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MINERVA ON THE SURREY DOWNS: READING PLINY (AND HORACE) WITH JOHN TOLAND

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John Toland's *Description of Epsom* (1711) is one of the most remarkable creative responses, ancient or modern, to Pliny's *Epistles*. Drawing on the villa letters and the collection as a whole for both topographical description and self-styling, Toland moulds himself after an intensely ruralist – and strikingly Horatian – Pliny. This article reads *Epsom* together with Toland's translations from the *Epistles* (1711–12) as a case study in reception which can also shed fresh light on Pliny's own epistolary self-portraiture.

Introduction

Among Pliny the Younger's appearances in the age of politeness, none is more curious than his role in a short book entitled *The description of Epsom, with the humors and politicks of the place: in a Letter to Eudoxa*. Printed in London in 1711, this letter from 'Britto-Batavus' to 'Eudoxa' offers a wryly rhapsodic description of his new summer residence at Epsom, with an appended 'Specimen of letters out of Pliny' bringing the volume to a modest forty-four octavo pages.[1] This short book is an oddity among the works of the Irish deist and 'free thinker' John Toland. It is an unusual witness, too, to Pliny's early modern reception, combining as it does selection, translation and a very particular sort of imitation. As an account of Epsom in its heyday as a fashionable spa town, the *Description* has drawn attention from Surrey antiquarians,[2] while its biographical and philosophical interest earns it occasional notice in Toland

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1 Toland (1711), also available in a facsimile reprint (Silverthorne (1978)).

2 From Macky (1714) through Home (1901) 51–7 to www.epsomandewellhistoryexplorer.org.uk (accessed 7.7.14). The best such treatment is Clark (1960) 33–9.

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scholarship.[3] Yet it remains barely known to eighteenth-century scholars and even less so to classicists. Intensely engaged with the *Epistles* at the time (a further anthology of translations followed in 1712), Toland made the two villa letters, and Pliny's epistolary self-portrait, central to his portrayal of Epsom, and of himself. A recognition and assessment of this response not only promises a richer reading of *Epsom* and a notable episode in Pliny's reception history, but also opens a new, strikingly Horatian vista on the *Epistles*: good reasons, I suggest, to take a closer look at Toland's Pliny.

Pliny was a fashionable writer in Queen Anne England (if, as usual, no rival for Cicero or Horace).[4] The first British editions of the *Epistles* had appeared in Oxford in 1677 and 1703, John Masson published a book-length biography in 1709, and Pliny's entertaining social portraiture and urbane Latinity earned him regular notice in the new periodicals. Here and elsewhere extracts were being turned, almost for the first time, into English:[5] a miscellany from Tom Brown in 1700, the three Calpurnia letters in the *Tatler* (1710), a letter of recommendation in the *Spectator* (1711).[6] If these tended to be shorter pieces, Pliny's descriptions of his 'Laurentine' villa (*Laurentinum*) on the coast near Rome (*Ep.* 2.17), and his 'Etruscan' estate (*Tusci*) at Tifernum Tiberinum in the Apennines (*Ep.* 5.6), were also beginning to earn notice. These extensive prose accounts of country estates, two of Pliny's longest letters, are exceptional among classical texts and have piqued the interest of many an archaeologist and architect.[7] They would receive lavish treatment in Robert Castell's *Villas of the ancients illustrated* (1728),[8] and had already appeared with French translations in the substantial edition of Jean-François Félibien, published in Paris in 1699 and reprinted in London in 1707.[9] It was around this time, too, that the two letters, notable for their combination of rapture and *Raffinesse*, began to inspire new literary imitations.[10] A modest example is the account of a Cornwall orangery published in the *Tatler* (1710), citing Pliny's 'long letter to his friend Gallus' (*Ep.* 2.17) as its model;[11] a more discreet but much more substantial instance, as we shall see, is

3 Lurbe (1994) put *Epsom* on the modern Tolandian map with an elegant reading, pursued since by Champion (2003) 239–40 and Brown (2012) 105–8.

4 For an overview of modern Plinian reception and further references, see Whitton and Gibson (forthcoming). On Cicero at this period see first Fox (2013a); on Horace, Money (2007) and Sowerby (2012).

5 The sole previous English translation seems to have been that of Abraham Fleming, who included eleven letters of Pliny in his *Panoplie of Epistles* (1576: 241–61).

6 Brown (1700), translating eight letters; Steele (1710); Hughes (1711) (*Ep.* 3.2). Also, e.g., *Ep.* 3.16 in *The Tatler* 71 (1709) and *Ep.* 1.14 in *The Tatler* 75 (1709).

7 Du Prey (1994) offers a wide-ranging survey, with particular attention to the age of neoclassicism and the Grand Tour. For introductions to the two villa letters and bibliography, see Gibson and Morello (2012) 200–33 and 306–7; Whitton (2013) 218–22.

8 This sumptuous volume (including text, translation, commentary and illustrations) is discussed by Du Prey (1994) 131–42 and Liu (2010).

9 Félibien (1699), also with commentary and illustrations; cf. Du Prey (1994) 127–31. The earliest vernacular translation seems to have been that of the younger Aldus Manutius (Manucci (1588)).

10 The outstanding ancient response is Sidonius Apollinaris' account of his wife's villa in the Auvergne (*Ep.* 2.2, late fifth century); cf. Whitton (2013) 35–7, 219–20.

11 Smith (1710).

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Toland's *Description of Epsom*. This form of homage, or parody, would live on through the eighteenth century, for instance in Alexander Pope's satirical portrait of his uncomfortable lodgings at Stanton Harcourt (*c.* 1718),[12] Horace Walpole's affectionate account of his estate at Strawberry Hill (1753)[13] and Thomas Wright's 'Description of his villa at Byer's Green' (1760s–80s),[14] and flowing ultimately into the whole genre of guides to palaces and country houses that has flourished since. *Epsom* thus takes its place in the vanguard of a rich literary tradition.

Toland's interest in the *Epistles* did not stop at the villa letters. His engagement with Pliny at the time he was writing *Epsom* is among the most intense, creative and idiosyncratic responses of any reader. This article takes stock of that response, beginning with his translations of the *Epistles* (Section 1). The central part of the paper is concerned with *Epsom*, demonstrating its substantial (but hitherto unremarked) interaction with Pliny's villa letters (Section 2) and situating that engagement within Toland's blend of parody and rhapsody (Section 3), before focusing on Toland's closing self-portrait, where the intertextuality is tuned rather to poetry and other Plinian letters (Section 4). A striking feature of that close is the pairing of Pliny with Horace as literary and ethical model. In a final move (Section 5) I consider the consequences of this combination, not just for what it can tell us about Pliny's reception in early modern England, but also for how it can inform a historicist reading of the *Epistles* themselves.

1. Toland as translator

By 1711 John Toland was well established in Britain and beyond as an erudite polymath and scandalous 'free thinker'. Notorious for his anticlerical polemic, above all in *Christianity not mysterious* (1696), he had also carved himself a distinctive political–intellectual niche as a republican, commonwealth Whig and agitator for the Hanover succession.[15] In his heterogeneous output classical learning played a significant if subsidiary role. Plans for a complete edition of Cicero attest to his philological ambitions, even if they never got off the ground: he completed only a prospective essay, *Cicero illustratus* Toland (1712).[16] Other authors provided ammunition for theological polemic: *Adeisidaemon* (1709), on superstition in Livy, raised dangerous questions about atheism; *Origines Judaicae* (published together

12 In a letter to the Duke of Buckingham, published in Pope (1737) 183–90 and available (e.g.) in Sherburn (1956) vol. 1, 508–12 (see ibid. 508 n. 1 for the date).

13 Part of a letter to Thomas Mann, 12 June 1753 (= Yonge (1890), no. 37). Pliny is neither mentioned nor strongly evoked, but Redford (2012) 435–8 establishes his influence on Walpole here and in his epistolary persona more widely. The villa letters feature briefly in his later essay on gardening (1771: 254–7).

14 Published posthumously by his biographer G. Allen as Wright (1793); the text is reprinted in Du Prey (1994) 319–22 (with remarks ibid. 142).

15 Champion (2003) is a valuable study of Toland's literary output and social positioning (with a catalogue of his works on pp. 257–9); for a brief biography see Daniel (2004).

16 On *Cicero illustratus* and Toland as classicist see Fox (2007) 274–303; also, on contemporary classical scholarship more broadly, id. (2013b).

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with *Adeisidaemon*) defended Strabo's account of Jewish antiquity against the authority of the Old Testament.[17] But Toland's involvement with Pliny's *Epistles* in 1711 and 1712 – which he had evidently known for some time[18] – was of a rather different sort.

In the spring of 1711 Toland set up house in Epsom,[19] thanks, it is generally assumed, to his old patron Robert Harley.[20] The *description of Epsom*, dated 'May 30, 1711', nowhere names Pliny; but it shows unmistakeably (I shall argue) that his *Epistles* were in mind, and indeed in hand.[21] So of course do his translations, which is one reason for starting with them here. But there is more to it than that: these anthologies, generally overlooked and in one case actively scorned,[22] comprise a unique and enlightening take on their original. Of course Pliny's 'private' correspondence, a collection of 247 self-standing miniatures,[23] lays itself open to excerption, and Toland stands here in a long tradition stretching from (at least) the early fifteenth century to the present.[24] But his own emphases are unique, and revealing.

Let me begin, then, with the eight-page 'Specimen of letters out of Pliny' appended to the *Description of Epsom*. It seems an arbitrary pairing, an impression not immediately corrected by the (unsigned) dedicatory epistle (pp. 37–8). Dated 'Epsom, Aug. 4. 1711', it reads as a brief sequel to the *Description*, which Toland's (unnamed) correspondent has now read. Toland thanks him for his compliments, replies to some follow-up questions and assures him that a sequel is forthcoming, once he is free of some business currently occupying him. Meanwhile ('till I regain my dear leisure') he encloses a sample from his

17 An example of more straightforwardly 'classical' enquiry is his early essay *The fabulous death of Atilius Regulus* of 1694 (in Toland (1726) vol. 2, 28–47), in which Toland argues – as many have since – that the received account of Regulus' heroic death is a myth.

18 Toland included his own translation of *Ep.* 6.19 in *The art of governing by parties* (1701, at pp. 168–72), as an argument for a parliamentary land qualification. A Latin essay of 1707 shows substantial Plinian influence on his style and manner (Toland (1707), esp. i–ix), of which the phrase 'opusculum est omnibus numeris absolutum' (p. v; cf. *Ep.* 9.38) is only the most obvious reflex.

19 Toland had returned to England after several years' absence around the start of 1711. Letters show him in London on 9 February (Toland (1726) vol. 2, 403) and 7 March (British Library Add. MS 4295, fol. 19).

20 Toland had certainly owed London accommodation to Harley (see Simms (1986) 41, and cf. Toland (1726) vol. 2, 219). Biographers since at least Ryan (1821) 599 unite in extending this patronage to Epsom – perhaps rightly, but without evidence and despite the increasing estrangement of the two men from 1711 or earlier. Toland was not new to the area: the *Adeisidaemon* preface (see nn. 104, 121, 139) recalls happy days of bookish leisure in Banstead and Epsom, which must antedate his departure for the continent (where he remained for over three years) in 1707.

21 Quite which edition (or editions) Toland used is not recorded; I give some reasons in n. 130 below for supposing Cellarius (1693).

22 Sullivan (1982) 33 has an 'amateur' Toland 'fitfully . . . peddling translations from Pliny', which 'failed to move' the 'public'. How this 'public' came to a view (most of the translations were not published in Toland's lifetime), and how Sullivan learned it, is unclear. His stylistic critique is more mysterious still: confronted with Pliny's prose, Toland 'was frequently becalmed, unable either to steer ahead masterfully or to drift into another's mind and expression. Instead, he was kept fitfully moving by gusts of Latinisms' (ibid. 49).

