Creating the Elsewhere: Virtual Reality in the Ancient Roman World

Dissertation

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Abstract

At first glance the ancient world may seem an odd place to study concepts of virtuality, but I believe that looking at the art and architecture of the ancient Romans through the modern lens of the virtual can provide surprising insights into how these spaces were viewed, experienced, and understood by their ancient users and may elucidate a further factor in the development of Roman painting beyond mere changes in aesthetic taste. Using a reexamined definition of the “virtual” that divorces it from a reliance on the digital and modern technology, I will investigate how ancient spaces were used to create environments that were intended to transport the viewer to another often distant or fantastic place, to a virtual “elsewhere.”

In explaining how these Roman spaces worked to effect such “transportation” through their architectural forms and decorative schemata, I have had recourse to two primary theoretical frameworks. The first is the burgeoning sub-field of cognitive linguistics known as Text-world Theory, which attempts to provide an understanding of how humans universally process discourse through the creation of mental “worlds” into which they project themselves, a projection which I believe forms the basis of virtual experience.

The second is the work of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, in particular his discussion of framing in his first book on cinema, and his idea of the hors-champ or the
out-of-field, that which is outside of any bounding frame. For Deleuze, as a set of
elements becomes ever more bounded and closed the out-of-field can imbue it with a
certain metaphysical duration, with what he terms a fourth dimension of “time” and a
fifth of “spirit.” Thus a (nearly) closed set acquires a certain trans-spatial existence. My
dissertation research suggests that the architecture and decorative programs of many
Roman houses created just such not-quite-closed sets, and that as a result they appealed
to the viewer’s “spirit,” engaging him in imagination of a “more radical elsewhere.”
Dedication

Dedicated to my family, old and new.
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge my advisor, Dr. Mark Fullerton, and also Dr. Timothy McNiven for their guidance and support.
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All photographs have been taken by the author unless otherwise noted.
Chapter 1: [Re]defining the Virtual

The first time I became aware of the term "virtual reality,” commonly abbreviated VR, must have been during the Christmas of 1995. I was eight years old at the time, and upon unwrapping my presents a wondrous device stood before me. From my mid-90s perspective it was quite futuristic looking, a bright red headset on a wire stand that would have seemed at home on the bridge of a space ship, the Nintendo Virtual Boy gaming console. Putting my face into the foam rubber goggles of the device I was taken from my living room and plunged into other more magical places. The stark red and black screen was my entire world now, the tactile sensation of holding the game controller in my hands the only link to the one that I had left behind. Through this machine I could not only leave the real world, but also my real-world self, slipping into new identities ranging from a pudgy mustachioed plumber to a combatant in a robot boxing tournament. While the Virtual Boy console was a monumental commercial failure (due in part, perhaps, because of its propensity to induce migraine headaches after prolonged play), it did serve to further cement in my mind and the minds of many the connection between a virtual experience and the use of electronic technology.

My own experience, in this regard, is far from unique. From the holodecks of the Star Trek fictional universe to the goggles and gloves of 1980's interactive sensory technology, the virtual environment is indelibly linked in the popular consciousness to
technology, to the electrical and the digital (particularly to advanced computers), that is, to products of the modern age. With the looming large scale introduction of products like Google Glass that promise to even more seamlessly combine the real world with the electronic one, this association is poised to become ever more entrenched.

However, this view of the virtual is woefully incomplete and short sighted. The virtual possesses a much broader manner of production and a much deeper chronological scope, extending back to the ancient world of the Greeks and Romans, and even earlier, to the dawn of man itself. While at first glance the ancient world may seem an odd place to investigate concepts of virtuality, nevertheless, for as long as the human mind has existed, the potential to create the virtual has existed along side it. The focus on technology has led to a fundamental misunderstanding of the virtual and its true nature. As I will demonstrate, that which is most important is not the "virtual object" itself, but the mental processes that it engenders. As Howard Rheingold notes, "At the heart of VR is an experience—the experience of being in a virtual world or a remote location—and the problems inherent in creating artificial experiences are older than computers."1

I believe that looking at the architectural spaces of the ancient Romans through the modern lens of the virtual can provide new and key insights into how these spaces were viewed, understood, and experienced by their ancient users. Such theoretical analyses are not yet common in scholarship focused on ancient art, which is in many ways still strongly wedded to the material culture and literature studies of the fields of archaeology and classical philology from which it largely developed. To accomplish this examination, however, the common definition of the “virtual” must be reexamined and

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modified from its popular connotations and common modern definitions.

It is not my purpose to give an exhaustive history of the evolution of the concept of the virtual and all examples of the myriad ways the concept has been used, but nonetheless a brief discussion of some of the major ideas that have been offered will be necessary to demonstrate how the current discussion of virtual reality is still incomplete and in a way, misguided, or at the very least intensely focused on that which is least important, especially when considering a broader usage of the virtual that can encompass the art and architecture of the ancient world.

*The Development of the Virtual*

The word virtual derives from the Latin *virtus*, which signifies virtue, strength, power, or potency. *Virtus* itself is derived from the Latin *vir*, meaning man, associating the power and potency of *virtus* to that of the strength and power of men and the manly sphere. Thus a virtual affect was one that possessed the masculine aspect of agency and causation; it affects something. The gendered moral implications of the term need not concern us here, but from this earliest of derivations we already have a key nugget.

This sense of *virtus* is readily apparent in the earliest surviving expression of the virtual, which can be found in the writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle uses the equivalent Greek term *dynamis*, which likewise in common usage means strength, power, and ability. In Aristotle's more technical discussion, he uses *dynamis* in two ways. First, in following the common usage, he defines the term as a "causal power," that is, a force that can create a change in a
substance. Second, he uses it in what we can consider a "virtual" sense, by expressing it as a type of potentiality. Aristotle writes:

"Actuality" means the presence of the thing, not in the sense which we mean by "potentially." We say that a thing is present potentially as Hermes is present in the wood, or the half-line in the whole, because it can be separated from it; and as we call even a man who is not studying "a scholar" if he is capable of studying.\(^2\)

Thus, according to Aristotle, the virtual is something that has the “potential” to become something else which it currently is not, a type of latent being. Potentiality itself, according to Aristotle, cannot be directly defined, but only understood through examples and analogy, such as comparing a block of virgin uncarved wood to a finished statue of the god Hermes produced from it.

While many scholars have read Aristotle's potentiality not as a separate definition of *dynamis*, but rather as a way for Aristotle to distinguish between the active and passive causal powers of substances, Charlotte Witt has rejected this, in her words, “unitarian” reading of *Metaphysics* book IX. Witt instead sees potentiality not merely as a passive causal power, but as a distinct “way of being.”\(^3\) When something exists potentially, it exists entirely for the sake of its counterpart that exists actually. For instance, as Witt explains, the faculty of sight (which exists potentially when not in use) exists entirely for the sake of the act of seeing. It neither acts upon nor is acted upon by any other substance or object; its only purpose is to become an active existence.\(^4\) Accepting this view and expanding it to our realm of the virtual, a virtual object exists for the very purpose of becoming what it represents in actuality (or at least as near enough as is

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\(^4\) Witt, 57-8.
This might at first not seem to change much in the grand scheme of things, but does in fact move us to a very different understanding of the virtual. If the virtual exists for the sake of its own actualization, in a teleological relationship irrespective of any activating conditions (or dispositions) of it, then the specific dispositional and descriptive features of an object or experience to be experienced virtually are entirely irrelevant. A virtual object could possess any configuration of visual elements, material, presentation, etc. The conditions of the virtual power could be anything as long as the intended experience, the actualization of the virtual, is achieved. This necessarily frees us from the simple consideration of what a virtual object looks like, or the attributes or qualities it must possess. In thinking about the virtual, most have been concerned with the attributes that can evoke this potency, rather than the potency itself. However, these attributes can never truly be universal. Rather, more usefully, an analysis of the virtual should move to what is the one constant of all virtual experiences, the human observer. How a viewer comes to understand and perceive the virtual must be the heart of the matter, in particular the mental processes of understanding themselves.

This Aristotelian line of thinking was taken up again in more recent times by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze. Though he never in fact uses the term "potentiality," Deleuze nonetheless formulates a very similar sentiment in his definition. For Deleuze, the virtual is not the opposite of the real, but the opposite of the actual, that is, the "here and now." What is opposite the real is rather the "possible," which is a backward projection of its real counterpart.5 The difference between the virtual and the possible is

one of limitation versus difference and creation. When a possible becomes realized it necessarily denies the realization of other possibilities. When a virtual is actualized, made present in the here and now, it does so not by preventing other virtualities from also actualizing, but by differentiating and distinguishing itself in actualization from its preceding virtual. It must be necessarily different in order to be its own discreet entity untethered to its virtual conception. Furthermore, not only is a virtual actualized by differentiating itself, it is in fact forced to do so, “to create its lines of differentiation in order to be actualized.”

Taking Aristotle and Deleuze's potentiality as our first definition of the virtual, we can see where lies the primary difference between this more ancient conception of the virtual and how most have come to define the term in more modern times. In the model of Aristotle and Deleuze, while a virtual object possesses the potential to change itself into some other form, it is at present not that thing; it is still its original unmodified self. When a ball, for example, sits on shelf, it possesses a potential energy based on that which would be released were it to fall from its perch; but it has not fallen, and might never do so. This energy does not properly exist. Furthermore, an observer would never perceive the ball to be falling and so be fooled into thinking it was doing so. To use again Aristotle's own example, a block of wood might be a statue of the god Hermes potentially, or as Witt would interpret it, the wood and the statue represent different ways of being, but still in current actuality it is a block of wood and possesses all the characteristics of such, not to be mistaken for a Hermes by any observer.

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6 Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 97.
Conversely, in the popular modern understanding of a virtual object, it is, at its most basic level, simply something that seems to be that which it is not. It revolves in some way around getting a viewer to perceive something that he is not, truly, perceiving; it is all about a type of deception. A holographic image of an apple, for instance, has no relation to its real-world referent; the one does not exist "for the sake" of the other. It is not simply a different way of being, but is composed of an entirely different "substance."

Philosopher Michael Heim perhaps best summed up the modern definition of the virtual, claiming that it is, “A philosophical term meaning 'not actually but just as if'.

This deceptively simple explanation possess an aspect that will become important for my own investigation in that it shifts the essence of the virtual, as did Witt's interpretation of Aristotle, away from the object itself and instead onto the observer. For a virtual object to be “just as if” it must create the effect of the presence of its actual counterpart, and it is the perception of this effect that is the key.

Of course, this sense of the virtual is not in and of itself new. Heim's definition can be seen to follow in spirit that of C. S. Pierce from the turn of the twentieth-century. Indeed, Heim himself sees the sense of his definition connected by a long and continuous thread all the way back to the work of the thirteenth-century philosopher John Duns Scotus. However, this understanding has been radically enhanced with the development and increasing ubiquity of technology during the 20th-century. This line of thinking has been more recently picked up again by scholar Anne Friedberg.

In her book, The Virtual Window, Friedberg defines the virtual in much the same

way as Heim, clarifying it as being something that is “functionally or effectively but not formally of its kind.” In this way, she divorces the concept of the virtual from the digital, arguing against the notion that the virtual is to be seen only as a product of the modern age and digital technology. She sees the antecedent of the modern virtual in such things as perspectival painting and the use of a mediating screen or window in the creation and composition of such works. For Friedberg, the evolution of modern digital technology has merely led to the increased mobility and ubiquity of the virtual experience ("a ubiquitous portal—a 'wormhole'—to past and futures"), but not a change in its fundamental nature. Indeed, even as the new "windows" of television and computer screens unbind a viewer's perspective through their multiplicity and create new modes of viewing, because their design is still firmly rooted in the tradition of the familiar framed rectangle, a viewer could be forgiven for thinking that he is still engaged in a traditional type of viewing.

Two Aspects of the Modern Virtual: Aspect 1, Equivalence of Appearance

These basic "just as if" definitions may be further separated into two primary ideas: these can be broadly summed up simply as “equivalent appearance” and “equivalence of function.” The former concept was perhaps best expressed by philosopher and computer theorist Theodore Nelson, who is often credited with first using the term virtuality in its modern, computer-driven signification. Defining the virtual, he writes:

10 Ibid., 242.
By the virtuality of a thing I mean the seeming of it, as distinct from its more concrete "reality," which may not be important. ... I use the term "virtual" in its traditional sense, an opposite of "real". The reality of a movie includes how the scenery was painted and where the actors were repositioned between shots, but who cares? The virtuality of a movie is what seems to be in it. Thus, the artificiality of a movie production, the fact that it is comprised of artificial sets peopled with actors following a script, is irrelevant as long as it presents the illusion of reality. Likewise, a visitor to the Universal Studios theme park in Orlando, Florida will be greeted by massive backdrop structures of the buildings of New York City. Even though they are only flat facades, through their decoration and manipulation of scale a viewer is presented with a convincing experience of the city's famous skyline; the seeming to be is what counts.

Aristotle had also expressed in the *De Anima* a similar sentiment in his description of the difference between an animate and inanimate object. He explains, “...each is in reality the thing capable of performing its function, such as an eye when it sees, while the one not capable [of performing its function] is homonymously [that thing] such as one dead or one made of stone.”

It is this equivalence of appearance that most people will first think of when conceptualizing virtual reality and it has formed the basis for much of the current art historical scholarship relating to the virtual. David Summers, in his influential book *Real Spaces* devotes over 100 pages to a discussion of the virtual, which is in his mind inexorably linked to the visual and to representation of the visual on a surface, such as a

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painting does. He writes:

Modelling is crucial; as representations of the optical and physical, virtual spatial models are representations of the potentially measurable, which is, however, itself represented as ratio. In the same way that a temple or plaza may be modelled in real space, as social space in miniature, spaces and times under human vision may be modelled in virtual space, but with vastly different implications.¹⁴

Certainly the essence of this first modern definition, as elegantly referenced in Nelson's explanation, resides at the heart of what is perhaps the most utilized instance of the virtual at present, that of the movies, and especially of modern IMAX theaters, and in particular those that utilize a domed shape such as at the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh. In such a theater, not only are mimetic images projected onto a screen in front of a viewer, but also projected around him. His entire field of vision, or nearly so, is taken up by the movie screen, thereby giving the impression that the objects viewed in the projected image are actually before his very eyes and that he occupies the same space as they do. So convincing is this illusion that such images can actually induce motion sickness in some viewers (indeed, the realistic sense of motion that can be achieved is one of the primary elements of the “Soarin” ride at Walt Disney World's Epcot Center). The return of improved 3D technology to the movie-going experience further enhances the immersive effect by increasing the perception of depth in the projected image and thereby lessening the presence of the surface of the mediating movie screen.

Of course, such a desire for illusion predates motion pictures. Functioning in principle in the same manner as a modern IMAX were the elaborate painted panoramas that captivated audiences throughout Europe and America during the 19th-century.

Bernard Comment goes so far as to call these grandiose structures the “signature” of that century. First patented by Robert Barker in 1787, panoramas (coming from Greek meaning “see all”) consisted of monumental canvas paintings of landscapes or famous cities, displayed in a circular rotunda to enclose a viewer and give him the impression of actually looking out upon the depicted scene, “an enclosed area open to a representation free of all worldly restrictions.”\(^{15}\) Indeed, some scholars such as Oliver Grau in his book *Virtual Art*, see the immersion caused by the closing in and “hermetically sealing” of the viewer within the virtual experience to be paramount in creating a transportative environment, blurring the distinction between the virtual and real worlds, an issue to which we will return in chapter 5.\(^{16}\)

It is this visual aspect that has the greatest hold on the popular conceptions of virtual reality. It is easy enough to understand why this is so, as the sense of vision is, for most people, the most dominant of the five human senses. It is the most powerful and immediate for interacting with the world in our daily lives and the one that is relied upon most heavily in most circumstances. However, this focus on appearance that so often dominates notions of the virtual and virtual reality unfairly forces the discussion too far into the domain of the optical.

The folly of limiting the virtual to the visual can be easily seen when one stops to consider the following question: can a blind man experience the virtual? The answer, surely, is an emphatic yes, though his virtual would not, obviously, be visually based. If we placed our blind friend into a room and into this room, for example, piped recorded


sounds of cows bellowing and the scent of fresh manure and placed within it a fan to create simulated outdoor breezes, the blind man would be easily able to imagine himself on a farm, though his true surroundings could be far from it. The experience is “just as if” he were standing on a farm, and thus, according to our simple definition, he is experiencing the place virtually, though not optically. Defining the virtual in terms of only that which can be perceived visually is much too limiting and does a disservice to the broader applicability of the concept.

The non-necessity of vision in creating an experience of the virtual raises very interesting possibilities. Let us continue with our blind man for a moment. What were the triggers for his transportative experience?— the sound of cows and the smell of manure. Both things truly exist in his environment but neither are what one would generally call a “thing,” that is, something with an easily definable materiality (or, at least, an easily perceivable materiality; sound and smell are, after all, created through the interaction of physical particles, but such particles are usually so far below a human's awareness as to not in practice exist). In this example, then there is not a “virtual object.” Thus, taken to its next logical step, the "virtual" and powerful feelings of transportation may even be engendered through external triggers of an entirely non-representational kind.

Naturally, the idea of non-visual virtual triggers is also nothing new. The development of 19th-century panoramas, to return to our earlier example, also incorporated other sensory elements into their presentations for feelings of maximum immersion. The main criticism of early panoramas was in fact the lack of engagement of
senses other than sight.\textsuperscript{17} In order to blur the boundary between the space of a viewer and the painted canvas screen, physical landscape features would be installed. These included replacing the canopy covering the panorama pavilion with a shady tree and adding shrubs, rocks, and earth to the ground in front of the painted canvas to blur the transition into its fictive landscape. The sense of smell was also accommodated. The 1900 maritime panorama of Hugo d'Alesi, \textit{Mareorama}, perfumed the air by filtering it through algae to enhance the experience of being near the sea.\textsuperscript{18}

The 1950s saw the invention of what might be seen as the spiritual successor of the panorama in Morton Heilig's Sensorama machine, a portmanteau term of "sensory" and "panorama." This curious device, resembling an oversize version of later arcade video game machines, allowed a user to experience the sensation of a motorcycle ride through the city of Berlin. A user would place his head into a viewing box while grasping a set of handlebars. A video of driving through the city would be projected in front of him while his seat would vibrate to simulate motion over uneven terrain and the sounds of the engine rang out.\textsuperscript{19} Thus the senses of touch, hearing, and vision were utilized for the transporative experience. Furthermore, Sensorama machines that survive to the present day have also gained the new ability to transport not only to another place, but also another time. A modern-day user, such as Howard Rheingold relates of his experience in 1990,\textsuperscript{20} sitting in the Sensorama would still experience the same ride through 1950s Berlin, seeing the streets of the city and those others who occupied them as they appeared at that time, turning the Sensorama into a time machine of sorts and

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{17} Comment, 105. \\
\footnotetext{18} Ibid., 104. \\
\footnotetext{19} Rheingold, 49-50. \\
\footnotetext{20} Ibid. 50-51. \\
\end{footnotes}
demonstrating the nearly boundless types of transportation that may be affected by the virtual.

A perfect example of the "mixed media" panorama updated for contemporary audiences may be found at the Universal Studios theme park in Orlando, Florida with their Terminator 2 3D show. This attraction mixes live stage actors with a 3D film projected on an IMAX-like screen. At one point the live actors drive a motorcycle off the stage and literally through the movie screen, transitioning seamlessly into their on-screen counterparts. Like the branches and rocks of the panoramas, this works to blur the line between a viewer's real space and the fictive space of the illusion. The other senses are also engaged for maximum immersion. The scent of gunpowder is wafted into the auditorium when guns are fired throughout the show. The seats of the auditorium are designed to spray water at spectators at appropriate moments to coordinate with what is happening on screen and even move and jolt the viewer, giving him the tactile feeling of experiencing explosions in battle.

Despite being linked to the "equivalent appearance" tack of virtuality, Nelson is not nearly as tied down to this usage of the visual as might first be thought. He summarizes his definition of the virtual, writing:

A 'virtuality,' then, is a structure of seeming—the conceptual feel of what is created. What conceptual environment are you in? It is this environment, and its response qualities and feel, that matter—not the irrelevant 'reality' of implementation details. And to create this seeming, as an integrated whole, is the true task of designing and implementing the virtuality. This is as true for a movie as for a word processor.\(^{21}\)

Here again we find the most important aspect of the virtual is the viewer's experience.

\(^{21}\) Nelson, 57.
The individual elements that create the experience can be anything. That a replication of sensory input has been the most commonly implemented strategy for creating a virtual world is not surprising.

This stimulation of the senses in a manner analogous to what is received in daily experience is certainly the easiest or at least most straight-forward way of creating the sense of being in another place. However, this rather analog approach does have its limitations. After all, how far can replication go before the replica is for all practical purposes the very thing it is trying to simulate? One cannot help but think of Jorge Luis Borges's short story *Of Exactitude in Science*, in which he describes a perfectly accurate but perfectly useless 1:1 scale map that records every detail of a country by covering the entirety of the realm its purports to map.\(^2\) To think of the production of the virtual only in this manner is entirely too limiting and, ultimately, unproductive. To consider the virtual further an important question needs to be raised: does there in fact need to be an outside stimulus at all for there to be a virtual effect or experience?

Consider, for example, something that a great number of people will have experienced as children—an imaginary friend. Such a being will be treated for all intents and purposes in the actions of a child as a real and manifest person. The child will speak with it, play with it, and engage with it in all the same manners that he would a human playmate, but the imaginary friend has no definable physicality. It has not even any illusory physicality as might be encountered in an illusionistic painting or a hologram, where three-dimensionality is perceived in a two-dimensional object. It engages none of

The body's other senses either; it has no smell, makes no sounds, and cannot be tasted or touched. A child's imaginary friend exists entirely and only within the confines of the mind of the child.

The imaginary friend is a referent without an image. It is a pure thought construction cobbled from the child's experiences with real playmates and often with fantastical elements drawn from myriad sources. Nonetheless, this friend fulfills Friedberg's definition of the virtual object; while it is not formally equivalent to a flesh and blood friend, having no physical presence, it is still functionally equivalent, performing all of the same functions as a human playmate. An imaginary friend may also be interacted with by persons other than the child that generated it. A parent may play along, for example, with the fantasy of the imaginary friend while playing with the child, even engaging with it in conversation. The parent may not (and probably does not) believe in the actual existence of the friend, but this is irrelevant. The effect is the same, but in this case, the virtuality of the imaginary friend is not reliant on illusion or mimicry.

*Two Aspects of the Modern Virtual: Aspect 2, Equivalence of Function*

This example neatly transitions us into the second primary definition of the modern virtual, equivalence of function. This sense of the virtual was expounded most clearly by Paul Levinson, according to whom the key to the virtual lies in the transferability of information structures. A virtual object, then, possesses the informational essence of something without also possessing the same physical structure or visual elements. For example, as Levinson illustrates, a book that records in great
detail the operations of a school classroom has had the basic information structure of that classroom transplanted into it. Thus, a reader can, in a way, experience the reality of the classroom through the written text.23

This transplantation of the information structures reached a higher level with the development of the electronic technologies such as the computer and especially the internet. With technologies like these, information is no longer "frozen," but can be changed and recombined; it can be interacted with in an immediate and productive way.24

Compare the aforementioned book describing a classroom with a modern-day online college course. The online course permits all the same interactions that could be had in its physical counterpart; discussion between teacher and pupils, the administering of exams, etc. It fulfills the same function as the traditional classroom without the materiality or visual features of the physical version. Similarly, another example would be the internet chat room. While having none of the physical presence of a conference room, it accomplishes the same function—facilitating the dialogue of different human participants. The essence of what such a space is intended to accomplish remains, though it is now mediated through computer screens and inputted text rather than face-to-face spoken communication and conference tables.

Some of the flavor of this aspect of the virtual is evident in Michael Heim's definition as well. To clarify his definition he gives the example of virtual memory in a computer which functions just as memory storage space on a hard drive, but without needing the actual hardware or being constrained by its usual physical limitations.25

24 Ibid., 364.
25 Heim, 160.
Heim explains (though still enamored with a replication of features), "Virtual space—as opposed to bodily space—contains the informational equivalent of things. Virtual space makes us feel as if we were dealing directly with physical or natural realities."  

This equivalence of function is not only encountered in such limited contexts as virtual classrooms or chat-rooms, but can include more expansive and immersive worlds. A particularly relevant example is the development of a type of computer game known as a MUD, a Multi-User Dungeon (or Multi-User Domain). First created in the early computer world of the 1980s, MUDs created a virtual world (first and most commonly a fantasy medieval setting) with which players could engage. Through simple text descriptions and text-based input commands, a player could explore the game world and interact with other players connected through the internet, acting out an improvised fictional narrative through collective imagination.

MUD's, then, draw upon the tradition of pen-and-paper tabletop role playing games (RPGs) like Dungeons and Dragons, which also call upon players to create worlds of play through acts of collective imagination, driven and organized by a common set of game rules and conventions. Within these game worlds players are free to take on roles and personalities that can differ markedly from their “real world” counterparts, performing actions that would often times be undoable in the off-line world because of legality or taboos, and creating, as Sherry Turkle expresses, an “evocative” experience.

A 1997 study demonstrated that a majority of MUD users surveyed indicated feeling a

26 Heim, 132-3.
strong sense of presence or "being there" in the game world.  

Turkle explains, “Role-playing games can serve in this evocative capacity because they stand betwixt and between the unreal and the real; they are a game and something more.”

This “something more” is primarily wrapped up in this transformative agency acquired by a player and the potential for both internal and external exploration that such transformation creates. Indeed, the powers of agency and transformation, along with immersion, are, according to Janet Murray, the key aspects of virtual reality. Such a focus on transformation especially may again evoke the transformative quality of Aristotle's potentiality. Moreover, implicit in this exploration of identity through MUDs are the qualities of “difference, multiplicity, heterogeneity, and fragmentation,” qualities that evoke Deleuze's definition of the virtual in contrast to the possible. The contemporary equivalent of MUDs, Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPGs or simply MMOs) such as World of Warcraft continue this tradition, updating the old text-based interface with advanced computer graphics and more complicated and varied manners of control and interaction.

While this second definition of the virtual, concerned with function over all else, provides a useful tool for some of the more involved examples of the modern virtual, it is not, however, without certain problems of its own. It does provide a useful descriptive tool for considering the digital equivalents of analog institutions and objects. However, when stretched and taken beyond this realm in which it developed it begins to break

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29 John Towell and Elizabeth Towell. "Presence in Text-Based Networked Virtual Environments or 'MUDS.'"  
30 Turkle, 188.  
31 Murray, 97-182.  
32 Ibid., 185.  
33 Deleuze, Bergsonism, 96-7.
down in its universal applicability and thus in its usefulness as a universal description and
definition of the virtual and virtual reality.

Consider for a moment the lawn mower, an object that many people throughout
the world will have had experience using, especially cash poor American teenagers. Here
is a practical object that is defined and understood through its function, to cut blades of
grass planted in an open area for decorative effect. The loud hum of such machines may
add to the usual summertime suburban symphony, but most would be hard-pressed to
consider their lawn mower to be a "virtual" object.

However, such a machine shares its grass-cutting ability with another object, a
farm-yard goat. This animal through its constant grazing also shortens expanses of grass
quite well, and indeed herds of goats have been utilized for just this plant maintenance
function. Since a mechanical lawn mower co-opts the function of its natural predecessor
(it is “functionally, but not formally of its kind”), why is it then not to be considered a
“virtual” goat? This comparison is, admittedly, somewhat facetious, but, nonetheless,
demonstrates that functional equivalence cannot be a complete definition of the virtual.
Focusing on function alone continues to miss the true essence of the matter.

*The Inadequacy of the Current Definitions of the Virtual*

To further understand this true essence at the heart of a virtual experience,
consider what happens when a viewer looks at a photograph of a deceased loved one. As
one gazes at the image printed on the photograph, one can recall the attributes of the
person, height, weight, hair color, etc., and also personality traits. If the photo is of the
person at a particular event, a family Christmas gathering, say, the person's behaviors and actions at the time are also recalled. With enough concentration, it can seem as if the deceased is alive once more, so vivid is the recollection. It can seem as if the very soul of the person has been carried out from Hades by Orpheus rather than being merely a memory pulled from the recesses of the mind of the viewer. Thus, the photograph is not merely an image trying to fool the eye, to create a virtual experience through an equivalence of appearance, but is still a virtual image in the effect it creates.

Such an experience in photography was pointedly discussed by philosopher and literary theorist Roland Barthes in his seminal book on photography *Camera Lucida*. The evocative power of a photograph was, for Barthes, especially evident in one particular photograph that showed his mother as a young child, dubbed by Barthes the “Winter Garden Photograph” as it was taken in a greenhouse.\(^{34}\) In this photograph Barthes discovered what was for him an emotive equivalence to the being of his mother, an accord, unable to be described fully in mere words, which convinced him that this photograph collected all the possible predicates from which my mother's being was constituted and whose suppression or partial alteration, conversely, had sent me back to these photographs of her which had left me so unsatisfied. These same photographs, which phenomenology would call “ordinary” objects, were merely analogical, provoking only her identity, not her truth; but the Winter Garden Photograph was indeed essential, it achieved for me, utopically, the impossible science of the unique being.\(^{35}\)

This photograph is not equivalent in form to Barthes's mother, it does not contain her

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\(^{35}\) Ibid., 70-1.
“truth,” but nonetheless creates a stirring emotive experience within Barthes upon his viewing it. The photograph itself is not a simple recreation of the mother's form (despite the capturing of likeness in a photograph, a photographic reproduction is not equivalent in size, weight, volume, etc. to the person represented and so cannot be a true equivalence of appearance), nor does it fulfill the functions of the mother (except in the most basic of senses), but nevertheless it evokes a powerful presence of the subject in the mind of Roland Barthes; it is a trigger for his personal experience.

Barthes quite clearly expresses this quality earlier in his discussion, stating of photographs generally, “In this glum desert, suddenly a specific photograph reaches me; it animates me, and I animate it. So that is how I must name the attraction which makes it exist: an animation. The photograph itself is in no way animated..., but it animates me.” Thus, Barthes again, in his always imaginative prose, places the key process onto the viewer of the "virtual" object over the object itself. The viewer is what brings the power, brings the "virtue" to the virtual and gives it life, it is not an inherent quality of a photograph or, for that matter, any object.

If we continue down this road even further it quickly becomes apparent that a transportative feeling of a virtual experience does not require any physical object or external trigger at all, but can be entirely self-contained within the person having the experience. Consider the experience of recalling a memory or having a dream. Certainly, in the case of memories, that a particularly strong one may be brought to the front of the mind through a trigger of some sort as has already been seen. The sense of smell is quite strongly tied to memory. Sometimes the smallest whiff of a long forgotten

36 Barthes, 20.
scent can cause a cascade of memories to flood back into mental view, creating a vivid re-living of the recollected moment. Vision, also, can have such an effect, as was just noted with the power of a totemic photograph. However, memories do not exclusively need such external stimuli to percolate to the surface of our consciousness. Most of the time they come to us from a purely mental act of internal connections, or even, often, seemingly out of nowhere for no reason at all.

Now, one might counter this assertion by arguing that memories do, in fact, have physical antecedents in the real places, persons, and things that are recalled in them. Dreams, too, often incorporate elements from the preceding day's activities. Thus, each, in a way, is "caused" by real external elements and stimuli. In these cases one who remembers or dreams is simply experiencing a delayed reaction of sorts. Indeed, such a (distant) foundation in tangible elements provides the basis for the assertion that even the most abstract and theoretical mathematics has at its foundation an origin in empirical data. However, even with this being the case, one who is recalling a memory or dreaming is not aware of these distant antecedents. For all practical purposes, these events do not have an immediate physical trigger. The trigger is rather of a purely mental kind.

However, this object-less virtual may take on additional significance, or at least a more nuanced understanding, when considered using once more the framework of Deleuze. A major component of Deleuze's writing on cinema involves a discussion, critique, and synthesis of the works of Henri Bergson. Bergson argued against the main current of western philosophy which regarded images as products of the human mind and
its contemplation. Thus, in a Bergsonian model, images become indistinguishable from their referents and the mind no longer occupies a separated privileged existence from the material universe, but rather becomes indistinguishable from it. This replete state of the image, and of the mind as image, Deleuze terms the "plane of immanence." In this way, the mental realms and images that human observers will produce while processing the discourse of art images are equivalent, again facilitating a viewer's projection into the mental realm and habitation of the virtual elsewhere.

Of course, if all images are mental, and the virtual is simply a mental construction, this does raise the interesting question of what to make of artificially induced mental triggers. For instance, if speculation may be forgiven, if a viewer were to look at an apple at the moment a doctor stimulates his brain with an electrical pulse in such a way that he perceives the apple to be an orange (in shape, color, taste, etc.), does it truly become an orange in the reality of the viewer? Should this apple/orange be considered a virtual object from the perspective of the stimulated subject? After all, it would certainly qualify as something functionally but not formally of its kind.

Recent neurological research has confirmed the brain's ability to create powerful and sometimes disturbing sensations when stimulated. For example, a team of Swiss scientists have discovered that electrical stimulation of a particular region of the brain causes a subject to perceive an illusory "shadow person" behind her that seems to mimic her position and movements.37 The researchers concluded that this was likely the result of an externalized perception of the subject's own body caused by the electrical

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stimulation. While this shadowy "presence" is explainable, it was, nonetheless, all too real for the subject during the course of the experiment.

This inducement of the shadow person also ably demonstrates that an image (or indeed any stimulus) need not (and surely cannot) be a "virtual" image for every single viewer that would behold it. A virtual experience is then necessarily a very personal one, reliant upon the individual perception and understanding of a viewer, and again shows that specific visual features cannot in and of themselves be the central focus of research into the virtual, but rather how a viewer comes to interpret and personally negotiate and understand them.

*Control as the Final Puzzle Piece*

Finally, there is one more important aspect of the virtual that must be considered, that of the issue of control. In order for a virtual experience to be had, that is, for one to truly feel transported to an elsewhere, there must be a certain surrendering of volition to the illusion of transportation. This surrendering, however, need not be involuntary, and, in fact, should not be, in order to attain the maximum effect. Any sort of artifice that attempts to recreate the experience of a place, of nature, of an experience itself, regardless of medium, can only be effective with the engagement of a viewer, one who is complicit in the creation of the virtual reality. Without any such surrendering, however, a virtual experience cannot take hold; a trompe l'oeil painting would remain nothing but an accumulation of globs of pigment on a canvas, but the control of the virtual space must necessarily be balanced by control of the viewer. As Comment notes, "[P]ainting
constructs space, volume, depth through subtle deceptions that require the spectator to consent to being duped; the consent is warranted, but must not be inflicted."38 To "inflict" such a condition onto a viewer would be to deny him agency, to deny him control, and therefore to deny the engagement needed for a truly vivid experience. Without a means to engage and “take meaningful action,” even purely imagined action, is to deny the transportation to the elsewhere.39

Such a desire for control in transportation can again be seen in the example of the nineteenth-century panorama. These artworks developed in the midst of the industrial revolution, a time of rapid expansion of cities and urban centers and the alienation such a societal evolution creates. As Comment explains, “In conditions like these, the panorama had a decisive role to play. Not only did it express the perceptual and representational fantasies that befitted such troubled times; it was also a way of regaining control of sprawling collective space.”40 Presenting an image of a city within a panorama worked to grant a certain power over it to a spectator. Even though panoramas attempted a type of transportative illusion, the static nature of the "frozen" images of cities and the awareness of the constructed artifice of the panorama's housing prevented a seamless immersion.