23 Pliny's correspondence with Trajan ('*Epistles* 10') makes no appearance in Toland's work, and will be left aside here; likewise the *Panegyricus*.

24 From Holkhamensis 396, a manuscript anthology of perhaps the 1420s, to Sherwin-White's *Fifty letters* (1969) and beyond. See Whitton and Gibson (forthcoming), and cf. Gibson and Morello (2012) 1–3 on 'the anthologizing habit'.

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planned translation of Pliny's *Epistles*. The connection with *Epsom* seems wholly casual, as if Pliny just happens to be on Toland's desk at the moment; only Toland's lack of 'leisure' – and the Plinian feel of the letter itself[25] – hint at the literary and autobiographical fusion of author and translator that will gradually emerge in my discussion.

Toland justifies his translation project – which, had he completed it, would have been a first[26] – with a brief encomium of his subject:

> For what they call a happy turn, delicacy of expression, and speaking only to the business in hand, I think no modern comes near him, no more than in the variety of his subjects, such as intrigues of state, points of literature and history, questions in natural philosophy, rural pleasures, the concerns of his friends, and some trifles which he renders important. (p. 38)

This Plinian praise for Pliny's variety chimes with the experience of many readers,[27] and Toland's little catalogue gives a good impression of the *Epistles*' broad range of topics. It also encapsulates what we shall see of his response to Pliny in *Epsom*: warm enthusiasm, but not without a mild sardonic edge ('some trifles which he renders important').[28] Yet these remarks are a strikingly poor fit with the selection that follows. Anything but diverse, Toland's 'Specimen' is a neat quartet on the associated themes of *secessus* ('withdrawal' from Rome) and *studia* (literary efforts).[29]

First comes *Epistles* 1.3, sensuously evoking the delights of Caninius Rufus' villa in Pliny's native Comum. Writing from Rome, Pliny urges Rufus to put his freedom to good use and devote himself to *studia*. Then the longer *Ep.* 1.9,[30] moving from reflections on the futility of urban busyness into a paean to Pliny's Laurentine villa, sanctuary of leisured composition. Third is another letter to Caninius in Comum (*Ep.* 2.8), dreaming of sport and study and lamenting the bonds that tie Pliny himself to Rome.

Given this cumulative emphasis on villa life and *otium litteratum*, Toland's fourth choice (*Ep.* 7.26) may seem a strange addition. Plucked from far later in the collection, it features neither *secessus* nor *studia*. Instead, light philosophising prompted by the illness of a friend:

25 Most obviously in its sign-off: the letter ends with an adaptation of a Plinian close (*Ep.* 1.5.17) and a simple 'Farewell', routine for Pliny (*uale*), but strikingly laconic for Toland.

26 The first full English translation was a compilation 'by several hands' gathered and completed by Thomas Henley (1724). He included five letters from Toland (below, n. 45) and quoted his judgment on Pliny's style in his preface, anonymously and not without unease at Toland's controversial reputation ('one, whose Judgment on this Head [sc. prose style] will not be question'd, however his way of thinking has been constru'd and represented in Affairs of a different Nature', vol. 1, p. xxix, citing the lines next quoted here). The first single-author translation was the hugely influential Melmoth (1746), shortly followed by Boyle (1751).

27 The importance of *varietas* to the *Epistles* is a topos of Plinian studies. Pliny states it himself at *Ep.* 2.5.7 (cf. Whitton (2013) 117, with references).

28 Toland continues with a generous spin on the old topos that Pliny is runner-up to his professed model: his Latin is 'not comparable indeed with that of Cicero, but nothing behind him in sense and manner' (p. 38).

29 On these key terms of the *Epistles* see Whitton (2013) 139 and 88.

30 Headed 'Lib. 1 Ep. 10' (a slip corrected in the 1712 collection).

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we are best when we are unwell, because our desires are reduced to the single, wholesome wish for good health. That yields an epigrammatic ethical prescription, 'that when we are well, we continue to be such, as we profess our selves resolv'd to be, when we are sick.'[31] Why end the 'Specimen' here? The closing *sententia*, typical of Pliny, was evidently to Toland's taste,[32] and the juxtaposition with *Ep.* 2.8 is neat: there Pliny 'yearn[s for Comum] as the sick yearn for wine, or baths, or fountains'; in *Ep.* 7.26 analogy has become theme, an invalid whose 'thoughts are wholly set on baths and fountains'.[33] It is apt imagery, too, for Epsom. The 'excellent mineral Waters' (p. 3) that made this spa town famous were used for purging, not bathing, but thoughts of invalids and springs make a fitting sequel to the *Description*: Toland's epistolary account and his translations from Pliny thus flow into one, in an implicit invitation to his addressee to visit Epsom for himself (albeit, we may hope, in good health).[34]

Yet Toland had one more reason, I think, for including *Ep.* 7.26. It lies in the broader ethical connection between the rustic calm in the first three letters and the simplicity of the sick man's desires here:

> [H]e pursues no amours, he covets no honours, he neglects riches … He envies no body, he admires no body, he despises no body, neither is he curious to hear or is pleas'd even with scandal. His thoughts are wholly set on baths and fountains. The top of his cares, the top of his wishes is, that, after escaping his distemper, he may become sleek and plump: which is to say, that he resolves to lead an innocent and happy life for the future.[35]

Toland has misconstrued the Latin here, transforming Pliny's 'soft and easy life' into a passing (autobiographical?) image of a 'sleek and plump' man;[36] but the point remains: a

31 *Ep.* 7.26.4 *ut tales esse sani perseueremus, quales nos futuros profitemur infirmi* (JT). I give Toland's translations where available ('JT'); others are my own. Pliny's Latin is cited after Mynors (1963), with some modifications to spelling and punctuation.

32 See below at n. 78.

33 *Ep.* 2.8.2 *sic concupisco ut aegri uinum balinea fontes*; 7.26.2 *balinea imaginatur et fontes* (JT). It is a distinctively Plinian effect (whether Toland knew it or not); cf. *Ep.* 2.5–7 with Whitton (2013) 111; also Gibson and Morello (2012) 188 on Pliny's 'daisy-chain' sequences.

34 I owe this suggestion to Emily Gowers. Toland takes Epsom's status as spa destination as a given (pp. 3, 7, 9, 14), rather than making it a focal point. Bathing (away from Epsom) features on pp. 25–7.

35 *Ep.* 7.26.2–3 *non amoribus seruit, non appetit honores, opes neglegit … inuidet nemini, neminem miratur, neminem despicit … balinea imaginatur et fontes. haec summa curarum, summa uotorum mollemque in posterum et pinguem, si contingat euadere, hoc est innoxiam beatamque destinat uitam.*

36 Only for a moment: the continuation ('which is to say') reframes the image as metaphor. This is one of two significant inaccuracies in the last sentence, which might be more nearly rendered 'This [i.e. his desire for baths and fountains] is the top of his cares, the top of his wishes; and he sets his resolve for the future, if he should escape his distemper, on a soft and rich – which is to say, innocent and happy – life.' Conversely, 'sleek and plump' captures to my taste the flavour of Pliny's adjectives far better than Boyle (1751) vol. 2, 153 ('indolent and decent') and the freewheeling Melmoth (1746) vol. 2, 49 ('disengaged from the cares and business of the world'), indefensible even as paraphrase. In general Toland's translations bear up well in his

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twin emphasis on simple comforts and inner tranquillity. The philosophical underpinning is characteristic of Pliny, a soft-focus blend of Stoicism and Epicureanism, emphasising the rejection of ambition and cultivation of the self but allowing for some creature comforts too. Toland surely saw what one or two modern readers have also seen, that the ethical focus makes *Ep.* 7.26, for all its difference of theme, an intimate relative of Pliny's rustic *otium* letters.[37] Although this letter contains no countryside and no *studia*, it gives unusually intense expression to a recurrent theme in the *Epistles*, and one more important than salts and water to (Toland's) Epsom: the bliss of retreat.

There is no sign that Toland ever completed his intended translation of Pliny's *Epistles* as a whole – not unusually for a man who 'hardly put out a Book, but he promis'd in it one or two more'.[38] He did, however, produce an extended selection the following year. It contains thirty-two complete epistles (including the four from his first set) and curtailed versions of the two villa letters. It is a fair bet that he was already at work on them in the spring of 1711;[39] at all events this second selection reached its final form, again in Epsom, in September 1712, but apparently remained unpublished until after Toland's death.[40] Even more than his first 'Specimen', this larger anthology is remarkable for its strong focus on a small group of themes.

Most obvious among them, again, is the calm of *rus*. The great senatorial trials (*Ep.* 2.11, 3.9, etc.) are omitted, along with the long discussions of style (*Ep.* 1.20, 9.26), the drama at Vesuvius (*Ep.* 6.16, 6.20), most letters of recommendation and virtually all those with political and legal themes. Instead, we find all three 'nature letters'[41] – the mysterious spring near Lake Como (*Ep.* 4.30), the *fons Clitumnus* (*Ep.* 8.8) and the floating islands of Lake Vadimon (*Ep.* 8.20) – as well as another natural marvel, the dolphin at Hippo (*Ep.* 9.33). This focus on nature's wonders is maintained through Toland's cropping of both villa letters. He includes less than a sixth of *Ep.* 2.17, just the first view of the estate and its surroundings (§§1–4a) and the coda (§27). The longer *Ep.* 5.6 gets more substantial treatment, with the languid setting of the scene (§§1–14) and the account of the 'hippodrome' (driving circuit) and gardens (§§32–6) adding up to a third of the original; but again the body of the letter, and with it the main buildings, are omitted. There may be an aesthetic motivation, making the two letters a better fit for their

contemporary terms, typical in accuracy (Warburton (1724) has some egregiously poor efforts) but unusually attentive to Pliny's distinctive concision (cf. *Epsom*, p. 38). The only known portrait of Toland might arguably justify the characterisation *mollis et pinguis* (see the frontispiece to Thorschmid (1766) vol. 3).

37 Cf. Bütler (1970) 50–1; Méthy (2007) 358–9. More on this topic in Section 5.

38 Des Maizeaux (1726) p. lxxxix; cf. Champion (2003) 48–50. I have already mentioned another abortive project from this period, Toland's planned edition of Cicero.

39 See especially on *Ep.* 5.6.14 below, at nn. 76–7.

40 'Some letters of Pliny: translated into English' (Toland (1726) vol. 2, 48–90, edited by P. des Maizeaux); the preface, cropped from the 1711 original, is dated 'Epsom, Sept. 10. 1712' (ibid. 49). Toland died in 1722.

41 In Toland's terms, letters on 'questions in natural philosophy' (*Epsom*, p. 38) – all with watery themes apt for Epsom. For some enthusiastic responses to these letters later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Lefèvre (2009) 252–72.

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companions in Toland's collection; and perhaps the tricky architectural vocabulary did not appeal. Still, it is striking that the houses themselves have been stripped out of both pieces entirely, leaving two letters dwelling instead on countryside and gardens: not the mediating interiors that dominate in Pliny's account, but the outdoor delights that surround them.