This power over the image is not, however, found only with a panorama. When a viewer looks at any landscape painting, for instance, and, vitally, understands it as a landscape, that is, an artist's representation of a natural expanse, he is, in a key way, taking a form of control over the presented scene and the discourse between him and it. By seeing the scene as landscape, one is immediately positioned as an observer, outside

38 Comment, 97.
39 Murray, 126.
40 Comment, 8.
the scene and thus distanced from it, rather than an active participant in it.\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, the more an image presents itself as image, its effectiveness at transportation and engagement is necessarily diminished. A viewer must become more than mere observer, he must be an active participant in the discourse of the virtual. As we will see in the next chapter, a Text-world Theory approach can demonstrate how this active participation is constructed, especially when confronted with static images such as paintings.

However, a virtual experience will also break down if it is taken too far in the opposite direction and becomes indistinguishable from reality. After all, can a virtual experience be a \textit{virtual} experience if the viewer is unaware that his experience is virtual? To return to the land of Hollywood once more, consider the movie \textit{The Matrix}, in which most humans exist within an elaborate computer program, the matrix, that exactly replicates life on earth in the year 1999, without being at all aware that it is an artificial program. Such a blending of the real and the virtual into an indistinguishable blur has been discussed by Jean Baudrillard, who termed such a state as "hyperreality."\textsuperscript{42} In a hyperreal state, virtual reality, physical reality, artificial intelligence, and human intelligence are blended together in such a way as to be indistinguishable from each other also in a way that enables the interaction of these parts with one another. However, I would argue that such a hyperreal state is not truly a virtual experience. To those inside such a state who do not know that they occupy such a position, who have no other frame of reference, the "virtual" \textit{is} reality, the matrix \textit{is} the world. Something can only be virtual if there is knowledge of its referent that exists within a separate and acknowledged

reality. Immersion is only immersive when there is a frame of reference to which to compare the inhabited world, when there is an “anchor” in reality to tether oneself.\(^{43}\)

Confronted with these problems, an artist attempting to create a powerful virtual world must balance his two primary avenues of attack. As was the case with panoramas, an artist can attempt to create a seamless replication and replacement of a viewer's world and surroundings, to completely deceive his senses in a total mimetic replication of the location of intended transportation (though this is in practical effort very difficult to achieve). Or, two, an artist can present a more abstract image to a viewer. By presenting something that does not attempt a perfect mimetic replication of a real-world object or place, the image can attempt to bypass the distancing reaction a viewer automatically mentally employs when encountering a landscape or any image presented as such. Relying on that viewer's innate powers of creation, it can be transformed into the desired virtual experience. This creative power is essential to the manifestation and duration of the virtual. As Janet Murray explains:

> When we enter a fictional world, we do not merely 'suspend' a critical faculty; we also exercise a creative faculty. We do not suspend disbelief so much as we actively create belief. Because of our desire to experience immersion, we focus our attention on the enveloping world and we use our intelligence to reinforce rather than to question the reality of the experience.\(^{44}\)

Thus, a certain agency can be had regardless of the form of the virtual. One does not need objects that can be manipulated in a holographic setting or on a computer screen, for example, to feel the power to take action. The acts of mental creation that a viewer goes through when looking at a static painting also create such a satisfaction.

\(^{43}\) Heim, 132.
\(^{44}\) Murray, 110.
Finally, after considering these previous perspectives on the virtual and the problems associated with them, a final definition of the virtual as I will utilize it in the following chapters becomes clear. The virtual (or "virtuality") is the experience of being transported to a state different than that from which a subject left (different in location, time, surrounding objects, etc.) that is created through the mental involvement with a stimulating trigger of any kind that may engender such engagement.

This definition accomplishes two important things. First, as I have advocated earlier and as others like Friedberg have already pointed out, this definition in no way requires electronic or digital technology. Thus it is possible to break out of the stranglehold that such technologies have had on the popular imagination regarding virtual reality and use the virtual as a powerful lens to examine various types of art and architecture and the experience that can result from encountering and engaging with them.

Second, it moves the focus of the study of the virtual onto not only the experience of a viewer, but even more specifically on the mental processes and mental engagement of that viewer that are what truly create the virtual experience. This liberates us from the need to focus our attention on specific features of a "virtual" object or place and can allow us to better understand and appreciate the complexities that underlie any encounter with the virtual elsewhere.

In the next chapter, with this new definition of the virtual now at our disposal, I will outline the main tenets of the theoretical frameworks that will underlie my analyses of ancient Roman art and that will aid me in exploring and describing the mental
engagement of a viewer in creating the virtual elsewhere and inhabiting this newly formed evocative space.
Chapter 2: New Frameworks for the Virtual Experience

The cornerstone of my reformed definition of the virtual revolves around examining the mental processes of a participant who creates the virtual aspect of an object or place in mental space. The next step, then, is to look closely at and describe the manner in which this occurs. To this end, my investigation of ancient virtual space will be underpinned by two primary theoretical frameworks. The first is the burgeoning sub-field of cognitive linguistics known as Text-world Theory.

Text-world Theory: Representing Mental Images

Text-world Theory evolved out of a long held tradition of scholarship which attempted to understand how language is processed by the creation of mental representations. Perhaps most famous of the models proposed under this theoretical umbrella is schema theory. Developed through research into artificial intelligence (AI), which attempted to recreate the cognitive ability of the human mind, schema theory proposed that humans cogitate through recourse to mental scripts. These scripts contained generalized and stereotyped events and objects encountered during any given situation. When faced with an unfamiliar situation, a human looks through his mental scripts to find the one that best matches the new encounter. For instance, if someone finds themselves in a restaurant that he has never patronized before, especially if the
restaurant specializes in a cuisine or a culture he has never experienced, nonetheless, the
"restaurant script" that he has mentally stored (laying out the manner in which a
restaurant patron orders and pays, the norms and etiquette of dining out, etc.) will likely
be able to help him navigate this new and novel situation. Subsequently, the items of the
script will be altered and expanded to accommodate this experience of the new restaurant,
to be drawn upon in future novel situations.

Of course, this understanding of the use of mental representations and models can
draw its lineage back to antiquity.¹ For instance, in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*
Philostratus' Apollonius proclaims:

...no one could appreciate or admire a picture of a horse or of a bull, unless he had
formed an idea of the picture represented. Nor again could one admire a picture
of Ajax, by the painter Timomachus, which represents him in a state of madness,
unless one had conceived in one's mind first an idea or notion of Ajax, and had
entertained the probability that after killing the flocks in Troy he would sit down
exhausted and even meditate suicide.²

Moreover, ancient art would often require a viewer to draw upon his own previous
experience and knowledge in order to fully understand the work. This was especially true
regarding images of mythological scenes, in which a viewer's knowledge of the myths
and persons shown was paramount to understanding the image as well as the story and
message being told. The East Pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, for example,
which shows Pelops and Oenomaus preparing for their chariot race, is reliant upon a
viewer's knowledge of the unfortunate fates of the characters depicted to add tension and
subtext to what is otherwise a fairly calms and static scene.³

² Philostratus. *Life of Apolonius of Tyana.* 2.22.5 Trans. F. C. Conybeare.
The creation of mental images in the engagement with a work of art has a pronounced lineage in ancient writings on the philosophy of art, literature, and oratory. In his book *The Animated Image: Roman Theory on Naturalism, Vividness and Divine Power*, Stijn Bussels discusses the importance of mental images, or *phantasiae*, to the process of understanding discourse. He explains that these *phantasiae* were not only images in the mind, but also, more critically, the mental faculty that produced them both from observation of their real-world antecedent and also detached from any observational referent. These mental images could, then, help to create an evocative animation of the work of art, transporting the subject of the work to the “here and now” of the viewer (and, likewise, transporting the viewer to the “there and then” of the subject of the work of art), and create a powerful emotional connection.

Working from this tradition, spurred by advances in AI research, the field of cognitive linguistics was also delving into the comprehension of cognition. However, as Joanna Gavins, explains, research in cognitive linguistics differed in focus from that in AI in two key ways:

Firstly, where the goal of AI scientists and schema theorists is to produce a machine which will replicate human behavior, the primary focus of Cognitive Psychology is on human, rather than artificial perception and experience. Secondly, and more importantly, cognitive psychologists are centrally concerned with exactly *how* human experience is represented in the mind.

It is this *how* that will also provide a key focus for a new investigation of the art of the ancient world, and to ancient painting in particular. For far too long *What?* and *Why?* have been the primary questions asked (though certainly, exploring *how art is approached*

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4 Bussels, 84.
5 Ibid., 92.
and understood can also lead to new revelations in the former questions). The present solution offered by cognitive psychologists to address the *how*, and the one that I will co-opt for art historians, is Text-world Theory.

Developed by Paul Werth in the 1980s and '90s and finally fully articulated in his monograph *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse*, published posthumously in 1999, Text-world Theory attempts to be a universal understanding of how humans process discourse through the use of mental models. Further expanded and elaborated by scholars like Joanna Gavins, it has thus far been primarily applied to written texts, as would be expected in a linguistic field. However, Werth himself was adamant in its applicability to any variety of discourse, whether written, spoken, or otherwise, and in which category I would include the visual arts and architecture. A discourse at its most basic level implies communication, an exchange of information. A work of art is perfectly capable of communicating with a viewer, of imparting information.

In general terms, Text-world Theory claims that when humans communicate they process this communication by creating mental spaces or “worlds” into which they subsequently project themselves, shifting the *orígo*, the zero reference point of subjectivity, away from the “here and now” and replacing it into the confines of the newly conceptualized text-world. The creation of these mental worlds is aided by “world building elements” in the experienced discourse. In a written text, these include the verbal signifiers of locatives, spatial adverbs, demonstratives, and verbs of motion. Discourse experienced visually will have its own equivalent elements which will likewise

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7 Gavins, 40.
help to place oneself within the mental text-world, and thereby into the realm of the virtual. As the frames of reference we use to understand a discourse are by necessity spatially based because of the nature of our day to day experience, it should come as no surprise that a discourse that is itself spatial, or at least evoking the perception of space, like painting and architecture, would be all the more forceful a world builder.

To help illustrate the fundamentals of a Text-world Theory deconstruction of a discourse, let us first consider how a basic analysis breaks down a written text. As an example I have chosen the second Eclogue of the Roman writer Vergil. The Eclogues, or Bucolics, take as their model the Greek poetic genre that focused on rustic subject matter, and present a series of vignettes of shepherds and other rural persons, imbued, as Vergil was wont to do, with undercurrents of current political themes. The second Eclogue revolves almost entirely, save for a brief introduction by the "Framer" or narrator of the episodes in the series of poems, around a soliloquy performed by the shepherd slave Corydon (played by the same actor as the Framer, with his theatrical mask and costume changed to represent his new role) as he bemoans his unrequited love for the youthful slave-boy Alexis, owned by the same master as Corydon:

Framer (FR) Grazer Corydon burned with love for well formed Alexis, darling of their owner, nor had anything to hope. Only through a thick beech grove with shady tops he kept on coming. There alone he used to flaunt these unsettled songs with futile zeal to hills and woods: 1

FR/Corydon O cruel Alexis, you care nothing for my songs? You feel no pity for us? Do you push me, then, to die? Now at last too stock is seeking to take the shade and cold. Now verdant lizards at last too hide in thorny brakes and Thestyli is crushing thyme and garlic—tangy herbs—for reapers wearied by the snatching heat. 5

Now at last too stock is seeking to take the shade and cold. Now verdant lizards at last too hide in thorny brakes and Thestyli is crushing thyme and garlic—tangy herbs—for reapers wearied by the snatching heat. 10
But woods along with me with throaty locusts echo
while I beneath the burning sun your traces scour.
Wouldn't it rather have been enough to bear Amaryllis'
gloomy wrath and haughty scorn? Or bear Menalca스—
dark however he is, you how gleaming white?
O well formed boy, don't place your trust too much in hue.
White privet flowers drop off, dark hyacinths get picked.
Yet I'm despised by you. You don't search out my sort—
how rich in sheep or how awash in snowy milk.
A thousand lambs of mine are ranging Sicily's hills;
milk I don't lack in summer fresh and winter too.
I chant what Amphion would, whenever he called livestock,
Amphion styled Dircean on Actaeon's Aracynthus;
and I'm not so ill-formed, I saw myself just now at the shore,
when calm from winds the seas stood still. Nor Daphnis would
I fear (though you were judge), if copies never trick.
O, might it only please you in paltry countryside
to dwell with me in groundling huts and go shoot deer
and drive with verdant mallow twig my troop of kids!
Along with me in woods you'll mimic Pan in singing
(Pan first to join together several reeds with wax
arranged. Pan cares for sheep and for sheep's masters)
nor should it shame you with a reed to rub your little lip.
To get to know these same things, what did Amyntas not do?
I've got—composed of seven unequal hemlock stalks—
a panpipe, which as a gift Damaetas gave me once
while dying and declared: "Now this one has you next."
Declared Damaetas. Foolish with envy Amyntas looked.
Besides, a duo that I found in a tricky valley—
little wild bucks, their hides still sprinkled now with white—
that dry two ewe's teats daily: them I'm keeping for you,
though to get them from me Thestylis long since appeals;
and she will yet, since paltry you find gifts from us.
Out here come, well formed boy. For you, look, nymphs bring lilies
in basketfuls. A spring-nymph gleaming bright, while plucking
you pale violets and poppies' topmost heads,
with flowers of sweetly tangy dill narcissus yokes.
Then weaving in wild cinnamon and other urging herbs
she paints soft hyacinths with yellow marigolds.
Myself I'll pick out peaches hoary with tender down
and chestnut kernels that my Amaryllis loved.
I'll add on waxy plums—honor for this fruit too—
and, laurels, you I'll pluck and you beside them, myrtle,
since set in this way you will mingle urging scents.
Corydon, you're country. Alexis doesn't care for gifts, nor, if with gifts you'd challenge, would Iollas concede. Woe! Woe! What have I wished me, wretched? Lost, I've sent hot southern winds to flowers and boars to limpid springs. Whom do you flee, ah, mindless? Gods as well have dwelt in woods and Trojan Paris. Pallas herself let care for citadels she set. Let woods before all else please us! Grim lioness after wolf; himself wolf after nanny; gamy nanny chases after flowering clover, Corydon after you. Their own pleasure pulls each one. Look how bullocks bring back plows hung down from yokes and sun the growing shadows doubles as it goes. Yet me love burns: what measure would there be for love? A Corydon, Corydon, what mindlessness has taken you off? Your vine's half-reckoned with, leafy, not yet pruned on its elm. Why don't you rather at least prepare to finish weaving something use requires from withies and soft rush? You will find, if this one scorns you, another Alexis.  

The first text-world a reader encounters is one in the present time of the reader. The location is unspecified, though the reader may assume it is taking place in the same space he presently occupies. This space is populated with only two figures, the reader and the framer, who addresses the reader directly with his narration. These figures are the world's "enactors," that is, the elements present that perform actions of one kind or another within the context of the text-world. No other objects are present in this first text-world. This information can be graphically relayed in a standard text-world diagram (figure 1).

In the simplest of such diagrams the basic world-building elements of the text-world are listed, laying out a basic description of the world the reader is helping to create and inhabit. The accessibility status of the text-world is also noted. In this example the

text-world is what is known as "participant accessible." This signifies that the nature of
the text-world is verifiable by all the current participants of the same ontological level in
that text-world. In other words, as Joanna Gavins explains, "[W]hen a participant in the
discourse-world established a text-world...the other participants in the discourse-world
will accept the contents of those text-worlds as reliable and true, and a corresponding
degree of responsibility for them is assigned."9

From the comfort of this initial text-world in discourse with the framer, a reader
immediately encounters a second, that of the story that the framer begins to tell of the
shepherd Corydon and his unrequited love for the boy Alexis. The reader is shunted to

9 Gavins, 77.
this second text-world, a change termed a world-switch. Figure 2 diagrams this new world, which will form the main "hub world" of Eclogue 2, that is, the world from which most other text-worlds will branch out as the story progresses. The time in which the world takes place has now changed, from the present world of the Framer and the reader to a world set in an idealized past, when the story recounted takes place. While it might not be evident in simply reading the text, if one were to see the poem performed onstage, as it would have been originally intended, the fact that the Framer and Corydon were likely played by the same actor would have also aided the transition between these two initial text-worlds. Additionally, because the viewer is a participant in the discourse of text-world 1, being the target of the Framer's narration, the fact that the viewer's partner at this discourse level transforms into the main character of the new world does have a certain effect of pulling the viewer into this new world, even though he no longer occupies a participant status in that world.

In this new world the main enactor is Corydon himself as he pines for his love. Now that actions will be starting to be performed within the world, this chart takes on a more complicated appearance than that for text-world 1. Actions performed by enactors are represented in the diagram by downward-pointing arrows that link an enactor to his action. For instance, beneath Corydon in the enactor's line of the chart is a vertical arrow pointing down to the first action he performs, burning with love for Alexis. Beneath this is continued a chain of action arrows continuing to list those that Corydon performs in this world throughout the rest of the text. Throughout this and other diagrams are also horizontal arrows. Instead of a relationship of action, these represent a descriptive or
Figure 2. Eclogue World-Switch 1
relational connection of some kind. Most commonly this is used to represent an adjective describing an object or enactor. For instance, the beech grove in which this world is set is described as "thick with shady tops." Such an arrow can also represent a "to" or "for" prepositional connection. For example, in line 59 Corydon sends winds "to flowers." The "to flowers" qualifier is diagrammed with a horizontal arrow pointing from "winds."