These pared-down villa epistles and the 'nature letters' are the longest pieces in Toland's selection, along with *Ep.* 3.1 on Spurinna's blissful retirement at his villa; together they constitute almost half of his anthology, and make a remarkable group in themselves.[42] Among the shorter letters, villa visits and rural *otium* are a recurrent theme (*Ep.* 1.6, 5.18, 6.14, 9.32), including the lakeside defenestration at Comum (*Ep.* 6.24). Most of those letters feature literary endeavour, and the theme recurs in several more – not the longer accounts of *recitatio* but several brief odes to *studia* in different guises (*Ep.* 5.15,[43] 7.13, 8.9, 8.19, 9.8, 9.14, 9.29, 9.38) and two recommendation letters, both focused on literary prowess (*Ep.* 7.22, 7.25). Brief moralising letters are well represented, on hospitality (*Ep.* 2.6 and 3.12), tolerance (*Ep.* 8.22) and liberality (*Ep.* 9.30). Pliny's preface (*Ep.* 1.1), a brief request for letters (*Ep.* 1.11), the striking note on the power of history (*Ep.* 9.27)[44] and a single letter on politics (*Ep.* 6.19)[45] complete the set.[46]

Together, Toland's selection is a nice demonstration of the power of anthologies to shift the balance of Pliny's self-presentation. The *Epistles* do indeed have several physical centres of gravity, including Comum, Laurentum and Tifernum; and Pliny's desire for the quiet life of retreat is a recurrent strain. Yet that is offset by – and in many ways dependent on – the strong pull of the *urbs*: Rome is the focus of Pliny's civic contributions as advocate and senator, and of the recitations that are so central to Plinian literary production.[47] If the dichotomies of *negotium* and *otium*, city and country, inform much of the *Epistles*, Pliny rarely attempts to resolve the contradiction between his professed desires for retreat and his devotion to duties at Rome; indeed, the resulting tension is (one might say) definitive

42 None of them had been translated into English before, so far as I can see.

43 Numbered 5.10 by Toland, as in all editions prior to Keil (1853).

44 In Toland's collection it follows Pliny's last letter to Tacitus (*Ep.* 9.14); did Toland – like many modern readers (e.g. Whitton (2012) 363–4) – see Tacitus evoked in it?

45 On elections and land prices. This exceptional intrusion of politics is explained not just by the letter's rustic frame, but by Toland's use of it several years earlier (above, n. 18). When Henley compiled his translation of Pliny (above, n. 26) he took from Toland only this letter and the four from *Epsom*. We might infer that he was unaware of the 1712 anthology, which would have saved him some labours of his own. Yet at *Ep.* 6.19.1 'this sudden dearness' (1701) has become 'this surprizing rise' in 1712 (at least as published by des Maizeaux in 1726) and 'this surprising rise' in Henley (1724). It is not a change for the better (Pliny wrote *subitae caritatis*). Did Toland have second thoughts, in which case Henley *did* know the 1712 set but but otherwise ignored it? Or did Henley make the change, followed by des Maizeaux? Another instance shows unwelcome intervention by Henley, and lack of it by des Maizeaux: at *Ep.* 1.9.8 Toland's 'idle' (both 1711 and 1712, for *otiosum*) has become 'Jolly' in Henley (1724).

46 Unlike me, Toland presents the letters in their normal sequence, identified by addressee and book and letter number.

47 On Pliny's literary circles see first Johnson (2010) 32–62.

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of his collection.[48] In Toland's anthology, by contrast, *negotia* are all but elided, serving at most as a backdrop for yearnings in the direction of *rus* and *studia*. This squeezing out of senatorial business shifts Pliny in the direction of Horace (Section 5) – and chimes nicely with Toland's own situation in *Epsom*. There both villa letters play a substantial and affective role, but not as the sole Plinian element, nor as the only Roman inspiration: poetic *loci classici*, above all from Horace, are also marshalled for Toland's take on rural idyll. And it is precisely Pliny's integration into that context that makes his contribution to Toland's self-portraiture in Epsom, and Toland's contribution as a reader of Pliny, so distinctive.

2. Epsom as villa

Toland published his *Description of Epsom* anonymously, addressing it as a letter to 'Eudoxa' ('Lady of fair renown') and signing himself, in thin disguise, 'Britto-Batavus' ('Brito-Dutchman').[49] A preface, purportedly from the publisher, adds that it was written for 'two very eminent patrons', Eudoxa, who wishes to learn about Epsom, and a 'Gentleman, that, for some reasons, was desirous to see the Author write in a manner different from his ordinary stile, in a strain he did not approve himself, and which is scarce ever allow'd by good judges'. This is doubtless the 'noblest Cheruscus' to whom Eudoxa is later asked to pass the letter,[50] and (we might suppose) the dedicatee of the translations that follow. The double purpose, information and entertainment, establishes the Janus-like nature of the *Description* to come: on the one hand, a 'severely exact' historical account, on the other, a stylistic *jeu d'esprit*.[51] It is a balancing-act presaged by the preface itself, teetering on the brink between po-face and parody:

48 See especially Bütler (1970) 41–57 ('Der *otium–negotium*–Konflikt'), Méthy (2007) 319–442 and further references in Whitton (2013) 89. On Pliny's epistolary balancing of *otium* and *negotium* see also Gibson and Morello (2012) 217–21 and Whitton (2013) 13–14.

49 Toland often used pseudonyms (cf. Daniel (1984) 69–73), including the similarly pellucid 'J. Londat' for *A letter against popery* the following year. A student in the 1690s at 'my beloved city Leyden' (p. 9; further admiration for Holland at pp. 18–19), he was freshly returned in 1711 from three years in The Hague.

50 *Epsom*, p. 29, where he is said to be planning to purchase property in Surrey. 'Cheruscus' presumably had connections with Hanover (once territory of the ancient Cherusci), a city and court to which Toland was a regular visitor (cf. Champion (2003) 116–40, esp. 129). 'Eudoxa' was also overseas, to judge from her desire to be informed 'about our Divisions' (districts). All we can say otherwise is that Toland was employed with 'something that concerns her interest nearer than her pleasure' in this same year (p. 38), and that she was a woman with whom he could be *cattivo* (see esp. p. 33, with n. 65 below). For some of his female correspondents, see Champion (2003) 52–4.

51 Some exemplification of the latter side in Section 3. Readers have been reluctant to acknowledge the duality. Clark (1960) 33–9 vindicates *Epsom* as documentary source rather than 'a mere bit of picturesque, illustrative writing' (p. 39), a view implicitly shared by the travel writers who cut and pasted Toland into their own accounts (so already Macky (1714) 73–87 and Aubrey (1718) 197–213). Brown (2012) 106 speaks simply of an 'idealization' … 'this utopian portrait'. Lurbe (1994), in a subtle reading, is not blind to the satire, but underestimates the stylistic fun, and the Pliny (acute remarks, however, on p. 130).

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> Of late years there have been printed several Descriptions of particular places in a jocular manner, in order to introduce such characters as might excite laughter only, without designing any sort of instruction, and yet often missing of this merry aim.[52] But hearing the Description of EPSOM was a serious thing, …

Of course that *can* be taken straight; but, like most prefatory denials, it will also bear a strong pinch of salt. As for the Greco-Latinate names, they are not exceptional for Toland,[53] but are well enough suited both to the playful manner and to the distinctly Roman colouring to come.

The *Description* itself is a substantial account of Epsom, its amenities, its society, and the surrounding countryside.[54] It says almost nothing about Toland's own house there;[55] but *mutatis mutandis* this elegantly ecstatic account of a summer abode near London is a close match for Pliny's accounts of his 'suburban' villa at Laurentum and his summer retreat in Etruria. No less Plinian is the elaborate ring structure. Since no précis will substitute for reading the letter itself, let me offer just a brutal reduction:

pp. 1–3 Preface: style (the author will be 'more a Poet than a Historian')
  pp. 3–10 Location and surrounding countryside (with poetic parody)
    pp. 11–19 Epsom and its social life (with mild satire)[56]
      pp. 19–23 'Digression': attack on politicians and priests
    pp. 23–5 Social life in Epsom (mildly satirical)
  pp. 25–32 Surrounding countryside (increasingly poetic)
pp. 32–5 Coda: Toland's *otium litteratum*

By this (highly summative) account, *Epsom* is symmetrical in both content and style, centred on precisely the portion discounted as a digression 'like some Episode in a Poem' (p. 22) –

52 Such as, perhaps, *A walk to Islington, with a description of New-Tunbridge Wells and Sadler's Musick House* (1701), one of many ribald farces by Ned Ward (the 'London Spy'). For some bawdy tales of Epsom see *Merry newes from Epsom-Welles* (1663) and Shadwell's *Epsom Wells* (1672).

53 *Clito* Toland (1700), for instance, features 'Clito', 'Victorina' and Toland himself as 'Adeisidaemon' ('Unsuperstitious', also title of the essay mentioned in Section 1).

54 Toland later revised it, presumably before his move to Putney around 1718. This was published posthumously as *A new description of Epsom*, in Toland (1726) vol. 2, 91–119 (Macky (1714) and Aubrey (1718) accordingly use the 1711 text), where it owes its apt setting, after the new *Letters of Pliny*, to des Maizeaux. Besides numerous small variations and the addition of footnotes (below, Section 4), Toland changed the structure considerably by adding a long description of two stately homes, one newly under construction (pp. 96–9), and excising the political 'digression' (at p. 108). The present discussion is focused primarily on the 1711 *Description*.

55 *Epsom*, p. 6 'Woodcot-Green, in which last place your humble servant has his Hermitage', counted among the streets favoured 'by such as are lovers of silence and retirement'. This was a residence largely but not only for summer (pp. 1, 30); presumably Toland also, like Pliny, kept a home in town.

56 A sample: 'The Ladies, to show their innate inclination to variety, are constantly tripping from one [bowling] green to the other' (p. 11); or, after celebrating Epsom's female beauties, 'But not to dissemble any thing, bountiful Nature has likewise provided us with other faces and shapes … ordain'd to quench the cruel flames …' (p. 12). Lurbe's (1994) shrewd account of Toland's social portraiture emphasises the benign side.

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in which Toland is anything but poetic or even lightly satirical.[57] *Epsom* is thus less insulated from the hurly-burly of London and national politics than might at first appear:[58] the *negotia* otherwise screened out come bursting in with a savageness of invective nowhere to be found in Pliny, at least as Toland anthologises him.[59] If this seems a far cry from the villa letters, with their insistent aura of calm contentment, it is only an intensification of the tension that, I have already remarked, runs through the *Epistles* as a whole. But politics, and the possibility that Toland himself felt frozen out of Westminster at the time, will be as subdued in this paper as in the rest of *Epsom*. Instead, let us follow him to the carefully depoliticised *otium* of Pliny's villas.

In broad terms the villa letters provide an obvious model, both as delighted descriptions and for the frame arrangement. *Ep.* 2.17 briefly situates Laurentum in relation to Rome and describes the land around (§§2–3), tours the villa and gardens in detail (§§4–24) and returns to the advantages of its location (§§25–8), before a closing invitation to Pliny's addressee to visit (§29).[60] In *Ep.* 5.6 Pliny introduces the region and climate (§§1–6), then slowly surveys the view from the hills above (§§7–13), tours the villa buildings at length (§§14–31) and lingers on the outdoor spaces (§§32–40); he ends with an apology, marked as a digression, for the exceptional length of the letter (§§41–4), before a conclusion (§§45–6). In both cases, Pliny embeds his tour of the buildings within their natural surroundings, as Toland frames Epsom with the Downs above.

If that seems a plastic comparison, it is typical of the relationship between these texts. With two exceptions, no single detail definitively points to Pliny, so that we are moving within the familiar grey zones of intertextuality. But this is expressive of the subtlety with which Pliny is incorporated. To summarise what follows: his presence is most concentrated and most evident in the first pages; it fades out towards the middle; but it returns, in a new and striking guise, at the end. The villa letters in particular make their mark both in terms of structure and in individual descriptive modules – but Pliny's role in *Epsom* goes far beyond the topographical.

The *Description* opens with an emblematic blend of Plinian motifs:

> MADAM,
> Since the Place in which I pass the summer was thought fit, on a certain occasion you remember, to be compar'd with my Mistress, who makes it summer wherever she is; you desire, that as I show'd you the picture of the one, I wou'd likewise send you the description of the other, and as like the original as may be. (p. 1)

57 He rails against 'degenerate Whigs, … the scorn of their own party and of all mankind' (i.e. the Junto Whigs), 'those Tories … who, like hungry dogs, return to their vomit again' and the priests who will 'fall into the pit they are now so maliciously digging for others'. If the publisher's preface denies knowledge of any 'secret meaning (as is usual in political letters)', there is nothing discreet about the politicking here, primarily concerned, like so much of Toland's output at this period, with legislation on the succession (an overview in Champion (2003) 116–40).

58 At least in its original form: Toland excised this section entirely in the revision.

59 Pliny's invective is best sampled in his attacks on Domitian (*Panegyricus passim*, and *Ep.* 4.11) and, on a smaller scale, on Pallas (*Ep.* 8.6).

60 For a structural analysis see Whitton (2013) 221–2.

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In good 'epistoliterary' style, this first sentence lets eavesdroppers imagine the exchange that has preceded, infer the writer's intimacy with Eudoxa and wonder who his 'Mistress' might be.[61] Britto-Batavus, we learn, is merely obliging a request of Eudoxa – a dedicatory topos used by Pliny in both villa letters: in *Ep.* 2.17 Gallus is surprised that Pliny likes his *Laurentinum* so much; in *Ep.* 5.6 Apollinaris is concerned that the Apennines may not make for a healthy summer sojourn. If Eudoxa is neither surprised nor concerned, the thrust of the move, a token deflection of responsibility for the pages that follow, is the same, while the evocation of summer replays the opening of the Etruscan letter in particular.[62] Toland's figuring of his epistle as a portrait may be another soft intertext, given Pliny's general fondness for epistolary portraiture,[63] and more particularly his use of the same conceit in a passage of *Ep.* 5.6 which Toland evokes later in *Epsom*.[64] At all events, it leads the sentence to a piquant close: 'as like as the original may be' is an apt banner for this intensely imitative – and innovative – epistle.

The most striking conceit, though, is the comparison of Epsom to a mistress; no passing fancy, it will return in a flirtatious passage near the end (p. 33).[65] The figure could be situated in contemporary terms,[66] but likely inspiration lies in a moment of rapture at Pliny's Laurentine villa. In a climax of the personification running through the letter, Pliny styles a favourite pavilion *amores mei, re uera amores* ('my darling, yes, truly my darling', *Ep.* 2.17.20). The phrase is extraordinary, as others saw: Henley translates 'my Delight, and indeed, my *Mistress*', and Boyle comments that Pliny 'speaks of his favourite edifice in the rapturous stile of a lover'.[67] Of course Toland is not Henley or Boyle, and this passage does not feature in his 1712 translation. But neither do others on which he draws elsewhere,[68] and Pliny certainly provides a proximate and pertinent – if less archly developed – model for his conceit.

Before the description itself comes an apologia for Toland's poetic style. Here the villa letters (which make no such apology) are left aside, but Pliny remains a first point of

61 Not for the first time: cf. 'Victorina' in *Clito* Toland (1700) pp. iv and 20–2, and 'A, B, C, D', the mistress whose portrait is painted in two letters to 'Mrs. D***' (Toland (1726) vol. 2, 357–68), written *c.* 1705–7 if des Maizeaux ordered the letters chronologically, as it appears (*contra* Champion (2003) 53).

62 Delicate in Pliny (*Ep.* 5.6.1 *aestate*, 'this summer', JT), emphatically doubled in Toland.

63 Toland excludes most of Pliny's 'portrait' and descriptive recommendation letters, but he can hardly have failed to notice them. On the *Epistles* as portraiture see Leach (1990), Henderson (2002) and Pausch (2004) 51–146.

64 *Ep.* 5.6.13 *neque enim terras tibi sed formam aliquam ad eximiam pulchritudinem pictam uideberis cernere* ([looking down on the villa,] 'you'll not imagin to see land, but some piece that is painted with the most exquisite delicacy', JT). For Toland's use of this passage (§§13–14) in *Epsom*, see below at n. 76. He returns to the 'portrait' figure on p. 27.

65 Having announced 'I have other Mistresses that charm me in the neighborhood', Toland lets Eudoxa miss the metaphor long enough to envisage him seducing 'lonely Shepherdesses' and 'plain farmers daughters' before decorously correcting her: 'But I know your next reflection will be, that I allude to the nine Muses …'.

66 As a decorous cousin of (e.g.) Francis Fane's imagery, figuring Bath as 'Englands C—t' (*Iter occidentale*, *c.* 1670s; on attribution and date see Love (2008) 63–4).

67 Henley (1724) vol. 1, 95 (his emphasis); Boyle (1751) vol 1, 160 (cf. ibid. 348 on *Ep.* 5.6.41 *indulsi amori meo*). The conceit is remarkable in ancient literature (Méthy (2007) 348; Whitton (2013) 246).

68 Cf. *Ep.* 1.5.17 on p. 38 (noted above) and *Ep.* 9.36.6 on p. 34 (discussed below).

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reference. As intimated in the 'publisher's preface', Toland undertakes to write in a rich, 'nay, … turgid' manner, since style, like a woman, is nothing without adornment, 'a slatternly negligence, or a tawdry affectation, being no less disgusting in the one than in the other' (p. 2). In itself the endorsement of a copious style is Ciceronian,[69] as is the analogy with female ornament.[70] But in explicitly advocating a jewelled style, Toland takes a significant step beyond Cicero. When he then justifies a manner that is actually poetic, he goes further still, into Plinian territory:

> You know (without being one of those they call Virtuoso-Ladies)[71] that there's the low and the sublime, *the epistolary, the historical, the oratorial stile, with many other such differences*. And in this Letter I fancy you'll easily agree, the stile ought to be a little *luxuriant*, like the subject itself. … I ought to show myself *more a poet than a historian* … Nature teaches us … to delight in the same innocent *Variety*; particularly in prospects, landschapes, and *the descriptions of* extraordinary *places* … (pp. 2–3, my italics).

Compare *Epistles* 2.5, a cover-letter in which Pliny defends the stylistic freedom of a speech on Comum: 'it is not forbidden to treat *descriptions of places … not just like a historian but almost like a poet*'; some may think he has written 'more *luxuriantly* than the strictness of oratory demands', but he hopes that he may satisfy different tastes *with several styles of oratory*, and that, above all, *the variety itself* will win over his readers'.[72] The accumulation of shared details is not matched in any other ancient text, or indeed in Toland's other treatments of style.[73] Pliny returns to the theme in another well-known letter (*Ep.* 7.9). There he distinguishes three types of prose – oratory, history and letters (the same trio as Toland's) – and advises young Fuscus that 'even in a speech a need often arises for descriptions, *not just historical but almost poetical*'.[74] Again, neither letter features in Toland's 1712 translation, but there is every reason to suppose that they are in mind: not just Pliny's practice, but his stylistic theorising

69 As Toland makes explicit, again with the woman analogy, in the defence of *copia* prefaced to his *History of the Druids* (Toland (1726) vol. 1, 18–20, first circulated *c.* 1718–20: Champion (2003) 216); cf. Fox (2007) 296–300 on the stylistic politics there. In *Nazarenus* Toland (1718) pp. xi–xii, by contrast, he advocates the plain style as most effective.

70 For oratory as woman cf. esp. Cic. *Or.* 78 (*nam ut mulieres …*). But here and elsewhere (e.g. Cic. *Brut.* 262, Quint. *Inst.* 8.pr.20, Messalla in Tac. *Dial.* 26.1), feminine ornament and dress is associated with the despised 'Asian' style; that Cicero and Quintilian advocate oratorical *ornatus* and *copia* elsewhere is another matter. Even in Cic. *De or.* 1.234, where jurisprudence is a bride adorned by Crassus' brilliance, the idea of refined garb has an aura of danger.

71 Evidently not a complimentary term (the 'bluestockings' of their day). A mistress of Toland is likewise 'far from being the monster they call a Learned Lady' (Toland (1726) vol. 2, 360).

72 *Ep.* 2.5.5–7 *descriptiones locorum … non historice tantum sed prope poetice prosequi fas est … nos laetius fecisse quam orationis severitas exigat … per plures dicendi species … uarietas ipsa*, a distinctive admission of an epideictic element to forensic oratory (cf. Whitton (2013) 115). My translation of *laetius* is based on *Ep.* 9.33.1, where Toland gives 'most luxuriant' for *laetissimo*.

73 E.g. *Clito* Toland (1700) 5–8, *Cicero illustratus* Toland (1712) 12–14 and the passages mentioned above, n. 69.

74 *Ep.* 7.9.8 *historia … epistulam … oratione* and *non historica modo sed prope poetica descriptionum necessitas incidit*. The tripartite distinction is rare and remarkable; Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.5.15, Pliny's model here) distinguishes rather oratory, history and dialogue.

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underlies the description to come. Whether Toland's hint that his own poeticising verges on the 'turgid' applies to Pliny too is another question, which I save for Section 3.

These preliminaries over, we reach 'Epsom, a village in the county of Surry' (p. 3), and the intertextual focus returns to the villa letters, both for small details and for the broad vista. Toland begins by situating his subject against London with a double measurement: 'Epsom … is distant about fourteen Italian miles from London-bridge, and twelve from Fox-hall' (p. 3). Pliny begins *Ep.* 2.17 by situating his Laurentine villa against Rome ('but seventeen miles'), then specifies two further markers of distance: '… but after fourteen miles you quit the Laurentin, after eleven the Ostian road' (*Ep.* 2.17.2, JT). Epsom 'is deliciously situated in a warm even bottom' (p. 3);[75] Pliny's Laurentine estate has 'downs' above (Toland's striking translation of *montibus* in *Ep.* 2.17.2), while the Etruscan villa 'stands towards the foot of the hill' (*Ep.* 5.6.14, JT). This hill, Pliny remarks, 'rises so easily and by such slow degrees, that you find yourself got up without perceiving that you mounted'.[76] The same gentle conceit recurs almost verbatim in *Epsom*: 'Indeed the Risings are many times so easy, that you find your self got to the top, without perceiving that you mounted' (p. 5).[77] If we have been dealing so far mostly in fuzzy intertextuality, this close imitation guarantees Pliny's place in the text. But it is exceptional, too, the only phrase from the villa letters integrated whole: it is not so much that Toland was concerned to 'plant' close echoes, as that he found a particular use for this sententious turn.[78]

With the villa letters in view, a series of smaller details start to look familiar. 'The form of this our village … is exactly semicircular' (p. 5), like the end of Pliny's Etruscan 'hippodrome' (*Ep.* 5.6.33 *hemicyclio* 'a semicircle', JT). 'EPSOM never misses of the eastern or the western Sun' (p. 5), a mannered expression of orientation evocative of Pliny's obsessive attention with capturing the morning and evening sun at Laurentum.[79] Thanks to its meadows and hedges, Epsom's constituent parts 'seem to be so many distinct little villages' (p. 6); from a Laurentine dining room Pliny looks out at the other villas around, 'which give the appearance of numerous cities'.[80] Epsom's lodging-houses have

75 Not so pert a remark in Queen Anne English as it may sound today (cf. *OED* 'bottom' 1b, 4b).

76 *Ep.* 5.6.14 *ita leuiter et sensim cliuo fallente consurgit ut, cum ascendere te non putes, sentias ascendisse* (JT).

77 Altered in the *New description* to '… perceiving that you were mounting' (Toland (1726) vol. 2, 95), so better reproducing Pliny's tense and point.

78 Other epigrams, both Plinian in construction (on Pliny's *sententiae* see Whitton (2013) 26–8), are 'a stranger is at a loss to know … whether it be a town in a wood, or a wood in a town' (p. 9), 'I abstain from all particular characters; sparing even those, who spare none but themselves' (p. 14). Toland's parting assurance of esteem for Eudoxa ('Of this the consciousness of her own worth assures her', p. 35) bears more than a passing resemblance to Pliny's epigrammatic close in *Ep.* 1.3.5, 'Do you only endeavour to have as good an opinion of your self, as others must needs entertain of you, if once you are conscious of your own worth' (JT).

79 See e.g. *Ep.* 2.17.6 *altera fenestra admittit orientem, occidentem altera retinet* (a room 'admits the rising sun through one window and holds back the setting sun through the other'), with Whitton (2013) 231–2. Horace may also be in mind: his Sabine farm is similarly orientated to enjoy the morning and evening sun (*Ep.* 1.16.6–7, lines included on the frontispiece of Toland's revised version).