Now, one might think that such a rapid transition from text-world to text-world (a pace that will only accelerate as a reader continues through the text) might create a sort of whiplash in a reader or viewer, but surely anyone who has read a fiction book or has seen a movie knows this is not the case. Each of these media can cut between numerous scenes taking place at different times in different locations with different characters without the audience losing track of what is going on (though such a disoriented confusion was feared by early film makers when the cross-cut was first employed as an editing technique). Such a mental organization takes place without explicit conscious effort.

Branching off from world-switch 1 is our first encounter with another type text-world, the bouloamai modal-world (figure 3). Such a world expresses a bouloamai modality (derived from the Greek βούλομαι, meaning to will or wish), that is, expresses a want, desire, wish, hope, or something similar that creates a modal-world distinct from the world from which it originates. In line two of the poem we are told that Corydon "nor had anything to hope." Corydon desires the love of Alexis, but this was a desire that could not be fulfilled. Such a modal-world remains only enactor-accessible, as it represents the inner thoughts of the enactor and, as such, the absolute

10 Gavins, 94.
truth value of the statement is inaccessible to the reader, who is not necessarily privy to internal motivations or feelings.

Starting in line 6 the reader encounters the second world-switch of the poem (figure 4). This world takes the reader from the presence of Corydon to that of his love Alexis. Additionally, another text-world forms in parallel to, but separate from, the world engendered by the textual description of the poem itself. Such a parallel world is perhaps made most clear in *Eclogue* 4 (the so-called "messianic" *Eclogue*), but is present throughout all 10 of Vergil's poems. It is the political world of the new Augustan principate, whose ideology and propaganda permeate the *Eclogues*. The fourth *Eclogue* celebrates the birth of a boy who will usher in a new “golden age.” This “messianic” figure (referred to as the “great increase of Jove”) is a thinly veiled allegory for the young Octavian, the first emperor Augustus, whose push for legitimacy after emerging victorious from civil war revolved heavily on such a narrative of new-found peace and prosperity for Rome.
From World-switch 2 branches the first example in the poem of yet another type of text-wold, the epistemic modal-world. Such a modal-wold represents a participant's beliefs and knowledge. In this example Corydon expresses the belief that if he were to challenge the amorous advances of Iollas, his rival for the affections of Alexis, by giving Alexis lavish gifts, he would still fail to win the boy's heart over his competitor. This is, of course, not a statement of absolute fact; neither the reader nor Corydon can know for certain what the results of Corydon's actions would be, but Corydon, at least, believes they would result in failure.
An epistemic modal-world is also encountered in lines 14-16 (figure 6). Here Corydon asks a hypothetical question of Alexis, "wouldn't it have been enough to bear Amaryllis' gloomy wrath and haughty scorn?" This question is predicated upon Corydon's belief that bearing Amaryllis' wrath and scorn would have indeed been enough. Of course, this view may not be shared by Alexis or anyone else for that matter and so cannot be understood by the reader as a statement of objective fact. Furthermore, because this particular modal-world posits one possible reaction of what is presented as a binary option of outcomes (it would have been enough), a second parallel modal-world is also necessarily called up in the mind of the reader. This second world is the negation of the original, in this case the world in which Corydon's hypotheticals are not, in fact, enough to bear. In a text-world diagram, such an illusory world is represented with a dotted outline (figure 7). Anytime a statement of belief is made with regard to an
outcome, the contrary outcome will manifest in such a parallel world. Thus, in any given discourse, there can be more text-worlds created than those explicitly described by the text. Closely related to this type of epistemic modal-world is another type of text-world encountered in line 17 of the poem, the negative modal-world. Also diagrammed with a dotted line (figure 8), the Negative Modal-world is a particular type of a broader category of modal-worlds known as deontic. This type of world deals with expression of a sense of duty and obligation. This sense can run the gamut of forcefulness from mere
permission through outright requirement. Here, the force of the obligation is a negative one—Corydon is telling Alexis what he ought not to do.

Perhaps more commonly, a deontic modal-world may also represent a positive command or directive, that is, what someone ought to do. Line 45 of *Eclogue* 2 presents just such an imperative (figure 9). Here Corydon tells the absent Alexis to “come out here” and then to “look” at the scene of nymphs picking baskets of wildflowers. While not in evidence in this particular text, an imperative directed at the reader himself is another common way for a text to place the reader as an enactor within the text-world, forcing him out of a passive status vis-à-vis the unfolding text-world.

An explicit command or direction is not, however, the only mode a deontic modal-world may take. Obligation can be expressed in more subtle ways. For example, in lines 71-72 of the poem (figure 10), Corydon, speaking to himself, notes other activities that would be a better use of his time than futilely chasing after the unresponsive Alexis, such as tending to the grape vines of the farm, which, in his love-struck state, he has left untended. He urges himself to turn his attention to practical
matters and weave something that “use requires.” Describing Corydon's theoretical woven product as “required” clearly lends the world a deontic sense, without recourse to a direct command, more so than the epistemic modality that his hypothetical question (“why don't you”) also lends to the text.

Up to this point, we have modeled individual text-worlds in diagram form.
However, these worlds are all part of the larger discourse, they are not entirely discreet entities in their own right. They are all connected in an ever expanding web, and these connections can also be charted. In a full text-world diagram, not only are the individual worlds charted, but the relationship between each is also noted, shown through lines linking a new world from the one from it it branched and shifted. Figures 11, 12, and 13 attempt to lay out the entirety of Eclogue 2. Were the page large enough, all three figures could be collapsed into a single continuous flow chart.

These compiled charts give us a schematized rendering of the mental map that is created by a viewer. Indeed, they can be used in part as a map to navigate the transition into a virtual world and from world to world within the larger web. The almost labyrinthine quality of the connections between text-world boxes in the compiled chart gives an readily identifiable visual marker for the complexity of a viewer's negotiation of a space or work of art, speaking again to the folly of overly simplistic explanations of the creation of virtual experience.

Furthermore, in viewing the text-world map in this way, almost hovering above the abstracted world, one is almost able to recreate the experience of the original projection recorded in the chart. As when confronted, for example, with a transportation-triggering stimulus (a painting, say), the totality of the web confronts us first and we are vaguely away of all the various pieces, but do not necessarily see them clearly. Just as a virtual projection will become more focused, so too from our position above the chart can we zoom in to a particular chart (a particular text-world) and clearly make out its component parts. The lines connecting the various boxes within the chart lead us
logically from one to the next; following these shifts so clearly laid out can help us to better recognize the causes of such shifts—causes that may be less consciously apparent during the actual experience of virtual transportation being recorded in the charts.

This overview has outlined some of the basic terminology and processes of dissecting a text with fundamental Text-world Theory. Applying these forms to non-text based discourse, such as painting, will work similarly, but, as we will see, will require some minor modification.

_Gilles Deleuze: Poles, Frames, and the Out-of-Field_

My second significant framework is based in the theoretical writings of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, in particular his work on framing in his first book on cinema, his discussion of poles of experience, and his idea of the out-of-field. While Text-world Theory will provide much of the structural framework for describing the mental spaces a viewer creates to negotiate ancient art, these Deleuzian elements will add a further explanatory power as to how these worlds are created in the first place.

Deleuze’s describes two "poles of experience," the objective and subjective poles. These, broadly speaking, represent a point of view that is either outside or inside, respectively, in any given bounding set of elements. Looking back to our analysis of Vergil's second *Eclogue*, the spectator or reader experiences both poles as the text progresses. In text-world 1, the viewer is the direct addressee of the Framer's narration. He is a direct participant in the text-world, and therefore his viewpoint occupies an

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Figure 11. Eclogue Compiled Text-world Chart (part 1)
Figure 12. Eclogue Compiled Text-world Chart (part 2)
Figure 13. Eclogue Compiled Text-world Chart (part 3)
objective pole. Once the world shifts to that occupied by Corydon the viewer or reader is no longer a direct participant in the discourse, he becomes instead a mere spectator to the actions described. He thus occupies, then, a subjective pole of experience.

The manner in which a viewer can move, sometimes imperceptibly, from one pole to the other may also provide a useful model for partially understanding how a viewer may move into a virtual space. This shifting of poles occurs when elements which at first seem outside of a set become understood as in fact belonging to it. Deleuze gives a cinematic example from the 1951 film *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* in which a house that seems far removed from the main action on the beach is revealed to be inhabited by a woman viewing the scene through a telescope, and therefore reveals itself part of the same set as the commotion below. In *Eclogue 2*, a similar almost imperceptible pole shift occurs in the transition between text-world 1 and world-switch 1 when, as previously mentioned, the actor playing the Framer changes his mask to become the character Corydon, about whom the Framer had just been narrating. As we shall see, this back and forth between objectively viewing and participating in an image may be useful for understanding the experience of some Roman images, such as those like the Dionysiac room at the Villa of the Mysteries near Pompeii, which may call more explicitly for such a dynamic of shifting between observer and participant status.

Perhaps most important for thinking about the experience of ancient art is Deleuze's role of what he terms the *hors-champ*, or the out-of-field. This term refers to that which is outside the frame (of the film screen in Deleuze's case, the framed field of vision for my current purposes), that which is “neither seen nor understood, but is

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12 Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 71-72.
nevertheless perfectly present.” According to Deleuze this out-of-field has two functions, the first being the simple addition of space to space. In a film, this occurs when, for example, the physical space in which a scene is taking place continues off screen. In these instances the film screen becomes a type of window, bounding our viewpoint and obscuring our surroundings, but, as is the case with real windows, does not confuse our perception of the space outside the frame.

The second function, and perhaps most significant, is what Deleuze calls the presence of the “more radical elsewhere” that occurs the more closed any framed set of elements becomes. For Deleuze a set can never be truly closed (there is always a larger set of which it is a part, to which it is connected by a metaphorical “thread”), but the closer a set comes to being so, the more it attempts to open up unto itself. The more closed it is, the more this second aspect of the out-of-field descends upon it “like a spider,” to use Deleuze’s wonderful simile, and imbues it with metaphysical duration, with what Deleuze calls a fourth dimension of time and a fifth dimension of spirit. Thus a (nearly) closed set is imbued with a certain transpatial existence (which Deleuze describes as not even really “existing” but rather “insisting” or “subsisting”).

Such a move toward a mental construct of space I believe creates a major process for understanding the experience of Roman spaces. These spaces in their decoration and layout can be seen to have worked in certain cases to create this greater closing of the set and thus impose upon it the Deleuzian "radical elsewhere." Indeed, as mentioned in the

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13 Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 16.
14 Ibid., 17.
15 Ibid., 17-18.
16 In an act of descriptive frivolity, if I may steal that proclivity from the philosophical fields, this mental construction of the elsewhere might be termed the "a|field" because it is both a field (as in the out-of-field of Deleuze) in which the image is conceived as well as afield, as in out of the field of vision and
previous chapter, some scholars such as Oliver Grau consider the closing in and “hermetically sealing” of the viewer within the virtual experience to be paramount in creating a transportative environment, blurring the distinction between the virtual and real worlds. Such a sealing might also help forcefully place the origo into a new text world.

Finally, again after Henri Bergson, Deleuze elaborates the connection between image, perception and memory that has a special relevance in terms of a cognitive model of the understanding of discourse such as Text-world Theory provides. According to the Bergsonian/Deleuzian explanation, when an image or object is perceived by a viewer, a virtual counterpart is created in the viewer's mind as memories are called up in an attempt to understand the image by placing it within the catalog of remembered images and experiences. Furthermore, every time one of these memories is recalled, the viewed object's mental representation is destroyed and recreated as it is "bound up" with ever widening circles of information. Thus, through this ping-ponging effect of recollection and reformation, the virtual mental image becomes ever closer to its real-world counterpart. Similarly, in Text-world Theory, as world-switches abound as a discourse progresses, the same ever widening circle creates a vivid experience in the mind of the reader.

Bergson describes a similar process in the act of remembering. When attempting to recall a memory of a specific time and place, as Friedberg explains it, “we become conscious of an act sui generis by which we detach ourselves from the present in order to replace ourselves, first, in the past in general then in a certain region of the past—a work experience, a purely mental image.

of adjustment, something like the focusing of a camera. But our recollection remains virtual.\textsuperscript{19} Again, similarly, with the creation of each new text-world in the mind of a viewer, after both gazing upon assemblages of different images and reflecting upon their content and context, a specific text-world could be generated.

A concern might be raised, however, that this denying of the primacy of the visual in the creation of a virtual experience is misguided and that using Text-world Theory to investigate such experiences (taking primarily visual media and mapping them in textual terms) creates a discussion that is too abstracted and distant from the human senses. And, after all, is not a mental world still visual in the way it is understood?

To counter this one might point the fact that, for instance, a person born blind will not organize mental worlds in a visual way, though this does smack of special pleading. Instead, I would argue that our mental thought, and therefore our mental text-worlds, are not, in fact, organized and perceived visually. To be sure, we speak of the “mind's eye,” but the way mental worlds are negotiated is better understood in terms of “knowing,” rather than “seeing,” that is, features are sensed intuitively rather than directly “perceived” sensorily. Indeed, “text-worlds” might be more appropriately thought of a “imagination worlds” or something similar to better capture this essence and distance our use of the framework from its linguistic origin.

Having digested this theoretical framework, the remaining chapters of this volume will unfold into three broad parts, each in turn expanding the scope of the project. First will be examined the virtual tendencies in single planes, that is, individual walls and painted frescoes. Next, we will move to the level of rooms, fully enclosed spaces, the

\textsuperscript{19} Friedberg, 143.
result of multiple single planes coming together, to show how the effects of single planes can be increased. Finally, we will move to the level of a total structure and how multiple rooms or enclosed spaces and the movement within and between them could work in concert to create an even more involving virtual transportation. Each of these three parts will contain two chapters. The first chapter will broadly demonstrate how the frameworks discussed here can be applied more specifically to ancient artworks; the second will analyze specific relevant case studies in greater depth to provide the fullest picture possible for the manners in which ancient virtuality was achieved and perceived.
Chapter 3: The Virtual Plane

To begin our look at how one would interact with and experience the ancient virtual, we will start with the simplest instance of its presentation, the single plane. While a two-dimensional surface might be the geometrically and physically simplest arrangement of images we will consider, it certainly is not without a special power of its own, and of greater consequence than it might first appear. As a simple manipulation of physical objects forms the ultimate foundation of the most complicated and theoretical of mathematics, the surface plane lies at the heart of all human perception. Two-dimensionality underpins how humans navigate and negotiate their three-dimensional world. As Benjamin Woolley notes:

 Our language betrays an uncomplicated attitude to space. Space is two-dimensional: we have revolutions, go round in circles, get straight to the point, square up. The most sophisticated geometric shape to make it into everyday language is, thanks to the US military, the pentagon. Spheres of influence are rare examples of a linguistic acknowledgment of the third dimension.¹

Thus, though it may oftentimes tread the road of three-dimensional illusion and mimesis, virtuality has at it heart the perception and manipulation of two-dimensional planes, both physical and, more importantly, mental.

A plane can be any flat surface, but for our purposes will primarily, though not exclusively, include those planes most encountered and produced, i.e. ceilings, floors,

and walls. Indeed, wall paintings will provide the most emphatic and easily accessible medium for the creation of ancient transportative spaces, given their location surrounding a viewer's space of operation, and their ability to play most emphatically with his visual perception. While the effect of an entire room or other enclosure on a viewer will be discussed in a future chapter, here we will see that a single image, taken in isolation, can still work by itself to effect a virtual space and cause transportative experience.

Certainly, artworks created on flat, planar surfaces have been the primary method to create the illusion and experience of some represented place or object. Indeed, in his treatise on painting, Alberti uses a metaphor of the window to describe how to envision the painter's canvas, describing the rectangular painting surface “as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen.”2 The plane is a mediating membrane, an analogue for the field of vision of a viewer. By imposing a frame, it both creates a portal of vision (Friedberg’s "wormholes") and coagulates and makes real that which is viewed through it.

Continuing in this vein of the plane as a type of looking glass, David Summers, in his seminal work, Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism, outlines a new conceptual framework for the understanding and interpretation of art, using notions of the “spatial” rather than the “visual” as its definition categories. An entire chapter is devoted to examining the ways in which the “virtual” has been approached and understood in the art of various cultures and times, specifying the planar surface as the primary tool for the presentation of a virtual "elsewhere." Indeed, Summers states, "Virtuality is rooted in the capacity to see three dimensions in two, and

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in the conditional availability of surfaces upon which this capacity may be brought into play.”

Broadly speaking, Summers outlines two primary usages of a framed planar surface to simulate a visual field and thereby create a virtual image, what he designates as stage space and viewer space. Stage space uses linear perspective and a designated ground line on the planar surface to create a sense of gazing upon a bounded area akin to a stage—connected to, but distinct from the space where the viewer stands. Viewer space, on the other hand, treats the space of the image as contiguous with that of the viewer; the edge of the frame of the image is no longer a ground-line, as in stage space, but rather the limit of the viewer's field of vision.

While Summer's discussion of the virtual is extensive, intentionally broad in its applicability, and illuminating, it nevertheless remains restricted in its insistence on optical recreation of visual reality as the cornerstone of the virtual. Summers goes so far as to declare illusionistic modeling as "crucial" to the creation of virtual space. Mimesis and its associated elements and modes of viewing must not, however, be given such all consuming importance. What is important is the transportative effect, regardless of how it is achieved, and mimesis is but one such option, and not the most effective one at that.