80 *Ep.* 2.17.27 *quae praestant multarum urbium faciem.*

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'handsom tho not large Gardens' (p. 8), with all the modest pride familiar from Pliny (e.g. *Ep.* 2.17.4 'a *petite* but cheerful garden').[81] Its trees are 'in many places artificially wreath'd into verdant Porticos, cut into variety of figures …' (p. 7); beside one of the several porticos at the Etruscan villa is 'an ambulatory enclosed by dense foliage, cut into various shapes'.[82] '[T]hese vegetable Canopies, in the very heat of the day, yield a grateful and refreshing coolness, by the fanning breezes they collect from the delicate air of the Downs' (pp. 7–8) – like Pliny's cryptoportico at Laurentum, which paradoxically 'lacks the sun above all at the moment when it burns down most on its roof' and 'collects and transmits the spring breezes':[83] the 'point' is not lost on Toland, even in his milder version ('in the *very* heat of the day'). Amid all Epsom's delights, 'One thing is wanting,' – namely, running water – 'and happy is the situation that wants no more!' (p. 9). Compare the *Laurentinum*: 'This convenience and charm lack just one thing, running water'.[84]

Not to say that Epsom did not enjoy all these charms, any more than one denies the reality of Pliny's villas in emphasising the textuality of his descriptions. Numerous points of difference make this clear enough, if they needed to: the inclusion of a jail (p. 7), the two 'rival bowling greens' (p. 11),[85] the travelling grocers (pp. 23–4), to name just a few. What we see here is rather a form of literary assimilation, and only of one ingredient among several. It is concentrated, too, in the opening pages: as we move from topography into social observation (a mode alien to the villa letters), Pliny fades from view, and in the stormy digression he is nowhere to be seen. Yet as Toland calms the waves, his affability has a Plinian touch:

> A just indignation at our senseless quarrels has extorted this Censure, like some Episode in a Poem. But (that I may not digress too farr, tho in a place where you may ramble long enough without fearing to lose your way) … (p. 22)

The genial tone, the curtailing of the 'digression', the play on 'ramble', and the comparison with poetry, all find close analogies in the remarkable 'digression' towards the end of Pliny's Etruscan letter. I have allowed myself to give you such a long epistolary tour, he tells Apollinaris, 'not least because you could occasionally take a break if you wanted, putting down the letter and, as it were, taking a seat'; Pliny then compares his description to famous poetic ecphrases, and exits with a joke, 'But back to where I started, for fear that

81 *paruola sed festiua area*. Or the hot- and cold-rooms in his baths, 'elegant rather than luxurious' (*magis elegantes quam sumptuosae*, *Ep.* 2.17.11).

82 *Ep.* 5.6.17 *ambulatio pressis uarieque tonsis uiridibus inclusa*; more topiary in *Ep.* 5.6.35.

83 *Ep.* 2.17.19 *tum maxime caret sole cum ardentissimus culmini eius insistit. … Fauonios accipit transmittitque*.

84 *Ep.* 2.17.25 *haec utilitas, haec amoenitas deficitur aqua salienti*.

85 Metaphorical rivalry for Lurbe (1994) 134, hard economics for Clark (1960) 36. Toland turned down the chance of an obtrusive Plinianism here: one contemporary term for such a green was *spheristerium* ('ball-ground'; cf. Clark (1960) 23), like Pliny's sunny *sphaeristerium* at Laurentum (*Ep.* 2.17.12).

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I will be justly charged with breaking my own rules if I take too long about this digression . . . .'[86]

The villa letters are most present in the opening pages, then, but Toland does not lose sight of them;[87] and, as we shall see in Section 4, Pliny plays a central role in the climactic self-description to come. First, however, I want briefly to address more explicitly a playful aspect of the *Description* that seems to have passed most readers by, and consider its consequences for Pliny. To put the question in a nutshell: is Toland's tongue in his cheek when he adds these Roman touches to his local town?

3. Parody, pathos and Pliny

In the first pages of *Epsom* rhapsody teeters more than once on the brink of farce. Consider the 'clay-hills' to the west,

> variously chequer'd with woods and groves of oak, ash, elm, and beech, with both the poplars, the intoxicating yew, and the florid white-beam. The wyche-tree, the horn-beam, and the correcting birch are not wanting. I need not mention the numberless copses of hazel, thorn, holly, maple, and other trees and shrubs of dwarfish growth, that agreeably diversify all this country: nor that, for the most part, they are amorously claspt in the twining embraces of Ivy and Hony-suckles. (p. 4)

Here one reader 'can feel, almost physically, the sensuous relish Toland experienced while writing . . .'.[88] We might be more cynical when faced with this epic arboreal catalogue, complete with elaborate ornamental epithets ('*intoxicating* yew', '*florid* white-beam', '*correcting* birch') and a climactic poetic cliché ('amorously claspt . . .').[89] Seen in those terms, the elegant 'I need not mention' doubles up as an ironic pointer to the superfluity of both list and hackneyed language.[90] Toland may indeed have delighted in such botanic variety, but his manner of expression seems to me, at any rate, to be touched with a dose of (self-)parody.

86 *Ep.* 5.6.41 *praesertim cum interquiescere, si liberet, depositaque epistula quasi residere saepius posses*, 43 (comparison with Homer, Virgil and Aratus), 44 *uerum illuc unde coepi, ne secundum legem meam iure reprehendar, si longior fuero in hoc in quod excessi*.

87 Small reflexes later on include the 'grateful variety' of the views from the Downs (p. 25; cf. *Ep.* 2.17.27 *uarietate gratissima*, on the view from the Laurentine villa), and a touch, perhaps, of Pliny's hippodrome (*Ep.* 5.6.32–3) in Epsom's nascent race-course, 'the new orbicular Race, which may well be term'd a rural Cirque' (p. 28).

88 Lurbe (1994) 131.

89 The conjugal imagery, ubiquitous in modern poetry, was already cliché in antiquity: see e.g. Watson (2003) 464 and 468–9 on Hor. *Epodes* 15.5–6.

90 Compare Ovid's false innocence when he curtails his over-long catalogue of Actaeon's dogs (*Met.* 3.206–25) with the line 'and those which it would take too long to relate' (*Met.* 3.225 *quosque referre mora est*, with Barchiesi and Rosati (2007) 159–60).

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I write '(self-)parody' deliberately, since these opening pages hover between mockery of contemporary poetic prose (that 'strain … which is scarce ever allow'd by good judges')[91] and irony at Toland's own expense for adopting it. *Epsom* as a whole, abounding as it does in precise observation and description, does not read as pure farce. Nor does it lack affection for its subject. Yet there are frequent touches of ironic distance.[92] The manner is Ovid pure, combining empathy and witty detachment to produce a text that is both affective and entertaining.[93] It is the same duality that we saw encapsulated in the publisher's preface, with its asseveration that 'no historical account can be more severely exact': exact it is, rigorously so, perhaps; but the manner is, for the most part, anything but *severe*.

Take Toland's outrageous rhapsody on the aquatic delights that Epsom … lacks:

> For in this place … are not to be heard the precipitant murmurs of impetuous cascades; there are no purling streams in our groves to temper the shrill notes of the warbling choristers, whose never-ceasing concerts exceed Bononcini and Corelli … (p. 9)

– and so on for half a page. The remark that follows is a typical blend of playful and serious: 'I leave you to guess, whether in these periods I design'd to show how well read I am in bombast-romance, or rather to exhibit the various images under which Water naturally delights us in the country.'[94] Clearly Toland is having fun at the expense of contemporary purple prose; but the following ruminations are far from sardonic, as he suggests a potential remedy to 'this present defect' in the form of an artificial watercourse from Ewell ('And I am persuaded from physical reasons …', p. 10). Conceivably this earnestness too is parodic, as Toland briefly plays the natural scientist;[95] but it seems more likely to reflect civic engagement: the wry overdressing of the 'impetuous cascades' need not negate the desirability of the amenity itself.

How, then, does Pliny fit into this texture? Despite his advocacy in *Ep.* 2.5 and elsewhere of a more 'poetic' oratory, his own letters are worlds apart from these passages of elegiac overload. The Etruscan villa, it is true, rejoices in an impressive array of water-features, but Pliny's description of them is (characteristically) limpid, not bombastic.[96] Nor does

91 Publisher's preface.

92 Compare Toland on a demolished palace, simultaneously invoking and deflating a moralising topos: 'Within a mile and a half is the place where that other splendid palace of Nonsuch lately stood: a fit subject of reflection for those, who are inclin'd to moralize on the frailty, uncertainty, and vicissitude of all things' (p. 28).

93 See e.g. Martindale (1993) 60–3, also on the Actaeon episode: 'in general reductive categories (like "serious"/"humorous") may make it difficult to do justice to an "Ovidian" vision.'

94 Toland apparently thought even this pudding under-egged: in revision he extended it to read 'bombast-romance, or rather to refresh the heated imagination, by exhibiting the various images'.

95 Cf. Pliny's 'questions in natural philosophy', especially *Ep.* 4.30 and 8.20. One might detect a hint in his direction ('for I augurate an approaching remedy', p. 11), given Pliny's own post as augur (advertised, *inter alia*, by the punning *auguror* 'I augurate' in *Ep.* 7.33.1) – but I realise this may be over-subtle.

96 *Ep.* 5.6.36–40.

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he catalogue trees at length; and the creepers are framed in his usual mannered antithesis, not amorous cliché: 'these [*sc.* plane-trees] are so cover'd with ivy, that their lower parts are green with its leaves, as the tops are with their own . . .'.[97] As for the various conceits that (I have suggested) Toland may owe him, they are integrated without obvious parody. Just one moment of absurdity may catch Pliny with a satirical lash. The semicircular Epsom has its church at one end, a palace at the other; 'or, lest our stile here shou'd offend you (Madam) it has a Palace for its head, and a Church for its tail' (p. 5). The remark welcomes a political reading, as comment on secular and sacred power;[98] but by raising the spectre of offensive style Toland also underlines the comic potential of his zoographic imagery. Is Pliny in mind, with his extraordinary corporeal description of the 'niche' in his 'darling' pavilion, 'it has the sea at its feet, the villa at its back and the woods at its head'?[99] Pliny's niche is human, while Epsom more resembles a snake or a rat; but the very oddity of both conceits is remarkable. If so, this is Toland's clearest tweak of Pliny's nose,[100] and not very clear at that: the humour of his stylistic transgression stands with or without the intertext.

In that last respect the putative reference here is typical. By and large, Toland unobtrusively incorporates Plinian elements rather than pointedly 'alluding' to them: although diversion is on offer to the reader who savours his imitations, this does not look like a simple game of 'spot the intertext'.[101] Likewise, the blend of affect and wit makes 'parody' too bald a term. Pliny's villas are folded into a description that is far from naïve, but no simple burlesque either: Toland's highly self-conscious literariness brings with it a continuous ironising of his descriptive genre, but that need not, I suggest, entail deflating the (Plinian) ethos of delight.

4. On the Downs with Pliny and the poets

In the final pages of the *Description* that ethos of delight reaches a climax. Here we move from 'Epsom' to 'Toland at Epsom', from portraiture to self-portraiture: so far Toland has played a discreet role as narrator and commentator, but at p. 30 ('I that love the country entirely . . . have fixt my residence here') he steps onto his own stage. At the same time the focus shifts from Epsom as idyllic summer home to Epsom as the ideal abode of the man of letters – from *otium* to *otium litteratum*. Here Toland once again replays Pliny in structural terms, reworking the moment of revelation late in the Laurentine letter, where the climactic account of his 'darling' pavilion ends with a glimpse of the master himself inhabiting his

97 *Ep.* 5.6.32 *illae* [sc. *platani*] *hedera uestiuntur utque summae suis ita imae alienis frondibus uirent* (JT).