The projection aspect central to Text-world Theory may have also been touch on somewhat tangetially by Edward Casey in his book *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps*. Casey explores the manner in which maps and paintings can both represent and in part create a viewer's sense of place. For Casey, a landscape is a special

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4 Summers, 445.
5 Ibid., 451.
kind of image "that both stands for this place and stands in for it." A landscape on the one hand, in being an artificial representation of a particular location, acts as a type of substitute for the original place that the landscape captures. On the other hand, such an image not only acts as a signifier for its referent, but can also act as a full replacement for it. This is especially true in the context of Text-world Theory, in which a viewer engages in the discourse by projecting himself into a mental world, in these cases one that is the environment depicted in the landscape.

Casey explores, in a way, a type of Text-world Theory projection, though he does not couch it in those terms. He writes that when a viewer contemplates a landscape scene there comes a point where through his projection into the scene he can imagine himself at the place and time depicted, that is, the very space-time of the artist of the image. "At this precarious but precise point, we can speak of our place in the painting and of our point of view; for the artist has invited us into his place of perception and put us in that place—put us there at his own expense, because we now occupy his place. We have replaced him in the scene of his own creation." Thus, a landscape painting can engage a viewer to such a degree that the depicted reality becomes the viewer's reality, a shift not unlike those described by Text-world Theory.

*Pompeian Fresco: The Limitations of Tradition*

Pompeian wall-painting, along with painting from other sites destroyed by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, through the chance of its preservation, has long formed the

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7 Ibid., 29.
primary corpus with which Roman painting as a whole has been reconstructed. Its relation to the rooms in which it was applied has often been discussed, with scholars such as John Clarke and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill elucidating the ways in which various forms of wall decoration could have imported social signifiers that worked both to rank the spaces of the house and also to reflect the activity that was expected to go on in these spaces, from slaves cooking the household's dinner, to the master of the house receiving important business guests. More recent works such as Roger Ling’s *Roman Painting* and Eleanor Leach’s *The Social Life of Painting in Rome and on the Bay of Naples* have analyzed wall painting through mostly a socio-political framework, showing how various styles and forms functioned to both reflect (and help to create) the intended activity of their spaces, as well as how such activity fit into broader Roman culture and customs of (especially elite) social interaction. This aspect will be discussed further in Chapter 5, which looks more specifically at the effects of entire visual programs within enclosed spaces.

The orthodox understanding of Roman wall paintings has recently been challenged by Emanuel Mayer in his book *The Ancient Middle Classes: Urban Life and Aesthetics in the Roman Empire, 100 BCE- 250 CE*. Mayer argues that the middle-class painted houses which comprise the majority of our evidence for Roman wall painting at sites like Pompeii were not nearly so concerned with notions of *decor* and of reflecting social rituals, spaces, and contexts of the elites as has been generally understood. This understanding is based primarily on the writing of Vitruvius, who, Mayer argues, should

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not be taken as the singularly authoritative voice for actual decorative taste and practice.\footnote{Emmanuel Mayer. \textit{The Ancient Middle Classes: Urban Life and Aesthetics in the Roman Empire, 100 BCE-250 CE}. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2012, 184.}

Mayer writes, “Instead, we are confronted with a system of cultural expression that uses the same iconographically set types as the social elites but recombines them in a new way. They have a new meaning in a new context.”\footnote{Ibid., 216.} The majority of these home owners were rather more concerned with “surround[ing] themselves with pleasant and ready-made atmospheric images that they could enjoy and fill with meaning.”\footnote{Ibid., 167.}

This interpretation is much in keeping with John Clarke's notion of the increasing importance of the poets' concept of \textit{amoenitas}, or "pleasantness," in the choice of painted images in domestic contexts in the first-century CE in which the \textit{decor} of Vitruvius gave way to greater emphasis on “charm” and the effect of a space. This change in values is seen most in the middle-class houses in towns like Pompeii that attempt to create with paint, stucco, and mosaics fictive vistas where there were none, to create a certain character or mood appropriate to a given room or space.\footnote{Clarke, 21.} This importance of “personal meaning” and the creation of “effect” in the choice of wall painting is in keeping with a desire for transportative effect as being paramount, an effect realized in slightly different ways for different viewers and audiences, and one that is not necessarily confined to trajectories defined by reflections in state political ideology or social functions.

Despite this fascinating and significant work both establishing and countering the orthodox interpretations of fresco styles, scholars have thus far often found themselves embroiled in the nettle of the paintings and have failed to grasp the larger aesthetic and
metaphysical paradigms at play in the experience and understanding of these works. Such theoretical analyses are not yet common in scholarship focused on ancient art, which is in many ways still strongly wedded to the material culture and literature studies of the fields of archaeology and classical philology from which it largely developed and is still often subservient.

Any discussion of Roman wall painting must deal with the categories first established by German archaeologist August Mau. Mau's division of the development of Pompeian fresco into four styles (with additional clarification, elaboration, and subtlety added over the years) still remains the primary vocabulary through which the history of Roman painting is largely categorized and told. For simplicity's sake, this chapter will be in large part subdivided according to Mau's four styles.

The First Style, derived from Greek decorative practice, sought to recreate in paint and plaster the effect of expensive colored stones. The Second Style took this desire to recreate even further with the addition of painted openings that looked out over fictive vistas beyond and through illusionistic architecture. The Third Style saw a return of an emphasis on the solidity of the wall with architectural elements reduced to oftentimes fantastical ornamentation. The Fourth Style saw an amalgam of many of the elements of previous styles, and an ever greater focus placed on isolated mythological scenes. Later scholars such as Hendrick Beyen took Mau’s original designations and worked to offer a more complete understanding of their development, for example, articulating the progression of the Second Style from, simply put, a closed wall to an open one and

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ultimately back again, and defining the stages of the Fourth Style.\textsuperscript{14}

Of course, no ancient Roman was so naïve as to actually be fooled by these painted images or three-dimensional spaces depicted in them. Even the most intricately crafted trompe l'oeil painting will not sustain the illusion under careful scrutiny. Nonetheless, I want to suggest, the works possessed a certain power to transport viewers—a power analyzable using modern Text-world Theory. The framework and vocabulary of Text-world Theory provide us with surprisingly potent means for discussing how viewers might have understood and engaged with the images painted on their walls.

Both the false masonry of the First Style and the illusionary landscapes of the Second can easily be seen as textual descriptors, aiding the viewer in his construction of a mental world to be “inhabited” through imaginative projection. Wall painting, even the Second Style is altogether less interested in truly tricking the eye (and certainly wall painting moved away from mimetic trickery), but rather, in the mode of Henri Bergson, is interested in creating signifiers that help in the "adjustment" of placing oneself in the past, or any elsewhere one would care to inhabit.

At this level, Text-world Theory yields results little different from anything produced by ordinary art historical analysis. But things become more interesting where the Third and Fourth Styles are concerned, when there was less reliance on illusionism, and more abstracted or eclectic manners took hold. In these paintings, although mimetic depiction is scarce, Text-world “world-building-elements” are still present. In fact, they are all the more powerful in that they are no longer focused on the description of an object or a place but, instead, on the elements that govern mental processing itself.

\textsuperscript{14} Ling, 23.
namely perception, attention, memory, imagination, and emotion.

First Style Painting

If virtuality is all about creating an artificial experience of a place then there is perhaps no better starting point than the so-called First style of Pompeian wall painting. The First Style, derived from Greek decorative practice, sought to recreate in paint and plaster the effect of expensive colored stones. In a sense, Pompeian wall painting had from its beginnings incorporated a type of virtuality. These earliest Pompeian wall-paintings were primarily concerned with reproducing with paint and modeled stucco the effect and appearance of various kinds of decorative masonry and marble blocks. While this First Style was supplanted by later forms, the act of painting faux masonry never leaves the wall painter's repertoire.

Consider as an example a section of fresco from the House of Sallust from Pompeii (figure 14). This house, the main surviving part of which dates to roughly the second-century BCE, is a fairly typical Campanian domus, comprised of a series of rooms surrounding a central atrium open to the sky. This atrium and the fauces entry hallway leading into it from the outside display some of the best surviving examples of this masonry style of fresco.

In Text-world terms, the initial world of the discourse is obviously the house itself in which the painting was installed, the present reality of the Roman domus and the larger social world of which it is a part. Such a world might be diagrammed in a text-world chart as demonstrated in figure 15. The location is the household, the time the present.
Figure 14. First Style Painting, House of Sallust, Pompeii

Figure 15. First Style Painting Text-world 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World-building elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong> Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong> Roman domus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objects:</strong> Furniture (table, chairs), work tools (weaving loom, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enactors:</strong> Viewer, family members, houseguests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15. First Style Painting Text-world 1
Objects would be whatever was contained within the room, furniture or other accouterments of Roman living. Enactors would include the viewer and any family members or other guests or persons with him viewing the painting. These enactors could be engaged in any number of actions in this world, from observing the paintings, conversing with one another about said paintings or any topic pursuant to their daily activities, conducting business, weaving textiles, drawing water from the impluvium, and so on.

Of course, while the exact nature of the relation and divide between public and private in ancient Roman life is one that is still debated, the larger social system in which a Roman home-owner lived and worked would be ever present, especially for those who could have afforded the painted town homes under consideration. Such a man would have been expected to participate in public life, including receiving clients in his home if were of such a station to have them. Thus, a viewer inhabiting the discourse world of his home would always have the additional text-world (figure 16) of this larger social reality hovering nearby, to come into sharper focus at any moment. Just as a negative modal-world, it exists simultaneously within the viewer's mental quilt of text-worlds.

Additionally, much of this First Style painting creates a further divergent text-world. By imitating the look of polished stones and marbles, painters in this early style attempted to recreate fancy and expensive revetment and other wall treatments in order to bring a sense of elite luxury into what would otherwise be much more modest dwellings. Therefore, a viewer of these frescoes would form a text-world that represents the world of the elite, of a full country villa estate to which he might aspire, and transports him
**WORLD-SWITCH 1**

(participant-accessible)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World-building elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time: Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Local community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactors: Viewer, community members (patrons, clients, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 16. First Style Painting World-switch 1*

---

**BOULOMAIC MODAL-WORLD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World-building elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time: Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Elite luxury Roman domus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objects: Elite living accoutrements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactors: Viewer, family members, houseguests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

↓

converses, observes, works, etc.
engages in elite private/public life

*Figure 17. First Style Painting Bouloaic Modal-world*
there. Being in a sense a desire or wish, this can be classified as a boulomaic modal-world (figure 17). Already, then, we have Romans transforming their living spaces into virtual spaces; through the use of paint and stucco they transform these rooms into the image of a much more elite residence that in reality does not exist.

Additionally, in this instance, a careful viewer of the wall could be transported to yet another text-world. This transportation, comparable to a world-switch, takes the viewer to the world of the ancient Greek oikos (figure 18). The First Style of Pompeian painting was a consciously Greek style, imitating elements of the cut-stone masonry used in construction of Greek elite houses. Moreover, the bright polished marbles oftentimes simulated in the First Style likewise alluded to the great Greek palaces of Hellenistic kings, such as the Ptolemies in Egypt, who used such lavish revetments for real.

Of course, this particular text-world may not be created by all viewers of these frescoes. To construct this world set in Greece requires the viewer to possess the
requisite knowledge of the Hellenic quality of the wall designs and their royal references. Otherwise, these paintings could be appreciated for their aesthetic properties but would engender no other associations, any more than, say, a contemporary viewer with no knowledge of the city of San Francisco would not to associate images of streetcars with that context. In this way both the streetcar and the faux masonry fresco are signifiers for a specific audience. Certainly, coding and crafting a discourse to reach specific target audiences is common to most types of communication.15

With the building up of these additional text-worlds in the discourse produced by the paintings, the out-of-field of Deleuze is more readily noticed. A viewer can only focus his full attention on one text-world at a time; the remainder float into the background of his consciousness. They occupy the periphery but are nonetheless connected to a viewer's central focus and still exert themselves in that viewer's negotiation of that focus. These other text-worlds are always present, even if a viewer is not consciously engaged with them; they occupy the out-of-field.

Additionally, in certain examples of the First Style, the painted veins in faux marble blocks actually form pictorial images, coalescing into images of birds, vases, garlands, and other figural scenes, including in at least one instance a scene of Herakles wrestling the earth monster Antaios.16 Seemingly ever threatening to dissolve back into the marbled background of the wall from which they developed, these images, too, suggest a permeability and a certain fluctuating sense of motion in this tentative existence on the edge of the viewer's world. Thus, a tentative text-world also forms in which the

marble vein images fully coalesce to obtain the physical status of the objects they create. This text-world can be diagrammed with a dotted outline (figure 20), as it, like a negative epistemic modal-world, constantly vies for existence with the text-world in which the marble veins are understood as simply that, veining in the marble block (figure 19).

This fluctuating sense of motion also creates a greater sense of engagement with a viewer, or a compulsion to engage, and, therefore, creates a more effective environment for projection. As Gavins explains, cognitive psychology has articulated a so-called "scale of empathy" that affects a human's cognitive perception of an image or scene.17 Signs of "willfulness" or purpose, such as motion or the appearance of motion, easily attract the notice of a human observer. Elements in a text-world that are active rather than passive will always garner greater attention. In this same vein, scenes that include images of human beings or animals evoke a strong empathic reaction in a viewer, thereby drawing and holding his attention much more easily. Scenes that contain only inanimate objects or abstract images are much less powerful in this regard. Since it is more difficult to create an empathic connection, such images do not attract the viewer's attention to nearly so great a degree. Additionally, brightness and vividness also help to transfix a viewer's attention, a quality not lacking in the brightly painted “stones” of the First Style.

17 Gavins, 44.
Figure 19. First Style Painting Epistemic Modal-world 1

Figure 20. First Style Painting Epistemic Modal-world 2
Figure 21. First Style Painting Complete Text-world Chart
Second Style Painting

It is with the advent of the so-called Second Style of wall paintings that we can see images that might be more easily and commonly placed in the category of the virtual. The Second Style took this desire to recreate even further with the addition of painted openings that looked out over fictive vistas beyond. Friedberg placed perspectival paintings such as these into her modified definition of the virtual, and it is certainly easy to see how such works give the false impression of three-dimensional space.  

Two factors are most important here, and in this limited context David Summers' focus on the importance of recreating the impression of three-dimensions on a two-dimensional surface is appropriate. The first is that these paintings now display the use of a linear perspective. To be sure, it is not the scientific linear perspective of later times with a single vanishing point to which all orthogonals converge, but rather a perspective schema that utilizes a central vanishing axis. Nevertheless, we have now a representation of the projection of space into a two-dimensional plane, thereby creating the illusion of space and depth where none really exists. The second, in the same vein as the first, is the implementation of illusionistic painting of objects, persons, and architecture.

Certainly, the trompe l'oeil effect evident in this painting style was often forcefully brandished and placed in the forefront to such a degree that its mimetic quality was likely intended as its primary quality of interest beyond, or at least equivalent with, any iconographic meaning. As John Clarke notes, ancient Roman authors like Pliny the Elder extolled the tale of the Greek painter Zeuxis, whose painted grapes were so life-like

that birds attempted to eat them, plainly speaking to the Roman fascination with mimesis.\textsuperscript{19}

Through creating these false mimetic scenes, wall painters could, in a way, attempt to bridge the ontological boundary between the real world of the viewer and the depicted fictive realms. Whenever someone negotiates a presented discourse, there will always be a separation between the ontological reality of each.\textsuperscript{20} Text on a page, oral description, painted images, etc., in being, in one way or another, description of a place or thing, necessarily produce a degree of separation from that thing. But when the fictive realm or object is perceptually indistinguishable, or as close as can be managed, it becomes closer to crossing that ontological threshold and becoming the object or place itself. While this could never be entirely accomplished, by narrowing the degree of separation, such mimesis can aid a viewer in crafting a text-world by making its elements all the clearer and more distinct, and therefore aid in that viewer's projection into it.

Traditionally, the inspiration for the development of the open walls of this new style has been thought to spring from three important sources. H. G. Beyen saw its most important forerunner the construction of theatrical sets. K. Schefold saw influence of Hellenistic monumental architecture. Finally, J. Engemann placed the greatest influence with the contemporary architecture of Italy.\textsuperscript{21} All in all, the Second Style was thought to have developed from observation of and desire to recreate architectural models in paint (certainly an understandable notion given the recreation of architectural blocks in the

\textsuperscript{19} Clarke, \textit{Houses}, 117-8.
\textsuperscript{20} Gavins, 83
\textsuperscript{21} Ling, 29-30.

preceding First Style). This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5, when the effect of total room enclosures will be examined.

Certainly, the world of stage sets is an attractive one for exploring the emergence of Second Style fresco. After all, there are in Pompeii and other sites numerous explicit examples of painted stage sets, or *scenae frons*—a direct allusion to the theater. Furthermore, the art of stage design was also keenly interested in the creation of illusionistic and transportative spaces, needing to create a proper setting for the scenes acted out in front of them, which could take place in myriad times and places. Both stage design and discourse generally are all about world-building. An explicit painted representation of a theater stage can act as a visual trigger for a world-switch, as a viewer would be already conditioned, through his experience with real-life theatrical productions, to expect to be transported to other realms when confronted with such a structure.

A particularly illustrative example may be found at the House of Neptune and Amphitrite at Herculaneum. A portion of the north wall of a *tablinium* of the house was doubtless inspired by the *scenae frons*. Here, two figures on either side of a mythological scene depicting Narcissus at a fountain walk down stairs leading from a raised stage-like area. Likewise, the atrium of the House of the Vettii at Pompeii also utilized figures descending staircases that lead up to a defined stage-like structure. These staircases emphasize the separateness of the here-and-now of the viewer and the space and time depicted on-stage. It is a world removed but yet, as the stairs suggest, there is the

possibility of entering that space. The stairs act also as a particularly powerful focal point for projection into the image, giving the viewer a defined pathway to inject himself in the proceedings.

Furthermore, this type of wall painting may carry additional significance in light of the recent scholarship by Rocco Sinisgali. In his newly published book, *Perspective in the Visual Culture of Classical Antiquity*, he convincingly argues that ancient painted linear perspective, as seen in the Second Style, was based on a study and philosophy of mirrors and catroptics, the study of reflections. Looking at such an image, then, is much like looking into a mirror (the tool through which a human can come to know himself) in which one's own reflection does not appear. Though one cannot see one's own physical self in a wall painting, nonetheless the painted images may be conceived as reflections of a viewer's mental self, that is, a reflection of and threshold into the internal mental world, the text-world itself. A threshold by its very nature is permeable, and so any plane treated as a threshold (whether physically transversable or not) will add the impression of a continuity of space and, more importantly, the ability to enter it. The commonly painted *scenae frons* may partly function in such a manner, and true threshold planes, such as entryways into houses or public spaces may also possess such a power of repositioning and forceful (re)placement.

As previously mentioned, scholars such as Clarke, Ling, and Leach have understood Roman wall-painting as oftentimes reflective of and appropriate to the activities that were intended to happen in a particular space, the paintings perhaps even working specifically to influence and shape those activities. In this way they "set the
stage for the owner," a sentiment that might reflect echoes of philosophical currents running through the Hellenistic and Republican worlds. This more intellectual element implied by the use of stage set designs was most clearly expressed by the Hellenistic philosopher Bion of Borysthenes. Bion used the theater to illustrate his doctrine of peace of mind through detachment, arguing that whatever situation fortune may have placed one into (whatever "role" fortune wrote), one must play his role to the best of his ability. Indeed, the first emperor Augustus was said to have asked on his deathbed whether he had "play[ed] [his] part well in the comedy of life."

John Clarke, however, ultimately sees the primary desire of the Second Style as one concerned with the articulation of luxury and richness, with a "penchant for grandiose display and regal associations." Like the First Style, then, the Second will create a text-world in the mind of a viewer set in a fantasy world of elite luxury, even more lavishly realized.

This style is perhaps most famously demonstrated in the House of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale (figure 22), a entire room of which has been faithfully recreated in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. In this room we can see the Second Style's highest expression; the walls are painted as if containing spaces between architectural columns or other openings which look out into a landscape or cityscape beyond. While the scenes between the columns are not continuous from panel to panel (though the constant blue sky background does lend a certain continuity), “the overall framework of a podium, Corinthian columns, and a cornice creates a coherent space.”

26 Bergmann et al., 29.
With such images one cannot help but again think of Alberti's metaphor of the window. Here, however, we have literal virtual windows looking out over fictional vistas. As Oliver Grau explains, “Through the device of seeming to extend the wall surface beyond a single plane, the room appears larger than its actual size and draws the visitor's gaze into the painting, blurring distinctions between real space and image space.”27 Thus, the wall painter has created both a portal to another virtual world as well as begun to blend this illusory place with the real space of the room.

Without a doubt, the Romans displayed a great love of the framed view,

especially at large country villas such as the Villa of Ariadni at Stabiae, in which extended sight-lines within the villa and from windows to the landscapes beyond were utilized to fantastic effect. To take advantage of prime locations along the coast and ocean views such locations allowed, Roman architects developed a particular villa plan, which Alexander McKay terms the *porticus* plan and which utilized long colonnades to frame and accentuate views of the surrounding terrain.\(^\text{28}\) As John Clarke has noted, "It was not raw nature, but framed views of nature, that the cultured Roman sought."\(^\text{29}\) This implies that a mediation of the view is important for maximum effect, a fact that further helps to explain how an exceedingly mediated viewpoint, as offered by wall-painting, could in the Roman mind be particularly transportative, perhaps even beyond actual vistas of nature and landscape.

Back at the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor, as with the First Style painting discussed earlier, a viewer in this Second Style room will first enter the discourse through building the text-world of his contemporary reality, that is, the house that he inhabits (see figure 15). As before, the time is the present, and any objects present would be whatever domestic detritus was housed within the room, which in this case would likely be a bed or couch of some kind given the room's likely function as a *cubiculum* bedroom. Again, enactors would include the viewer and any family members or other guests or persons with him at the time. They could be engaged in any manner of domestic activity appropriate to the space. But as with the First Style painting from the House of Sallust, this initial text-world quickly branches out beyond these boundaries. The shift to a text-

\(^{29}\) Clarke, *Houses*, 20.
world of elite luxury (a boulomaic modal-world) has already been noted (see figure 17), but the Second Style allows for more extensive text-worlds that the simpler First.

To demonstrate, let us consider more carefully two sections of this painting ensemble. The eastern and western walls of the *cubiculum* contain very similar parallel scenes. In the center of each wall appear red Corinthian-style columns, echoing the peristyle courtyard onto which the room opens. In-between these columns is a *syzygia*, a type of shrine comprised of two pillars supporting an entablature, surrounded by a bounding wall screening it off from the viewer (figure 23). Within this shrine stands a statue of goddess holding torches. Thus, the first world-switch created by a viewer is one that transports him to the world of a religious sanctuary, to the realm of the sacred (figure 24). Here, the world will contain, for example, the ritual objects used in worship as well as the priests and priestesses of the cult. Other worshipers may also be present as well as, in the mind of the viewer, the goddess herself.

Having been transported to the world infused with the sacred, another text-world also forces its way into the discourse. A viewer engaged with a temple shrine will be unable resist calling to mind the greater mythology of the goddess of the shrine as well as the entirety of Roman mythology and religion generally (figure 25). From there is called to mind the world of the oral tradition of such myths along with traditions of song, literature, and theater (figure 26). A viewer will also be confronted with text-worlds representing religious belief itself. Dealing with belief, these worlds can be classified as epistemic modal-worlds. The first is that in which divinities like gods are believed to in fact exist, likely the one which an ancient viewer will by default inhabit (figure 27). But
Figure 23. Detail, Cubiculum, Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor (Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY: 03.14.13a–g), Image copyright Peter Roan, used under CC license

Figure 24. Synistor Cubiculum World-switch 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORLD--SWITCH 1</th>
<th>(enactor-accessible)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>World-building elements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong> Present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong> Religious sanctuary complex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objects:</strong> Ritual accoutrements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enactors:</strong> Priests, priestesses, attendants, goddess</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>worship, sacrifice, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WORLD-SWITCH 2
(enactor-accessible)

World-building elements

Time: Mythic past and present
Location: Divine realm
Objects: Divine attributes, mythic objects
Enactors: Gods, goddesses, divinities, demi-gods, etc.

fight, meddle in the mortal world, etc.

Figure 25. Synistor Cubiculum World-switch 2

WORLD-SWITCH 7
(enactor-accessible)

World-building elements

Location: World of mythic oral tradition, song, literature, and theater

Enactors: Mythic characters, actors, bards, playwrights, etc.

engage in mythic deeds perform sing write

Figure 26. Synistor Cubiculum World-switch 7
Figure 27. Synistor Cubicum Epistemic modal-world 1

Figure 28. Synistor Cubicum Epistemic modal-world 2
like any binary choice, the world's opposite, that gods, etc. do not exist, will co-exist in
the viewer's mind, here represented by a chart with a dotted outline (figure 28). A viewer
may also be tempted, especially seeing depictions of the gods and heroes (a factor that
will become more significant in the Third and Fourth Styles), to project themselves into
that personage, seeing vicariously through their point of view—the character acts as a
focalization for the viewer's *origo*.

Such an action is common for a modern person, for instance, when reading a novel or watching a movie, and a painting may invite projection in the same manner.

Moreover, the advent of peopled landscapes in the wall painting of this style
(according to Pliny the invention of Studius, the first "landscape painter") may also speak
to this same manner of projection into a third-party point of view. The very act of
including images of people in these scenes speaks to a desire to inhabit the fictive spaces.
The desire to inhabit landscapes may also have played a role in the development of
Roman gardens, which will be discussed in chapter 5.

Returning to the Synistor *cubiculum* and expanding one's gaze further along the
wall, the bounded sanctuary blends into a gated boundary wall with a large complex of
buildings behind it. The viewer then becomes aware that the sanctuary in the center of
the wall is part of a large country villa estate, and that it is to this estate that he has been
transported. This awareness leads to the formation of another text-world to house the
world of this new villa, its form, its decoration, and its activity (figure 29). What is more,
the elaborate architectural structure of the painted fantasy villa (figure 30) is clearly

30 Gavins, 85.
shown as the composite of individually rendered rooms, whose differing color, shading, and perspective add to the ad hoc effect of the composition. This, in a way, mirrors the effect of the multiple text-worlds that occupy the viewer’s attention and are compiled to embody and give form to the discourse, the complete web of which is diagrammed in figure 36.

| WORLD-SWITCH 3  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(enactor-accessible)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>World-building elements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong> Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong> Fantasy villa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objects:</strong> Villa buildings, furnishings, tools, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Enactors:** Patron, clients, servants, family, guests  
| receive guests, manage, etc.  
| work |

Figure 29. Synistor Cubiculum World-switch 3

All these details work, upon inspection of the paintings, to blur the distinction between interior and exterior space and create an ambiguity that helps to transition from the one to the other. Bergmann et al. see the common inclusion of masks and ritual offerings in the visual program acting as "'shifters,' transition points between realms," that signify a potential transition and aid in reorienting a viewer.32 In this way, they act as

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32 Bettina Bergmann, Stefano De Caro, Joan R. Mertens, and Rudolf Meyer. *Roman Frescoes from Boscoreale: The Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor in Reality and Virtual Reality*. New York:
"focalizers" in Text-World Theory parlance, points through which the discourse is filtered.

The north wall of the cubiculum expands the number of possible text-worlds even further. Here a viewer encounters a depiction of an outdoor landscape of ivy covered grottoes (figure 31) containing spurting fountains within their cave-like confines. Lattice-work trellises sit atop the grottoes, heavy with ripe bunches of grapes. Within

Figure 30. Detail, Cubiculum, Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor (Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY: 03.14.13a–g), Image copyright Alethe, used under CC license

this one wall we already have instigated world-shifts sending a viewer to the sacred realm of the nymphs (figure 32), the world of country villa wine production (figure 33), and, through the association with wine, to worlds of the specific mythology and religion of the god Bacchus (figure 34).

Things become even more convoluted when the yellow panel beneath the real window of the room is examined. Within the monochrome yellow emerge images of other landscapes, of buildings, bridges (which by their very nature evoke a leading pathway), and even people to populate them, necessitating the creation of additional text-

\begin{figure}
  \centering
  \includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure31.jpg}
  \caption{Detail, Cubiculum, Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor (reproduction from the Antiquarium of Boscoreale)}
  \end{figure}
**WORLD-SWITCH 4**
(enactor-accessible)

**World-building elements**

**Time:** Present  
**Location:** Grotto  
**Objects:** Fountain, ivy vines  
**Enactors:** Nymphs, animals, fountain  

\[ \text{animate nature, etc.} \rightarrow \text{flows} \]

*Figure 32. Synistor Cubiculum World-switch 4*

---

**WORLD-SWITCH 5**
(enactor-accessible)

**World-building elements**

**Time:** Present  
**Location:** Wine arbor  
**Objects:** Trellaces, grape vines, harvesting tools  
**Enactors:** Vinyard workers  

\[ \text{tend to and harvest grapes} \]

*Figure 33. Synistor Cubiculum World-switch 5*
**WORLD-SWITCH 6**
(enactor-accessible)

World-building elements

Time: Mythic past and present  
Location: Realm of Bacchic mythology  
Objects: Wine, drinking cups, thyrsoi, etc.  
Enactors: Bacchus, fauns, maenads

↓

drink, revel, cavalcade

*Figure 34. Synistor Cubiculum World-switch 6*

**WORLD-SWITCH 8**
(enactor-accessible)

World-building elements

Time: Present  
Location: Yellow landscapes  
Objects: Bridges, colonnades, boats  
Enactors: Fishermen, townsfolk, etc.

↓  ↓

fish converse, etc.

*Figure 35. Synistor Cubiculum World-switch 8*
Figure 36. Synistor Cubicum Compiled Text-world Chart
worlds (figure 35). The material that the yellow panel is supposed to evoke is also left ambiguous, "recall[ing] materials such as parchment, marble, or metal," further blending the real world of the viewer with the fictive ones of the fresco by both reflecting other materials that may be present in the room and forcing a viewer to negotiate its own ambiguity.  

The monochrome landscape is an element that will continue into the Third and Fourth Styles as well. In many instances, as can be seen, for example, at the House of the First Floor at Pompeii, these landscapes may be framed with a thin bounding line. Such a minimal attempt at framing accomplishes the opposite, it makes it quite apparent that the background color of the landscape scene overflows the frame and continues across a larger portion of the wall. Such an overflow, in making the continuity of the wall explicit, makes the presence of Deleuze's out-of-field explicit and consciously perceived. It is almost a visible out-of-field, if such a thing is indeed possible.

The single most important element of this north wall, however, is not actually a part of its painting, but rather the actual physical window built into the wall that looked out onto the real world landscape outside the room. As Bergmann notes, "With the wooden shutters open, the scenes either contrasted with or continued views of the real landscape outside...Outside and inside, reality and simulation vied for attention." The painted birds in the grotto, along with the gilt flowers on the red Corinthian column in the center of the wall also reflect what would have been seen through the window, the sounds of the real birds outside helping to animate the painted birds within.

33 Bergmann et. al., 29-30.
35 Bergmann et al., 30.
In addition to aiding us in understanding how wall painting can be negotiated to transport a viewer, considering Roman fresco through this lens, and assuming that this desire for transportation is a constant in wall-painting, can also allow us to offer another factor in the development of the traditional four Pompeian styles beyond mere changes in aesthetic taste.

The Second Style was further divided into two phases by Heinrick Beyen. The first dates roughly from the time of Sulla to Caesar (80-40 BCE). This phase is characterized by a progression from a closed to an open wall, that is, to a wall pierced by fictive windows and other apertures. The second phase dates from the Second Triumvirate to the early reign of the first emperor Augustus (40-15 BCE). This phase is characterized by a change of direction away from open vistas back to a closed, solid wall with a new focus on a central picture and new aesthetics in which pattern and color become more important than a simulation of reality.36

The First Style, while transportative to a degree, nonetheless is still characterized by identifiably domestic architecture, if often evocative of a particularly lavish type, and so representative of the "here." The Second Style, then, with its common focus on vistas to landscapes and cityscapes beyond the confines of the room came to shift the focus onto a location outside of the room, to an elsewhere or a “there.” The Third Style, with its re-imposition of the solid wall, partially reflects the “placedness” of the First Style, but its oftentimes surreal fantastical architecture, vivid colors, and mythological scenes give it a much different, otherworldly character. It is as if a viewer has arrived at and entered the world of the “there” only glimpsed through the apertures of the Second Style and is now

36 Ling, 23.
experiencing the elsewhere.

A slight distinction must be made, however, between the “there” and the “elsewhere.” The “there” is that place that is represented (for example, in Second Style vistas) as opposed to the “here” of the viewer. The “elsewhere” is the mental construct and mental image that the “there” engenders but to which it is not necessarily equivalent, a mixture of the “there” and “here” filtered through consciousness. Scenae frons elements in the Second Style and pinocothecae “picture galleries” of the Third, in a way, mitigate the “there,” emphasizing the mental and in so doing moving it closer to the nature of the “elsewhere,” which helps to create a more vivid transportation. The re-imposition of the wall at the end of the Second Style and into the Third has traditionally been seen as a development of aesthetic tastes. However, in light of the virtual and a desire for a transportative experience, if we consider generally the goal of these frescoes to be transportation to an elsewhere, then the act of moving to the Third Style may be seen as the manifestation of the elsewhere.

A return to the story of the Greek painter Zeuxis may be instructive. Beyond a simple expression of the Roman love for mimesis, the story of Zeuxis and his grapes may carry additional import to our approach to virtual transportation when considered more carefully. In this episode Zeuxis creates his grape painting as part of a competition with rival painter Parrhasius. While Zeuxis' painting is able to fool birds through it's life-like quality, Parrhasius manages to fool Zeuxis himself, who, in his impatience to get on with the contest, attempts to remove the cloth curtain covering Parhasius' painting only to realize to his embarrassment that the curtain is the painting. Thus, the painting that
emerges as the most illusory, and therefore virtual, is not the one that recreates a viewer's gaze into space to observe a three-dimensional object, but rather the one that presents a solid impenetrable plane, the curtain. In this way, the plane as surface is more affecting than the plane as vista.

If the Roman interest in this episode was as strong as Pliny would have us believe, then the ultimate replacement of the open windows of the Second Style by the closed walls of the Third Style may likewise be at least in part a realization of the inherent transportative qualities of the closed surface, or the more effective, varied, and imaginative manner in which a viewer could mentally grapple with such a surface as opposed to an always imperfect recreation of three-dimensional space. Such a reason may also in part be behind the decline in popularity of illusionistic mosaic floor emblemata. While such images certainly added to the luxury of a space, helping to signify the greater importance of a room, they could also disorient a viewer by presenting a viewing perspective that did not match his own. Walking atop them would also shatter any illusion of the continuity of space.37

Because mimesis can never be truly achieved, artists moved to other techniques of transportation. A floor image is more quickly rendered ineffectual by standing on it, and so is abandoned sooner; a wall, lacking tactile contact, will withstand slightly more scrutiny, but must also ultimately be deemed unconvincing, leading to the exploration of other methods, which include a deliberate focus on less optical and more mental imagery.