98 So Daniel (1984) 170.

99 *Ep.* 2.17.21 *a pedibus mare, a tergo uillae, a capite siluae.*

100 And in the spirit of Sidonius Apollinaris (above, n. 10), who wryly homes in on some of Pliny's more striking (or pretentious) expressions (Whitton (2013) 36).

101 One might compare (and contrast) Toland's equally smooth integration of famous poetic texts, more recognisable to start with, and in several cases – unlike the villa letters – made explicit in revision by footnotes (see Section 4 below, esp. n. 122).

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domain, blissfully buried in his books.[102] Again, the motif is not recycled unchanged. Pliny stages himself indoors, revelling in the pleasant calm and mediated views that the interior spaces of his villa, so extensively described, can offer. Toland's backdrop, by contrast, is nature at large and unmediated: Epsom fades away and the Downs become the backdrop for a scene of blissful rural retreat. At this point the poetic colours, too, take on a new hue.

His palette is identifiably that of the 'happy man' tradition, a rich vein of contemporary thought which drew time and again from a handful of *loci classici* in Roman poetry.[103] The most rhapsodic passage ('O refreshing Zephirs . . .! O cooling shades and grots, ye retir'd caves, mossy springs, and awful woods!', p. 34) evokes it in all its glory, with an eye to a favourite passage, Virgil's 'praises of Italy' in the *Georgics*.[104] Another canonical scene is evoked just below:

> I call you all to witness, that, tir'd with sport or study, and sleeping on the grass under a spreading beech, I enjoy not a more solid and secure Repose, than the proudest monarch in his gilded Palace? (pp. 34–5)

The snatch of the *Eclogues* could not have escaped many Latinate readers, coming as it does from the very first line of the book, 'You, Tityrus, reclining under the shade of a spreading beech'.[105] It is joined, perhaps, by a delicate reflex of another canonical moment, the epilogue to the *Georgics*, in which Virgil returns full circle to that pastoral opening: 'while I sported with the poems of shepherds [cf. Toland's 'sport or study'] and, in the boldness of youth, sang of you, Tityrus, under the shade of a spreading beech.'[106] If so, the change from sporting on the page to literal sport is a striking move, since Toland's hunting 'n' scribbling, as we shall see, has immediate Plinian precedent.

The Virgilian echo is not sustained: his beech is just one of several stock features in Toland's *locus amoenus*, along with the grassy bed[107] and the sound sleep of the humble man.[108] That in turn chimes with a broader motif of ambition renounced which runs

102 *Ep.* 2.17.24 (cf. Whitton (2013) 249–50). Pliny's moment of revelation, like so much in the *Epistles*, is intense and fleeting. Toland's extends for several pages.

103 For the term, and a rich account of this tradition in its shifting guises *c.* 1600–1750, see Røstvig (1954–8); also Mack (1969) 77–115 on its adaptation by Pope at Twickenham.

104 *G.* 2.485–9 *rura mihi et rigui placeant in uallibus amnes, | flumina amem siluasque inglorius. o ubi campi . . . || . . . ! o qui me . . . | . . . protegat umbra!* The same lines had provided epitaphs for (e.g.) Cowley's ode 'On solitude' (1668) and Pope's *Pastorals* (1709); Toland quotes from them in the Latin preface to *Adeisidaemon* (1709), in a similar rhapsody on his leisured studies in Surrey. Comparison with that poetic outburst, unprotected as it is by the ironising apologetics of *Epsom*, seems to confirm what I proposed in Section 3: self-awareness does not equate to ridicule.

105 *Ecl.* 1.1 *Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi.* Translations here are mine.

106 *G.* 4.565–6 *carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuuenta, | Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi.*

107 E.g. Hor. *Odes* 2.3.6–7 *in remoto gramine . . . | . . . reclinatum* with Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) ad loc.

108 The conventional ancient contrast, as deep sleep goes, is 'poor ~ rich' (e.g. Hor. *Odes* 1.16.15 with Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) ad loc.). The shift to 'humble subject ~ monarch' is Senecan (cf. esp. *Herc. Oet.* 644–7) and Shakespearean (*Henry IV Part 2* 3.1.26–31 '. . .Then happy low, lie down! | Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown').

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through these pages: 'I ingloriously resign' (p. 32), 'as void of care as of ambition' (p. 35), and its most impassioned development:

> Let some therefore hide their aking scars under laurels, or raise estates to their children by ruining their clients, or squander the gettings of their fathers in corrupting elections against their country, while others kill whom they can't cure, or preach what they don't believe: but grant me, ye powers, luxurious Tranquillity! (p. 32)

The Stoic celebration of simple self-contentment is familiar enough from Virgil or Seneca,[109] but both the 'priamel' form, cataloguing lifestyles rejected, and the unabashedly Epicurean twist at the end ('*luxurious* Tranquillity') point first and foremost to Horace.[110] His *Odes* were famous in Toland's time as they are now for their celebration of country over city life, and for admitting a generous dose of Epicurean indulgence alongside the Stoic ideals of a tough farmer's life. Toland for one is not shy of allowing himself small luxuries in his retreat:

> Here then, EUDOXA, let me have Books and Bread enough without Dependance, a bottle of Hermitage and a plate of Olives for a select Friend, with an early Rose to present a young Lady, as an emblem of discretion no less than of beauty. (pp. 31–2)

The fine wine and imported nibbles have seemed incongruous to some,[111] but they make a fitting eighteenth-century version of a Horatian table scene: Hermitage for Horace's best wines, Mediterranean olives for his Asian oils, a rose-bud for the rose-petals that routinely make up a trio of sympotic trappings.[112] The wine is well named, of course,[113] and the olives just might have a Plinian tang;[114] but this intimate *tête-à-tête* with a 'select Friend', complete with walk-on beauty, is evocative above all of the *Odes*:[115] less through

109 Virgil: *G.* 2.486 *flumina amem siluasque inglorius* (preceding the passage quoted above, n. 104), 4.563 *ignobilis oti* ('ignoble tranquillity'). Seneca: e.g. *Thyestes* 391–5 (his most famous ode in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), *stet quicumque uolet potens | aulae culmine lubrico: | me dulcis saturet quies; | obscuro positus loco | leni perfruar otio*, which can well be read as the conceptual underpinning for Toland's sentence, from the 'aking scars' (cf. *culmine lubrico*) to his 'luxurious tranquillity' (cf. *leni otio*).

110 For 'priamel' see canonically *Odes* 1.1; for tranquillity e.g. *Odes* 2.16 (the *otium* ode). Toland's final phrase can also mean, more pointedly, 'the luxury of tranquillity', but that hardly excludes the more obvious sense. I use 'Stoic' and 'Epicurean' loosely, as I suspect Toland would have, without engaging with the much debated nuances of Horace's philosophical stance, on which see e.g. Ferri (1993) 81–131, Moles (2007).

111 Lurbe (1994) 130–1.

112 Best wines: e.g. *Odes* 2.3.8, alongside the 'cheap Sabine' of *Odes* 1.20.1. Unguents: e.g. *Odes* 2.11.16–17. Sympotic trio: *Odes* 2.3.13–14 with Nisbet and Hubbard 1978 ad loc.

113 Toland styles his Epsom residence a 'Hermitage', p. 6, a common conceit in 'solitude' literature.

114 Pliny's moderate supper at *Ep.* 1.15 – responding to imitation poems such as Horace's *Odes* 1.20 – features imported Spanish olives alongside the blend of fine wine and cheap gruel (cf. Gowers (1993) 275–6).

115 E.g. *Odes* 2.11, with Horace, Quinctius and the courtesan Lyde.

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verbal intertextuality than through situational allusion, Toland at Epsom looks very much like Horace at leisure out of Rome.[116]

The countryside is thus for Toland, as for Horace, a site of comparative rather than total solitude.[117] Yet it is also a place of quiet contemplation and study. That too is a core Horatian motif, less in the lyric poems than in his *Epodes*, *Satires* and above all the first book of *Epistles*, where the town/country dichotomy and the inner life are recurrent, intertwined themes.[118] *Epistles* 1.18, for instance, ends with a famous statement of simple contentment: happy on his Sabine estate, Horace need offer no more ambitious prayer than *sit bona librorum et prouisae frugis in annum | copia* ('Let there be *a good supply of books* and *grain provisions* for a year', *Ep.* 1.18.109–10). If the sympotic world of the *Odes* is evoked (I have suggested) by Toland's Hermitage and olives, this line from the *Epistles* is a sure model for his prayer, 'Let me have Books and Bread enough'.[119] In another idyllic evocation Horace wonders how fellow-poet Tibullus is passing time at his villa:

> *. . . tacitum siluas inter reptare salubres,*
> *curantem quicquid dignum sapiente bonoque est?* (*Ep.* 1.4.4–5)[120]

Toland figures himself after the same mould, inviting Eudoxa to 'imagin to see me wandring as void of care as of ambition, and always a book in my hand or in my head' (p. 34). Again the association is loose, but not in doubt, even without the footnote that he added in revision: Toland is recycling this part of his self-portrait from an earlier, Latin work, where the Horatian echo is unmissable.[121]

It is above all Horace, then, who sets the poetic tone for Toland's idealised life at Epsom. If his presence becomes most obvious only in these final pages,[122] the ethos has been

116 In the revision of *Epsom* the phrase 'Epsom is the place you must like before all others' (p. 30) is footnoted with *Odes* 2.6.13–14 *ille terrarum mihi praeter omnis | angulus ridet* (on Tarentum) – likewise exemplifying Toland's sense of intertextuality, in which verbal imitation is subordinate to affective association.

117 On the solitude motif in post-Restoration literature, only occasionally laced with an Epicurean (and Platonic) emphasis on friendship, see Røstvig (1954–8) vol. 1, 311–434.

118 For a helpful overview from an eighteenth-century perspective, see Brower (1959). The best known and most influential passages are *Epod.* 2, *Sat.* 2.6 and *Ep.* 1.4, 1.10, 1.14 and 1.18.104–12. A brief survey of the association of *rus* and *studia* in Roman literature in Riikonen (1976).

119 The motif returns in *Tetradymus* Toland (1720) p. xx: 'Books and bread enough, with select company in an agreeable Retirement, give the solid satisfaction. . .'. As with Virgil's spreading beech, Toland did not trouble to identify the echo in revising *Epsom*.

120 '. . . sauntering in silence amid the healthful woods, concerned with whatever is worthy of a wise and good man?' The identification of Horace's addressee Albius as the poet Tibullus is widely assumed, but not certain (see Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 368 and Mayer (1994) 133 for contrasting views).

121 The *Adeisidaemon* preface has Toland on the Surrey Downs with Livy in his hand, strolling deep in thought or 'sauntering through the nearby woods' ('vicinas perreptarem silvas'; cf. Horace's *siluas inter reptare salubres*). Perhaps by then, and surely before *Epsom*, Toland had excerpted several ruralist tags from Horace, including this one (see BL Add. MS 4465, fol. 65, with *Odes* 2.6.13–14; *Sat.* 1.6.111–12, 2.6.1–3 and 60–2; *Ep.* 1.4.4–5, 1.16.4–7, 2.2.77–8).