37 Clarke Houses, 40-41.
Third and Fourth Style Painting

The so-called Third Style of Pompeian fresco offers an altogether different sort of presentation, characterized by a “rejection[ of] illusionism in favour of surface effects and fastidious ornament.”38 A conventional Third Style decorative program may at first glance seem to be a step backward in the creation of virtual space. It is generally characterized by segments of solid color, often black, red, or white, arranged paratactically on the wall, emphasizing once more the physicality of the wall and its surface as surface. Additionally, in the Third Style developed depictions of very fanciful and unrealistic architecture, albeit now concerned primarily with ornamental decoration. The painted architecture of the Second Style, generally well-grounded in the possibilities of real-world architecture, is now taken toward the extremes of the imagination. Columns become impossibly thin and svelte, supporting architecture in manners that the basic laws of gravity would render unconstructable outside the realm of painting.39 The Fourth Style does not present us with much in the way of new stylistic innovation but rather is characterized by a mixing of Second and Third Style elements as well as a return to an opening up of the wall to a virtual “outside,” albeit with a less illusionistic intention.

These new styles were not to everyone's taste, however. Famous Roman architect Vitruvius lamented the movement away from mimetic scenes and in his treatise, de Architectura, writes:

But these [earlier wall paintings], which were representations derived from reality,
are now scorned by the undiscriminating tastes of the present. For now there are monstrosities painted on stuccoed walls rather than true-to-life images based on actual things...And yet upon seeing these false images [people] do not disapprove of them, but on the contrary they delight in them.40

Third Style Roman wall-painting tended to abjure either the illusionistic masonry of the the First Style or the fake windows of the Second, favoring instead much smaller images, often tiny landscapes floating in large seas of solid color that were themselves surrounded by fanciful architectural frames. Where most standard accounts present this “development” as motivated by more or less arbitrary changes in taste, I see it driven instead by a desire to turn the viewer's world-building inward, as it were, through greater

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 37. Floating Figure on a Blue Field, House of the Ancient Hunt, Pompeii*

engagement with his or her powers of imagination. The small, floating landscapes or other figures sometimes found in Third and Fourth Style paintings (figure 37) functioned, I would argue, as “condensation nuclei,” that is, as focal points for imaginative projection and transportation that were all the more effective because they demanded greater mental involvement from the viewer. In this way they might be placed into the Text-world Theory category of "focalizers," that is, elements through which the discourse is filtered.41

Notions of the gaze, such as discussed by Hans Belting, may also come into play here, in particular what happens when the gaze searches for itself. This occurs when the gaze is confronted with a blank or nearly blank image (as which the large solid swaths often encountered in the Third Style may function) in which it finds nothing else to latch onto and thus sees itself and its own gazing.42 The image as perceived by the gaze then mixes with all the other mental images that float about in the mind of the viewer. As Belting has put it, the gaze discovers that it “has company.” In this way one’s perception of an image is always informed and influenced by other images that have been perceived and recalled in precisely the manner in which Text-world Theory presupposes and attempts to map and analyze.

The inclusion of large swaths of solid unbroken color in numerous examples of this style may also act in much the same manner as early rock paintings (as David Summers describes), that is, as an unbroken, unified surface that functions as "the

41 Gavins, 46.
grounds for the representation of any possible event in any possible field of vision." Thus, these sorts of fields become amorphous and polyvalent; they can be interpreted in myriad ways by a viewer, aiding in his projection through the streamlining of the transition between present reality and imagined text-world. Indeed, these paintings, in their distancing from a representation of a mimetic reality seek instead to engage with a viewer on a more emotional level.

Furthermore, in the Third Style especially, one also finds the creation of what have been called “picture galleries,” that is, depictions of painted panels either “hung” on the wall or supported by decorative stands—in effect paintings of paintings. These "virtual" pinacothecae in the Third Style might still be seen to relate to a class-based transportation in that they recreated in paint, much like First Style polished marble revetment, the trappings of an upper class elite space, in this case actual galleries of real Greek panel paintings by famous master painters. Certainly, the late Third Style and especially the Fourth commonly recreated the effect of rich textiles hung on the walls, similar to those described, for example, in the pavilion of the Hellenistic monarch Ptolemy Philadelphos.

In many instances of the Third Style, especially, for example, in houses along the Via della Abbondanza in Pompeii (a major thoroughfare and one of the richest streets in the city), the mythological scenes shown in these false picture galleries utilized a continuous narrative, that is, depicted multiple stages of a narrative within a single composition (whose further significance will be discussed in chapter 7). Eleanor Leach

43 Summers, 436.
44 Clarke, Houses, 67.
has argued that this demonstrates a shift away from decoration focused primarily on status signifiers for public consumption to one focused on private taste and significance, with a great influence provided by the world of the theater.\textsuperscript{45} Certainly, a greater personal significance of the images would be perfectly in keeping with a desire for greater virtual transportation, in which personal engagement with the image is paramount. However, Leach, like most scholars is too focused on finding larger societal and social aspects behind every facet of domestic decoration.

In any case, Leach is right to point out that such picture gallery compositions were particularly effective in the “highlighting of subjects.”\textsuperscript{46} Traditionally, this highlighting has been seen as decoration intended for contemplation and comparison—items of discussion at dinner parties, such as put on by Petronius' Trymalchio, or with guests or clients. However, in addition to such a “conversation starter” function, such isolated and highlighted images would have worked to further aid a viewer in creating and shifting between distinct text worlds both by again creating “condensation nuclei” to prick the attention and give the imagination something on which to build as well as creating a composition of the elements of the wall that partly mirrors the juxtaposed quality of the web of mental text-worlds. Such a reflection of the viewer's mental organization of elements of the discourse naturally allows him to more quickly engage with the paintings.

A particularly elaborate late example of Third Style painting (also beginning to demonstrate elements of the Fourth Style) can be seen in the tablinum of the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto at Pompeii (figure 38). Situated on the Via di Nola, at the

\textsuperscript{45} Leach, 149-51.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 151.
periphery of the part of the city that has been thus far excavated, this house is smaller
than many of the townhouses of the imperial era in the city, but is nonetheless richly
appointed with Third and Fourth Style wall painting.

Standing in the *tablinum* and gazing at the North wall, a viewer is confronted at
first with a large and convoluted architectural expanse, again reminiscent of a *scenae*
frons stage set (see figure 26), now given a much dreamier quality than its Second Style counterparts through the use of particularly slender, unrealistic architecture. This stage is no stage that exists on earth, only perhaps in the realm of the divine, or of dreams. Thus, again, these additional text-worlds are called forth (see figure 25). Throughout the wall theatrical masks hang, both acting as further signifiers of the stage and again as "shifters" to lead a viewer from the realm of the real world into those engendered by the images of the wall.

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<tr>
<th>World-building elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong> Present</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong> Blooming garden/nature</td>
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<td><strong>Objects:</strong> Fence, plans</td>
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*Figure 39. Fronto Tablinum World-switch 3*

The wall is divided into three primary registers. The bottom register at the base of the wall contains a short latticework boundary fence that recedes in the middle, surrounding a garden fountain and creating diagonals that serve to create a sense of being drawn inward toward the wall. Flowering plants and brightly colored birds along with this fence create the sense of a transportation to a verdant garden space (figure 39).
In the main central register garlands of flowers act as frames to divide it into three main vertical zones. These garlands also serve to remind the viewer of gardens and fertile nature more generally, adding a further broad text-world to the growing cacophony of competing worlds. The central focus of this main register is a single mythological scene imitating a separate panel painting in the characteristic "picture gallery" manner of the Third Style. The scene shows the god Ares surprising the goddess Aphrodite among onlookers, including Aphrodite's son Cupid in the center of the composition. The viewer is thus confronted with both a text-world for the scene itself (figure 40) as well as for the larger world of mythology relating to the depicted divinities (figure 41). Again the text-worlds of Roman religion and mythology generally (figure 25) and the competing

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**World-building elements**

- **Time:** Indeterminate (mythic past and presents)
- **Location:** Indoors (domestic setting)
- **Objects:** Columns, stools, cushions, textiles
- **Enactors:** Aphrodite, Ares, Cupid, attendant figures
  - sits
  - approaches, touches
  - holds bow
  - enter, converse

*Figure 40. Fronto Tablinum World-switch 4*
WORLD-SWITCH 5

World-building elements

Time: Mythic past and present
Location: Olympus, mortal world, etc.
Objects: Bow and arrows, other attributive objects, etc.
Enactors: Aphrodite, Ares, Cupid

...mythic exploits, preside over divine domains, etc.

Figure 41. Fronto Tablinum World-switch 5

WORLD-SWITCH 6
(enactor-accessible)

World-building elements

Time: Mythic past/present (time of the Aphrodite and Ares scene)
Location: Indeterminate (world beyond doorway)
Objects: Indeterminate
Enactors: Indeterminate

Figure 42. Fronto Tablinum World-switch 6
epistemic modal-worlds of religious belief (figures 27 and 28) are also likewise present.

Directly above Cupid, three figures, two young women and a young man, enter from an open doorway. The space beyond the door is painted a light sky blue, giving the sense that the three figures have just entered from outdoors. This outdoor world, then, also enters the viewer's mind, creating another text-world which, because no details of its nature are given explicitly by the image, is particularly amorphous, limited only by the viewer's imagination (figure 42).

Furthermore, the gazes of the figures in this scene add to its ability to engage with a viewer. Most gaze at Aphrodite, seated toward the left edge of the panel. Aphrodite herself, on the other hand, gazes outward toward the viewer, breaking the self-containedness of the scene and helping the viewer to feel as though he is not simply a spectator but a participant in the gathering, pulling him into the text-world of the scene. The two seated females at the right of the scene also gaze outward at the viewer, amplifying the gaze of Aphrodite. The lead woman of the group of three entering through the central doorway is the only figure not gazing at either Aphrodite or the viewer. Instead she glances back through the doorway through which she has just passed, a glance that further moves a viewer outward through that door into the realm beyond. To that same end, the wings of Cupid are echoed in the winged headpiece of the youth positioned above him. Both are in line with the open doorway and both might be intended, given their positioning, to evoke an outward flight into the blue sky beyond the door.

A sense of passage or entry is further underscored by the central structure of the
topmost register of the wall, where two miniature staircases lead to half-opened doors, watched over by seated griffins on their lintels. Thus, a viewer is confronted with the text-worlds of the lands and culture of the Orient (figure 43), the origin of the griffin motif and a region from which the Romans were particularly wont to borrow, as well as a text-world representing that which lies beyond the doorways (figure 44). Since what exists beyond the doors is not explicitly shown, this particular text-world is, even more than the space outside the door in the central mythological panel, ambiguous. Also leading to and from this unarticulated ambiguous place are balconies overlooking the main open doorways in this upper register.

Additional canopied doorways that seem to also lead to this space (though certainly not definitively) overlook the central red panel of this upper zone which houses

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World-building elements

**Time:** Present

**Location:** The Orient

**Objects:** Oriental accoutrements (real or imagined)

**Enactors:** Griffins

*Figure 43. Fronto Tablinum World-switch 7*

WORLD-SWITCH 8
(enactor-accessible)

World-building elements

Time: Present
Location: Indeterminate (world beyond doorway)
Objects: Indeterminate
Enactors: Indeterminate

Figure 44. Fronto Tablinum World-switch 8

WORLD-SWITCH 9
(enactor-accessible)

World-building elements

Time: Mythic past and present
Location: Divine realm
Objects: Tripod, attributes of Apollo, etc.
Enactors: Apollo

\[\text{slays serpent, etc.}\]

Figure 45. Fronto Tablinum World-switch 9
the image of a tripod, again referring to a divine context (in this case one involving specifically the god Apollo [figure 45], for whom the tripod was a sacred object).

Moreover, the solid bright red background behind the tripod, a vivid color that certainly captures one's attention, recurs at numerous points across the wall. This punctuation with color not only adds simple aesthetic interest to the painting, but also helps to unify the overall composition, providing a visual parallel to the drawing together of disparate text-worlds in the mind of the viewer. These individual worlds must be worked through in the mind of the viewer to make connections between them (and given their generic quality, one might weave all manner of story threads to sew them together) in order to make sense of the wall before him.

**Figure 46. Fronto Tablinum World-switch 10**
Finally, there remain three independently framed scenes within the wall composition. The first sits below the central tripod panel of the upper register and depicts freshly caught fish hung on a wall and displayed in a basket. The image allows for the creation of a text-world of an ocean, lake, or river and the fishing activity that led to the bountiful catch displayed (figure 46). The other two framed scenes are located on the left and right sides of the central register. Atop two elaborate filigree stands, displayed like panel paintings separate from the wall, sit two images of villa landscapes. Colonnaded villa houses sit in verdant landscapes, surrounded by flowing rivers, sloping hills, and flowering trees. Here again, we might have both a world-switch to the world of the true aristocratic elite as well as a type of boulomaic modal-world, representing the wish of the viewer to someday himself possess such prosperous country estates (see again figure 17). All the various activities of such an estate also necessitate additional text-worlds: the patron receiving guests, the fishermen in their boat, the gardeners tending the grounds, etc. (see again figure 29).

Later Styles

While the primary four styles of Pompeian painting have dominated discussions of Roman wall-painting (and, for sake of brevity are our main focus here), styles continue to develop beyond them. One of these later styles deserves a brief mention here. During the Severan period a new style of stark line painting takes over. This style often employs vivid red lines on a white background, creating geometric shapes and linear patterns. What this manner lacks in illusionism it makes up for in liveliness. The curvilinear red
Figure 47. Fronto Tablinum Compiled Text-world Chart
designs applied in an imperfect, almost free-form manner create a certain vibrating sense of energy that animates what are otherwise rather crude compositions.

While the stark nature of these linear Severan walls seems far removed from painting styles of centuries earlier, their animated quality was nonetheless anticipated in earlier painting experimentation. For example, at the Antonine period House of Jupiter and Ganymede at Ostia Antica, figures of the eponymous characters overlap their painted frames; this "lack of centering displaces them spatially, creating an effect of animation and contradictory movement that sabotaged the architectural logic of the wall system." 48 In any case, here, too, in the Severan period, as in the Third and Fourth Pompeian styles, the frantic and abstract quality of the painting connects with a viewer on an emotional level more so than an optical, mimetic one.

In the next chapter we will explore this ability of a single plane to create a vivid transportative experience in greater depth by focusing on a single case study, that of the Forma Urbis Romae, a monumental marble map of the city of Rome.

Chapter 4: The Forma Urbis Romae and Virtual Space

From the whole of the ancient Mediterranean world, there has survived only a single major city map, that of the so-called Forma Urbis Romae. Sometimes referred to as the Severan Plan of Rome, as it was commissioned during the reign of the Emperor Septimius Severus around the year 203 CE, this map of Rome was carved into marble slabs and hung in the interior of the Templum Pacis at the heart of the city in the region of the Imperial Fora (figure 48). The original map was truly colossal in size, standing over four stories tall and covering an area of 281 square yards, representing the whole of the city in roughly a scale of 1:240.\(^1\) The level of detail imparted into the map was equally staggering, with every structure in the city recorded, from the grandest imperial palace to the most common of households. These were mapped not only in exterior outline, but also displayed measured representations of all interior rooms, down to the location of staircases to upper levels.\(^2\)

This monumental map remained intact until the sixth-century CE, when the wall on which it was installed was incorporated into a Christian monastery and the map may have been deliberately destroyed because of its pagan associations.\(^3\) Its remnants were

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3. Anderson, 70.
discovered in 1562, and despite the often rough treatment of the recovered fragments over the following centuries, the map has struck the imagination of scholars thereafter. Since the time of its discovery, 1194 total fragments of the map have been identified,
comprising roughly 12% of the original plan. 4 Despite this poor rate of preservation, the surviving fragments have been of immense value for the study of the layout of the ancient city and the identification and re-creation of its buildings and monuments. 5 However, these aims have preoccupied scholars almost to the exclusion of all other roads of inquiry. Among these is a full consideration of the ancient viewer's experience of the imposing physical presence of the monument itself and how the format and presentation of the map affected a viewer's understanding of its message. Utilizing Text-world Theory to diagram and explore this negotiation, I argue that the Forma Urbis worked to create a certain transportative virtual experience that effectively aided its presentation of the propaganda and ideological program of Septimius Severus.

First, I will demonstrate how the map created for a viewer a certain transportative experience, again understood through the out-of-field. Through this lens the map, due in large part to its location, position, and presentation, will be seen to have acted in such a manner to create a forceful “closed set” that imbued it with Deleuze's metaphysical sense of duration and animating “spirit.” By demanding an onlooker's attention and filling his field of vision, the map in a way denies the view of the rest of room. The presentation of the city as an insistent whole also works to negate the world outside the room. The map is the whole and so forms a complete set unto itself which upon viewing envelopes the viewer. This enveloping, mental rather than physical, thus “hermetically seals” the room, helping to create the believable illusion of a virtual space. As eighteenth-century panoramas or modern-day IMAX theaters cut off the outside world to impose their own,

so too the Forma Urbis makes its reality the only path through which the *origo* can proceed.

Second, I will examine how this process of viewing and the mental understanding of the map played into the ideological propaganda purposes of the Forma Urbis as intended by its commissioner, the emperor Septimius Severus. In particular, the map reinforced notions of Roman unity and the domination of the state over the individual (and thus the public over the private) by emphasizing (and in part creating) a shared experience of space.