122 We saw one possible Horatian echo in the description itself (above, n. 79). In the revision Toland adds another. Epsom's healing waters go from being 'very beneficial in gently cleansing the body, in cooling and purifying the

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implicit since the frontispiece, with its pregnant motto, '*Quid quaeris? vivo & regno*. Hor.' – one of Horace's most evocative encapsulations of the Stoic/Epicurean ideal.[123] But here too Pliny plays a significant part. If his villa letters provided both effects and affect in the description of Epsom, here Pliny himself makes his most conspicuous entrance onto Toland's stage, in a climax of imitative *Selbstinszenierung*:

> Minerva is to be met on our Downs as well as Diana: and if ever I go a hunting, 'tis always (as a learned Roman has recorded of himself) with a pocket-book and a pencil, that if I happen to take nothing, I may yet bring something home. (pp. 33–4)

It is Toland's most obtrusive reference to Pliny (if too oblique to have been noticed by modern readers), alluding to the early letter in which Pliny tells Tacitus about his unorthodox hunting technique (*Ep.* 1.6). Tacitus will be amused, Pliny writes, that he has caught three boar; but – here a familiar touch of mildly Horatian self-depreciation – he has not abandoned his life of laziness completely. Sitting by the nets,[124] he was equipped not with 'a hunting-pole and a lance' but with '*a pocket-book and a pencil*', so that 'if I went home with empty hands, yet I might bring with me full pages' (JT, my italics).[125] The silence of the hunt is an excellent spur to concentration; '[w]hen therefore *you go a hunting* hereafter, you may upon my authority carry with you *a pocket-book and a pencil*, as well as a pouch and a bottle. *You'll find that Minerva does no less wander upon the mountains, than Diana*' (ditto).[126]

Minerva and Diana are not multi-purpose mythological extras:[127] they evoke a famous exchange with Pliny's best-known correspondent.[128] That is not all. The closing epigram ('that if I happen to take nothing, I may yet bring something home') looks like a

blood' (p. 26) to 'very beneficial in gently cleansing the body, in cooling the head, and purifying the blood' ((1726) vol. 2, 111), so recalling – as a footnote confirms – the stream on Horace's Sabine estate, whose 'flow is good for the poorly head and the poorly belly' (*Ep.* 1.16.14 *infirmo capiti fluit utilis, utilis aluo*). The intervention is a striking confirmation of Toland's attention to minutiae; it is equally striking that he does not add or flag up any such echoes from the villa letters in the reworking (contrast *Ep.* 1.6 and 9.36 below).

123 Hor. *Ep.* 1.10.8 ('In a word, I live and I am king', continuing '… as soon as I have left Rome behind'). On the implications of *regno* (self-sufficiency through lack of ambition), see e.g. Nisbet and Hubbard (1978) 42, on *Odes* 2.2.9. In Toland's *New description* this motto is replaced with an epigraph from *Epistles* 1.16.4–7 (on his Sabine villa) *scribetur tibi forma loquaciter & situs agri* … ('I shall give you a long-winded description of the shape and site of my land …') – far less pregnant, but apt, not least for its touch of self-irony.

124 Roman hunting was in large measure a sedentary sport (references in Whitton (2013) 138). Presumably we are to imagine an equestrian Toland, in his variation on the theme, taking a break from the chase. At the age of forty, he was, like Pliny, in the prime of life (*Ep.* 1.6 is probably from *c.* AD 96–9; Pliny was born in 61 or 62).

125 *Ep.* 1.6.1 *non uenabulum aut lancea, sed stilus et pugillares … ut si manus uacuas, plenas tamen ceras reportarem.*

126 *Ep.* 1.6.3 *proinde cum uenabere, licebit auctore me ut panarium et lagunculam sic etiam pugillares feras: experieris non Dianam magis montibus quam Mineruam inerrare.* Toland takes the liberty of adding a pencil to this sentence too.

127 So Lurbe (1994) 131.

128 *Ep.* 1.6 has been a favourite of anthologists and beginner Latinists for centuries. Scholarly debate has focused ever since the first commentary on the *Epistles*, Catanaeus (1506), on its relationship to *Ep.* 9.10 (also to Tacitus), where the 'Minerva and Diana' motif recurs, and (more recently) on its mooted intertextuality with Tacitus' *Dialogus* (bibliography in Whitton (2012) 365). Toland omits the later letter from his translations; if that was an active decision, it may be in part because Pliny's take on *otium litterarum* there is altogether less rapturous.

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variation on Pliny's *manus uacuas*. So it is; but the variation is Pliny's own, from late in Book 9: 'I hunt from time to time, but not without my pocket-books, so *that though I take nothing, I may yet bring something home*'.[129] The connection was well spotted, whether or not Toland found it for himself.[130] Through it, his sentence alludes not just to the famous Tacitus letter, but also to an acme of Plinian autobiography, the letter in which Pliny – near the very end of his *Epistles* – describes a day in his life on the Etruscan estate.[131] There, as in *Ep.* 1.6, literary pursuits loom large, confirming the deep intrication of villas and *studia* in his letter-collection as a whole.[132] With it, Toland's passing self-portrait as a latter-day Pliny – no more naïve than Pliny's own self-portrait,[133] if a little less reverent in its framing[134] – reaches to the heart of the *Epistles*.

This cameo from a very particular 'learned Roman' confirms what so much of *Epsom*, and of Toland's translation project, implies: in Pliny he found an attractive model not just for epistolary politesse and description, but for his own self-fashioning at Epsom.[135] It is no coincidence, I think, that *Epistles* 1.6 is one of the letters that shows Pliny at his most Horatian, at least in its self-depreciatory proclamation of laziness, given the place of this cameo in Toland's distinctly Horatian 'happy life'. The implications of this idiosyncratic blend will occupy the final section of the paper. First, allow me just a few words on Toland's own variation on the ruralist theme.

It is not just the addition of Pliny to the usual poetic suspects that makes these 'bucolic posturings' stand out from the crowd.[136] For one thing, Toland's insistence on 'Retirement'

129 *Ep.* 9.36.6 *uenor aliquando, sed non sine pugillaribus, ut quamuis nihil ceperim, non nihil referam* (my translation, in Tolandian vein). This reference, along with *Ep.* 1.6.3, is made explicit in footnotes to the revised version (Toland (1726) vol. 2, 117).

130 He was perhaps helped by Cellarius (1693) 14, ad *Ep.* 1.6.1. That he consulted this volume (or its second edition, 1700) is (also) implied by some peculiarities of punctuation (*Ep.* 1.6.1, 1.9.6, the latter unique, so far as I can see, to Cellarius and Toland). He was certainly not using Beroaldus (1501), the copy of Pliny he owned at his death (Champion (1999) 307), since (*inter alia*) that early edition lacks much of Book 8, including several letters translated by Toland. He had ample access to large public and private libraries; cf. Champion (2003) 25–44, Brown (2012) 93–5.

131 *Ep.* 9.36 is paired with *Ep.* 9.40 (the last letter) through topic and addressee. On this sealing of Pliny's portrait, see Henderson (2002) 11–14, 147–8.

132 For this claim, cf. Whitton (2013) 10–11, 220–1.

133 Wieland (1774/5) read *Ep.* 1.6 in romantic vein as a 'naives Gemäldchen …, wie Gelehrte zu jagen pflegen'. I find it more 'sentimental'.

134 The Pliny epiphany follows hard on Toland's naughtiest manipulation of poetic tropes, with the Muses as 'mistresses' (above, n. 65).

135 Not that he hesitated to apply it to one 'Guglielmus Veldenius' in a letter. Having undertaken to play Pliny to his addressee's Trajan ('Sim ego tibi Plinius (si hoc non altum sapere est) …') with a 'librum … qui Trajanum meum, inter maiora sui ornamenta, ad vivum effingat', he flatters him on his composition of a tragedy: 'in montibus enim, in silvis, in musaeo [cf. *Ep.* 1.9.6], tam familiaris tibi dia Minerva accurrit, ac in cubiculo vel in lecto domestica illa Diana, quam complecteris, quam exoscularis, quam in sinu foves' (quoted from Toland's draft, BL Add. MS 4465, fol. 53). Given his reference thereafter to a child Baron Dudley (surely Edward, 13th Baron Dudley from birth, 1704–31), Veldenius is presumably the boy's father, William Ward (d. 1720), or, more likely (he styles him 'Dominus'), grandfather, the Hon. William Ward (d. 1713) – making the letter more or less contemporary with *Epsom*.

136 The dismissive phrase is from Sullivan (1982) 32.

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rather than 'Solitude' (pp. 30–1) expressly rejects the fetishising of solitary rustic idyll in contemporary thought.[137] It also contrasts with Pliny's careful emphasis in both villa letters on undisturbed tranquillity.[138] Likewise, for all the implied celebration of country over city, the capital retains an important part: 'In two or three hours time I can be at London, whenever I will, at my ease' (p. 31). It is a distinctive note, whether measured against contemporary fantasies of rural escapism or against Pliny's satisfaction that his Laurentine villa is only a half a day's journey from Rome (*Ep.* 2.17.2): Pliny likes to be able to get away from town, Toland (also) to get back to it – an equal partnership underlined in the revised version, 'Thus I remove at pleasure, as I grow weary of the country or town, as I avoid a crowd, or seek company'.[139] Finally, he goes a step further still, defining Epsom not as an end in itself or even as one of two equals, but as a temporary respite, and a functional one: all the bookish wandering is 'yet still with a design of returning more entertaining to private conversation, or more serviceable to publick Society' (p. 35).[140]

Toland is not simply sinking into bucolic cliché.[141] Nor is he 'just' replaying Pliny, or Horace. For Horace, rural nostalgia may dominate but the city never loses its draw, a tension to which he merrily confesses as a charming weakness: *Romae Tibur amem, uentosus Tibure Romam.*[142] In the case of Pliny, engaged advocate and senator, the tension is stronger still, between duties at Rome and (usually rustic) devotion to self and studies. He too lets it stand for the most part unresolved,[143] without the Horatian self-depreciation; as Méthy puts it (2007: 439), this abstract contradiction finds only an

137 Cf. Daniel (1984) 158–62 and especially the letter to 'Mrs ***' (Toland (1726) vol. 2, 412–13), from perhaps 1711 or 1712, refuting another woman's claims for the superiority of solitude: among many such effusions (cf. n. 117), one might think of Mary Chudleigh's essay 'On solitude' (1710: 232–40).

138 A contrived effect: social life at both villas was far livelier than Pliny implies (cf. Gibson and Morello (2012) 207, 231–3; Whitton (2013) 238).

139 Toland (1726) vol. 2, 116, quoting in a note Ausonius *De herediolo* 29–32 (*... alternis rure uel urbe fruor*), another apt citation (from the poem on his estate near Bordeaux), which itself joins a long tradition (cf. Ter. *Eun.* 971–3). The rustic fantasy of the *Adeisidaemon* preface ends with thoughts of merry (seasonal) variety: 'seu ad focum ideo seu in Umbra, tam Epsomiae quam Londini' ('whether by the fire, then, or in the shade, in Epsom no less than in London').

140 As has been well observed (Daniel (1984) 160, Lurbe (1994) 133, Champion (2003) 240). The latter goal of 'returning more servicable' has good Roman pedigree, widely implicit in Cicero's letters and dialogues (e.g. *De or.* 2.22–3, with its famous scene of two great statesmen, Laelius and Scipio Africanus, on the beach). If Toland's Epsom sojourns reflected not just such high-mindedness but also the enforced *otium* of a man marginalised from politics (so Brown (2012) 107–8), like Cicero in his last years (cf. *De off.* 3.1–4) and the entire senatorial class of Pliny's day, he is as scrupulous as Pliny in avoiding comment.

141 This despite the assemblage of clichés in a page of notes headed 'Epsom' (BL Add. MS 4465, fol. 69b; cf. Clark (1960) 34). There 'retirement' is already prominent ('there must be intervals of retirement ... there must be a pause from noise & show'), along with gestures to ancient ethics ('No disposition so fit to read Horace and Virgil, as that in which they [w]rote, retirement', 'sallads, &c were the dishes on the table of Epicurus'), but there are no specific references – and no Pliny. Clearly Toland's plan had developed some way since these jottings.

142 *Ep.* 1.8.12 'when at Rome I love Tibur, when at Tibur – fickle as the breeze – I love Rome'. Cf. *Sat.* 2.7.28–9 with Harrison (2007b) 327.

143 See however *Ep.* 8.9 (the paradoxical lesson of *studia*, that *studia* should come second to *negotia*), included in Toland's anthology (above, Section 1), and cf. Hoffer (1999) 112 on *Ep.* 1.9.

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unstated, practical resolution, in the varied life on display in the *Epistles*. How far Toland's liking for city as well as country reflects his own political engagements and frustrations (witness the 'digression') is another question – one which for now, like him (and Pliny), I deflect.

5. Horace and Pliny, *via* Toland

The *Description of Epsom* turns out to be a unique creative response to Pliny's villa letters, reworking structure, details and ethos. But Toland's engagement goes far beyond the topographical: as the *Description* reaches its climax, this 'happy man' grants us a striking glimpse of his Plinian self jotting on the hunt. As we read on (or back) to the translations, Toland's fusion with his subject continues: where Pliny spent his leisured villa days writing *Epistles*, Toland devoted his Epsom *otium* to translating them. The collections that resulted, like all anthologies, have as much to tell about Toland as about Pliny. But these translations, and the *Description of Epsom*, also reveal a good deal about their original. Toland's response, I suggest, is not just a peculiar episode in Pliny's reception, but can also make a significant contribution to a reading of the *Epistles* themselves.[144]

When Toland combines Horace and Pliny, I have said, he creates a striking effect. But how contingent is that effect? Is Toland Horatianising the *Epistles*, or is he revealing a side to them which recent readers have tended to forget? Let us glance again at the four letters that Toland translates in the appendix to *Epsom*. All soon start to look, to varying degrees, Horatian. *Epistles* 1.3, asking Caninius Rufus how he is spending his time at Comum and urging him to devote himself to literature, bears more than a passing resemblance to the scenario of Horace *Epistles* 1.4, asking Tibullus what he is doing at Pedum, and urging devotion to philosophy and study of the self.[145] That same poem seems to intrude in Toland's version of *Ep.* 7.26, with its curiously 'sleek and plump' man; for it is there that Horace famously styles himself *pinguem et nitidum bene curata cute* … | … *Epicuri de grege porcum* ('plump and gleaming, my hide well-groomed, … a pig from Epicurus' drove', *Ep.* 1.4.15–16). As we saw, Toland has distorted Pliny's syntax here, and I do not press a claim that Pliny, for his part, is alluding to Horace.[146] On the other hand, we can hardly exclude the possibility that the reflex Toland (perhaps) perceived is no mere readerly quirk. Certainly the soft point remains, that *Ep.* 7.26, Pliny's most extreme endorsement of the easy life and of self-contemplation, free of the *negotia* that

144 Although my agenda is historicist, I mean to invoke at least an element of 'dialogic' reception in the spirit of Martindale (1993).

145 That Caninius is also a poet becomes explicit in *Ep.* 8.4 (his panegyrical poem on Trajan's Dacian war). More recent readers have also observed intertextuality, both thematic and linguistic, with Horace's numerologically apt *Epistles* 1.3 (Guillemin (1929) 119–20; Marchesi (2008) 33–6).

146 The textual 'hook' would be *pinguis*. On Pliny's idiosyncratic use of this term cf. Hoffer (1999) 39–40; Méthy (2007) 366–9; *TLL* x.1 2173.65–6.

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loom so large in the *Epistles* as a whole, and even of the *studia* that dominate his life of retreat, is one of his most Horatian in ethos.

In *Ep.* 2.8 Toland has picked out another of Pliny's strongest laments over *negotia*. Yearning for the country, he figures his duties at Rome as slavery: *hos artissimos laqueos … tot nexibus, tot quasi catenis* (*Ep.* 2.8.2–3 'these intolerable bonds … so many cords and chains', JT). The language here sounds Senecan, and the imagery goes back at least to Cicero; but again Pliny shares it with Horace: in the *uiuo et regno* passage that supplies *Epsom*'s epigraph, Horace talks of escaping the city like a 'runaway slave'.[147] Most Horatian of all, though, is *Ep.* 1.9, as Pliny laments the futile hurry of life at Rome and dreams of his happy Laurentine retreat. Wieland saw it at once:

> Ein vortreflicher Commentar über diese Verse des Horaz, deren Wahrheit und schöner Ausdruck sie immer so sehr empfohlen hat:
>
> *O rus, quando te aspiciam, quandoque licebit*
> *Nunc ueterum libris, nunc somno et inertibus horis*
> *Ducere sollicitae iucunda obliuia uitae?*[148]

Wieland quotes from *Satires* 2.6, an early development of the city/country theme that proves so central in Horace's first book of *Epistles*. Horace there laments the 'hundred occupations' that come flying at you in the city, listing a few; between them 'the day is lost', while you ask in vain, *o rus, quando ego te aspiciam …*?[149] This and further prayers give way to a fantasy scene of relaxed rural conversation, free from envy and devoted to philosophy,[150] before the parable of the town mouse and country mouse gets underway. Pliny's letter is rodent-free, but the similarities with Horace are substantial: he lists some of the obligations one fulfils on any given day in Rome, then remarks that, though they seem important one by one, cumulatively 'they must appear to be pure losing of time'.[151] This thought strikes him especially when he is at Laurentum, where he enjoys a life of calm retreat, free of 'malicious discourses' and devoted to himself and his books.[152] Of course there are differences, most obviously the double shift from convivial philosophising to solitary

147 *Ep.* 1.10.10 *fugitiuus*. For Seneca and Cicero see Whitton (2013) 140.

148 Wieland (1774/5): 'A splendid commentary on those verses of Horace whose truth and beautiful expression has always recommended them so strongly: "O countryside, when shall I behold you? When shall I be allowed, now with the books of the ancients, now with sleep and lazy hours, to drink down sweet forgetfulness of anxious life?"' (*Sat.* 2.6.60–2). The received text is (and was) *quando ego te aspiciam*. On Wieland's intimacy with Horace's hexameter poetry (not restricted to his translations of the 1780s), see e.g. Fuhrmann (1986) 1082–9.

149 Quotations from *Sat.* 2.6.33 *negotia centum … 59 perditur … lux*. Horace reprises the first complaint in *Ep.* 2.2.65–80.

150 *Sat.* 2.6.70–6. Lefèvre (2009) 236 hears a Plinian echo of the same scene in *Ep.* 6.31.13. His verbal case is overstated ('Wer dächte bei der Verbindung von *cena*, *nox* and *sermo* nicht an Horaz' Satire 2, 6 …?'), but the idyllic ethos – here at dinner *chez* Trajan – perhaps bears comparison.

151 *Ep.* 1.3.3 *inania uidentur* (JT, whose translation – not, I suspect, accidentally – conspires with my implication that Horace's *perditur … lux* is in view).

152 *Ep.* 1.3.5 *sinistris sermonibus*.

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studia.[153] Nor is there obviously 'allusive' language.[154] But Wieland was surely right, and I suspect Toland saw it too: both the run of the letter and its ethos show Pliny in particularly Horatian guise.

I do not propose to pursue Toland similarly through his 1712 anthology, but for two small observations. One is his mistake with the addressee of Pliny's first letter: 'Septicius' to us, 'Septitius' to editors three hundred years ago, but 'Septimius' in Toland's translation. Carelessness, no doubt, but also perhaps a Freudian slip: this rare name (nowhere in Pliny) is associated above all with *Odes* 2.6, another memorable paean to rustic bliss.[155] My second remark concerns one letter Toland did not include. *Ep.* 7.3 looks at first sight like a counterweight to Pliny's theme of rustic nostalgia, as he taxes the aptly named Praesens with lingering too long in southern Italy. But Pliny quickly lets the nostalgia seep in, as rebukes slide into envy:

> *quousque regnabis? quousque uigilabis cum uoles, dormies quamdiu uoles? quousque calcei nusquam, toga feriata, liber totus dies? tempus est te reuisere molestias nostras* . . .
>
> How long will you be king? How long will you stay up when you please, sleep as long as you please? How long will your formal shoes be out of sight, your dress casual, your whole day free? It's high time you paid a visit to our life of troubles . . . (*Ep.* 7.3.2)

With Horace fresh in the mind, can we miss the echo, in *quousque regnabis*, of that motto *uiuo et regno*?[156]

Toland omitted this letter, whether by accident or design. But I include it to illustrate how reading Pliny with him can teach us something not just about Toland, but also about the *Epistles* – to recognise the degree to which Horatian ethics are moulded into this self-portrait of a senator.[157] How far we owe this effect to the tint of Toland's spectacles, or to the fact that this was a generation steeped in Horace, is debatable. What is certain is that modern scholarship, tuned above all to Pliny's much vaunted emulation of Cicero,[158] has tended to neglect other epistolary forebears – not least Horace.[159] Pliny

153 Reflecting a broad change of emphasis in the *Epistles* at large (a similar contrast, in part, between Tibullus and Caninius above). Toland integrates both aspects into his own portrait.

154 Reason enough for Trisoglio (1973) vol. 1, 204–5 and Méthy (2007) 336–7 to slap down Casaceli (1971) 8–10, a rare modern suggestion that *Ep.* 1.9 imitates *Sat.* 2.6.

155 *Odes* 2.6 is signalled as a source in the *New description* (above, n. 116).

156 Praesens' relaxed dress finds echoes in Pliny on his Etruscan estate (5.6.45 *nulla necessitas togae*); cf. also *Epsom*, p. 15, contrasting the 'winter suit at London' and the 'gayer easier habit worn in the country'. For the lazy mornings compare (and contrast) Hor. *Sat.* 1.6.119–22 (unusual lie-ins at Rome) and Pliny *Ep.* 9.36.1–2 (early-morning pillow meditations).

157 Another good candidate is *Ep.* 2.2: brief comments in Marchesi (2008) 89, 94; Whitton (2013) 88.

158 So, for instance, the *regnabis* of *Ep.* 7.3.2 has been compared to Cic. *De off.* 1.69–70 (Bütler (1970) 44 n.13; Marchesi (2008) 216 n. 33; Gibson and Morello (2012) 169–70), a passage which one might (also) see as underlying Horace's own. For the extensive bibliography on Pliny's Ciceronian self-modelling, see Whitton (2013) 2.

159 Another is Ovid, whose role as a structural model (signalled by a mooted intertext in *Ep.* 1.1) has become a new focus of attention (Marchesi (2008) 20–2, Gibson (forthcoming)). For Seneca see e.g. Whitton (2013) 3 (with

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does not explicitly signal a debt to him, or flaunt allusions, making it hard to demonstrate intertextuality in terms of certifiable linguistic reflexes. A preference for 'evidence' of that sort is the natural corollary of any historicist agenda, protecting our authors (as we might see it) from arbitrary or anachronistic interpretation. But the modern insistence on 'hard' allusion risks overlooking the fuzzier intertextuality of ideas and concepts that could seem so natural to readers like Wieland and Toland – one reason, perhaps, why no book, or even an article, has yet tried to set Pliny in dialogue with Horace.[160] Of course, as my footnotes show, Horace has featured from time to time in recent work on Pliny, but scarcely beyond passing comments. The degree to which Toland, a different reader in a different age, drew out the Horatian in the *Epistles*, is (I suggest) strong reason to suppose that such comments reflect more than scholarly fancy, and a prompt to clearer recognition of Horace's significance not just for Toland's self-portraiture, but for Pliny's too.

'As like the original as may be' (*Epsom*, p. 1). This brief sojourn in Surrey has done partial justice at best to Toland's *Description*, and barely opened the door to Pliny's Horatianism. Still, I hope it has shed some fresh light on the rich texture of *Epsom*, on villas in the age of manners, and above all on Toland's most important 'original' – the epistolary Pliny himself.

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references), 219. These influences are not, of course, exclusive: see e.g. Gibson and Morello (2012) 172–6 on Senecan elements in *Ep.* 1.9 (cf. also *Ep.* 1.9.5 ~ Sen. *BV* 20.3).

160 The most concerted effort was the few pages of Guillemin (1929) 119–22, suggestions generally dismissed or ignored in Sherwin-White's commentary (1966: 16–17, 245, 468). Sherwin-White himself draws a single comparison (*Ep.* 9.26.2 ~ Hor. *Ep.* 2.1.210–1), familiar since Buchner (1644) 212–13. For further sporadic remarks see Whitton (2013) 3–4 and index s.v. 'Horace'.

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