*The Function of the Forma Urbis*

Most early scholarship on the Forma Urbis tried to assign some kind of practical function to the map; after all, the plan had been used by scholars primarily to analyze Roman topography and the design of the ancient city, and so it is no wonder that scholars would wish to see ancient Romans using the map in a similar manner. One such proposed practical application was that it served a cadastral function, that is, the plan was a map used to record land ownership for purposes of taxation and legal record. However, there are immediately obvious problems with the Forma Urbis serving such a function.

First of all, the Severan Plan has very few inscriptions. When they do occur, inscriptions are almost exclusively limited to public buildings and imperial monuments and so private properties are not differentiated from each other, thereby making it impossible to use the plan as a record of property ownership. This, coupled with the fact that because of its sheer size the map would have been difficult to consult in detail make
it extraordinarily impractical. Additionally, cadastral maps are by their very nature temporary and need to be updated with every sale or inheritance of property and with all new construction and demolition. This makes a stone cadastral map absurd, as once carved it is immutable. Within its very creation lies its own obsolescence.\(^6\)

However, despite this obvious flaw with a stone cadastral map, such maps are known to exist. These, unlike the Severan Plan, are covered with detailed inscriptions and labels denoting property ownership and so are unequivocally functional in design. Why such impractical maps were made remains a matter of debate. David Reynolds surmises that perhaps “building construction and demolition were uncommon enough that the architectural layout... still might serve as a generally useful permanent record on which to record temporary and changeable annotations of private ownership, painted on but not engraved.”\(^7\) However, Reynolds observes that no traces of paint have been detected in any un-engraved portion of the Severan Plan.

Reynolds continues to dismantle the idea of a practical function for the map by noting that it is both graphically ambiguous as well as inaccurate because of its eschewing of many of the normal conventions of representation used in Roman urban survey maps. For example, where such plans normally utilize a double line to indicate walls, creating a sort of wall outline, the Severan plan uses a single line for both walls and lesser architectural features. This creates a confusing situation with “ambiguity in many areas, where it is uncertain whether a line should be read (for example) as a wall, a

\(^6\) Anderson, 70.

step, or the edge of a roof.” Reynolds, 121. Couple this with the difficulty of reading such a large and inaccessible map and the problem is raised to the level of the impossible. Since this ambiguity has caused trouble for modern scholars who can examine the map fragments close up and in detail, one can only wonder how an ancient viewer looking at the map in its original context would have wrestled with such issues.

These impracticalities of the Severan Plan have led James Anderson to other explanations for its use. In particular, he sees the map's location in the Templum Pacis, specifically in its relation to the libraries that were housed in that structure, as being key for its understanding. He writes:

The libraries that flanked the sanctuary of Pax were used in part as archives for the city survey administered by the office of the Praefectus Urbi; the Plan hung on a central wall that divided the two large rooms of the south library. Its function in that position must have been purely decorative, separating the vestibule of the archive from the library itself and serving as a graphic reminder to all visitors of what the archive contained. Anderson, 70.

While certainly the location of the map should be seen as important, and this aspect shall be examined further, Anderson's purely decorative identification, while certainly partly true, is far from satisfying. Such an elaborate and labor intensive object, both in the carving of the marble and more significantly in the collecting of the data that underpins the map, would surely have been produced with more than simply adornment in mind. Again, a propagandistic function seems to be most likely for an imperial monument.

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8 Reynolds, 121.
9 Anderson, 70.
The Forma Urbis and Virtual Transportation

Upon approaching the Forma Urbis Romae, a viewer, as with the wall painting discussed last chapter, would be able to use the image to foster transportation through the creation of mental worlds. The experience of this work, too, can be better understood through charting this transportation using Text-world Theory diagrams. The first world that viewer would create is necessarily that of the present reality of the room in which the map was installed. Perhaps this is the office of the Praefectus Urbi, perhaps not, but in any case it is this world that forms the initial text-world of a viewer's discourse with the map (figure 49). In this participant accessible world the time is naturally the present, objects could be tables, desks, instruments of the Praefectus, other maps, etc., and enactors, in addition to the viewer himself, could include government officials, other members of the public, and so on.

Upon focusing on the Forma Urbis, a viewer will naturally been transferred to a second text-world, that representing the present external reality of the city of Rome more generally (figure 50). Being that this text-world is based in large part on the viewer's own knowledge and first-hand experience of the city, this text-world is participant-accessible, that is, the representation of the city in the map and in the mental world is verifiable through the participant's own experience. Furthermore, this new text-world would have been able to quickly mutate in focus and specificity as a viewer, gazing over the map, recognizes, for instance, if he is a resident, his very own neighborhood or even, given the detail of the map, his own house (figure 51). With this ever narrowing focus of text-worlds, the various world-building elements associated with each also
**TEXT-WORLD 1**
(participant-accessible)

**World-building elements**

**Time:** Present  
**Location:** Tempulum Pacis (office of the Praefectus Urbi)  
**Objects:** Tables, chairs, scrolls, lamps, etc.

**Enactors:** Viewer, government officials  

↓

converses, observes, works, etc.

*Figure 49. Forma Urbis Text-world 1*

**WORLD-SWITCH 1**
(participant-accessible)

**World-building elements**

**Time:** Present  
**Location:** City of Rome  
**Enactors:** Citizens, merchants, slaves, foreigners, etc.

*Figure 50. Forma Urbis World-switch 1*
populate the viewer's mind, followed by ever more text-worlds for every conceivable context related to these new places to which the viewer projects himself one after the other (a level of detail too involved for our current charting purposes, but one that mustn't be forgotten). In this instance, the specific manner in which the Forma Urbis was presented within its room would have strongly aided in this particular cascade of world-shifts.

The Forma Urbis is oriented roughly with south at the top, although the precise orientation of the map is not constant throughout its extent but varies as much as nine degrees in places. While most Roman survey maps tended to be oriented with north towards the top, a southward orientation is not as uncommon in Roman cartographic practice as might be first thought. However, the decision to present the Forma Urbis oriented in this direction may have had an additional cause besides the weight of tradition

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in orientating to the cardinal directions. This orientation may have been chosen as it
coincides approximately to the direction that the viewer was facing when looking at
the map\(^\text{12}\), although, since the map was erected indoors, he would not have been able to
compare the mapped view with an actual observation of the city simultaneously. Thus, it
has been argued that the viewer was intended to look in essence through the wall on
which the map was displayed to conceptualize the vista beyond, to in effect conduct a
mental journey beyond the room, from the spaces depicted in the plan to their real
counterparts in the city.

Such an intended conceptual viewpoint would seem to be supported by the
reconstructed arrangement of another set of stone maps, the so-called Arausio (or
Orange) Cadasters. Unlike the more ambiguous purpose of the Forma Urbis, these stone
maps were without question cadastral in function or at least design, that is, they were
intended to show boundaries and property lines, and are surely related to the re-
imposition by the emperor Vespasian of previously lax tax collection in the region around
the modern city of Orange, France—an act recorded in an extant monumental
inscription.\(^\text{13}\) Originally housed in the record office of the Roman colony, it has been
proposed that the three extant tablets were oriented such that the direction of the tops of
the maps corresponded to the directional facing of the walls on which they were installed
in order that the viewers' facing would correspond to the appropriate direction.\(^\text{14}\)

However, this reconstruction is not without issues. As O. A. W. Dilke has pointed out,
"This theory... seems to require the inversion of [Cadasters] B and C, since Cadaster B,
\(^\text{12}\) Reynolds, 64.
\(^\text{13}\) Dilke, 108.
\(^\text{14}\) Ibid., 107-8.
which must have extended some 44 x 19 km in greatest measurements, was clearly north of Orange, towards Montélimar."\textsuperscript{15} Furthermore, Reynolds notes that the wall on which the Forma Urbis was mounted actually faced south-west and so was approximately 90 degrees off the orientation of the plan, severely diminishing the supposed correspondence between map and viewpoint.\textsuperscript{16}

While this precedent does exist, the objection might be raised that the building in which the Forma Urbis was displayed, the Templum Pacis, was located more or less in the center of the city, and so more or less in the center of the map. Therefore, the viewer's location on the map would have been over two stories up in the middle of the wall, and so there would have been a considerable amount of map real estate between him and where his supposed view from the Templum Pacis would begin past the wall, severely limiting him from making any direct correlation between the plan and this imagined vista beyond it. Unlike with the painted fictive vistas of the Second Style of Roman wall painting, one must wonder how much an ancient observer would have been able to imagine the cityscape through the much more conceptual architectural plan of the Forma Urbis.

However, these objections rather miss the point. The Forma Urbis is not some tourist placard labeling the view in front of a gawking visitor, but rather more of a focal point or an entry point, a point through which the viewer can project himself into his own mental landscape and there establish the origo of his perception, that is the reference point from which deictic relationships can be constructed. This projection is invited by

\textsuperscript{15} Dilke, 108.
\textsuperscript{16} Reynolds, 64.
the map, whose appearance as a deliberately measured plan of the physical reality of the viewer's real world eases this transition into mental space by presenting a great correspondence to the viewer's real experienced world. The surface plane of the wall becomes, therefore, permeable to the viewer in a different but no less appreciable way than the colonnaded entryway of the room. Certainly a desire for permeability manifested at multiple points in the development of wall painting, as we have seen, for instance, in the painted apertures and windows of the Second Style or the fluctuating marble vein images that sometimes occur in the First.

Indeed, the enormous expanse of the Forma Urbis in much this same way as those marble vein figures seemed to emerge from the very wall. Natural features of the landscape of the city, topographic features like trees, waterways, etc., were omitted entirely from the composition; the Tiber River appeared only as a band of negative space, a ghost defined by the man-made docks and buildings that lined its banks, flowing into and merging with the amorphous background field of the wall. The city appeared to the viewer like Atlantis rising up fully formed out of the murky depths that had concealed it, ever threatening to sink back into the abyss.

Such an understanding would be in keeping with ancient Roman conceptions of motion and vision. A succession of planes is how scholar Lise Bek describes the framed axiality of Roman domestic spaces, modifying Heinrich Drerup's earlier notion of the Durchblick, or “view through.” In ancient theories of vision, the visual image acted as an impression in the eye, much as a signet ring makes its mark into wax. As Bek explains:

18 Reynolds, 2.
It is this image in which one essays to form the world around one, one's architecture as nature. Although it possesses a character, as regards depth, of proximity and distance, it has no precisely measured or measurable spatiality from viewer to horizon. For this reason numerous planes lying behind each other are perceived as frames for the central element of the fore- or middle-ground... and of the ... panorama of the background.\textsuperscript{19}

If Roman motion can be understood as piercing a succession of individual planes of vision and experience, then the Forma Urbis may also be understood in such a way, its framing being simply more direct and imposing within the confines of its room. This particular plane, then, in that it presents to the viewer the entire city of Rome, produces a much more totalizing effect. Because the Forma Urbis was so large and hung indoors, where the enclosure of the room limited the distance one could travel away from the map in any given direction, it would have quite forcefully imposed its presence on anyone entering the space, filling a viewer's entire field of vision. An average human being has a field of vision of roughly 120 degrees, including peripheral vision. Given the width of the wall on which the Forma Urbis was hung, the map would have extended beyond this maximum field when a viewer stood at roughly three meters from it (figure 52).

Obviously, this distance is much greater than one would be inclined to stand in front of a wall when looking closely a images upon it, as anyone who has visited an art gallery can attest. This impinging upon the senses of the viewer ensured the preeminence of the map as a whole over its individual parts, as gazing upon any single part of it, one would be unable not to perceive its looming totality.\textsuperscript{20}


While the room which housed this map was itself open onto the courtyard of the Templum Pacis through a screening colonnade on its western side, nonetheless this imposition of the extent of the map on the eye of the beholder worked in a way to "seal him in." By demanding an onlooker's attention and filling his field of vision, the map thus denies the view of the rest of room. The presentation of the city as an insistent whole also works to negate the world outside. The map is the whole and so forms a complete set unto itself which upon viewing envelopes the viewer. This enveloping, to be sure mental rather than physical, thus “hermetically seals” the space in an act that

Figure 52. Angles of Vision at Varying Distances from the Forma Urbis
scholar Oliver Grau describes as necessary to create the believable illusion of a virtual space.21 As eighteenth-century panoramas or modern-day IMAX theaters cut off the outside world to impose their own, so too the Forma Urbis makes its reality the only path through which the *origo* can proceed. But it is more than simply this that makes the Severan Plan so compelling. To further elucidate why this is so, Deleuze may again provide a useful framework.

As discussed in chapter one, in his first book on cinema, Deleuze defines what he calls the “out-of-field.” This term refers to that which is outside the frame (of the film screen in Deleuze's case, the framed field of vision for the Forma Urbis).22 According to Deleuze this out-of-field has two functions, the first being the addition of space to space. In a film, this occurs when, for example, the room in which a scene takes places continues off screen. In the room of the Forma Urbis this occurs as previously mentioned when a viewer looking at any one section of the map is nonetheless aware of its other parts, of its whole, and how these all connect to one another; in these moments, however, the viewer is also keenly aware of the presence of the entire physical topography of the real city of Rome outside the room as it is called up in his mind through the presence of the map and he is forcefully connected to it. Thus, space is added to space and creates a vivid mental landscape for the viewer to inhabit, the very landscape we are attempted to chart and negotiate using Text-world Theory.

Deleuze's second function of the out-of-field may also play an important part here. When a framed set is so insular and sealed from outside fields, it opens itself up to the

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additional dimensions of what Deleuze terms Time and Spirit and makes “the image into a mental image, open...on to a play of relations which are purely thought and which weave a whole.” 23 In other words, it takes on a certain transpatial aspect that more easily allows a viewer to create a vivid mental impression and experience of the intended elsewhere space, in this case the eternally present city of Rome. Thus, in a way, by circumscribing the viewer, the Forma Urbis Romae in fact unbinds him.

Furthermore, the Forma Urbis may have utilized this more totalizing impression of time to promote an intentional linkage to the past. While cadastral maps by their very nature reflect a place at a specific moment in time, the Forma Urbis deliberately creates a map with a broader chronological scope. Not only does the map create an ambiguous placement in time by eliminating inscriptions labeling the owners of the buildings shown, as would be expected on a true cadastral map, but it also depicts various structures in the city not as they would have appeared at the time of the map's manufacture in 203 CE, but rather in their earlier incarnations, free of their later additions and renovations (the monumentalized entrance to the Porticus Octaviae, for example, is depicted in its Augustan-era form). 24 A viewer encounters, then, yet another world-switch, this time to the past of the city of Rome and the historical and political contexts of these past eras. A viewer, in forming a text-world set in the age of the first emperor Augustus, for example, (figure 53) would also be unable to avoid producing a text-world that depicts, for example, Augustus's victory at the battle of Actium (figure 54) or any of his other notable achievements. The latter worlds are needed to make sense of the former.

23 Deleuze, 18.
24 Trimble, “Process,” 76.
This vivid conjuring of the past must have also functioned to present the new emperor of Rome, Septimius Severus, in a particular light. The maps broader chronological scope, combined with the presence on the plan of brand new, specifically Severan monuments like the Septizodium, create a dual temporal identity which worked both to create an image of the city that was timeless, eternal, and awe-inspiring, and to
place and fix the current emperor Septimius Severus within this historical tradition and physical reality.\textsuperscript{25}

Furthermore, Severus further emphasized the importance of the city of Rome within the empire and evoked the shadow of Augustus through other constructions of his building program. One such project was the so-called Umbilicus Romae, the “navel of Rome,” located in the heart of the city at the Forum Romanum. This monument “recalled famous Greek monuments, notably Delphi’s ομφαλός, and promoted a rival claim that Rome was now the centre of the world.”\textsuperscript{26} As Cooley points out, building the Umbilicus in the Forum Romanum would have invited comparisons with an Augustan monument nearby, the Milliarium Aureum (the “Golden Milestone”) which, similarly, symbolically located Rome at the center of the Empire by reckoning all distances from the capital city.\textsuperscript{27}

Given, then, Septimius Severus’ proclivities and purposes visible in his building program in Rome, the Forma Urbis must be viewed through a similar lens. In this vein, there are, for instance, other identifiable factors at play that could have had a role in the decision to display the map oriented to the South. For instance, in 7 BCE the Emperor Augustus did away with the traditional division of the city of Rome into four quarters and instituted a system of division into fourteen regions. The first of these designated administrative zones was located in the South.\textsuperscript{28} Therefore, it is not surprising that an official Imperial map would be oriented with this system in mind. Furthermore, by

\textsuperscript{25} Trimble, “Visibility,” 382.
\textsuperscript{27} Cooley, 394.
\textsuperscript{28} Dilke, 105.
orienting the map with South at the top, it places the Campus Martius area of Rome nearer the bottom, and so closer to the viewer where it may be examined more easily and in greater detail, prompting the viewer to project himself into a text-world set there perhaps more easily than other areas of the city (figure 55). While this may be a tenuous interpretation at best, certainly the Campus Martius was one of the hubs of Imperial display and building, as well as the burial site of Augustus and other Emperors of Rome. Perhaps the map is emphasizing this region precisely to express a connection with these previous rulers and with the Roman institutional rulership generally. Certainly, with Septimius Severus having seized power after a period of significant turbulence and civil strife, he would have had every reason to promote a return of stable government and the prosperity of earlier times.

![Figure 55. Forma Urbis World-switch 5](image)

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<th>WORLD-SWITCH 5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>World-building elements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong>: Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong>: Campus Martius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objects</strong>: Ara Pacis, Horologium Augustae, etc.</td>
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</table>

Indeed, as we have already seen, Septimius Severus consciously modeled himself on earlier emperors, especially the emperor Augustus. As Alison Cooley relays:
Severus created an impression of continuity between himself and Augustus in Rome...through his sponsorship of building projects. Coins were issued during his sojourn there honouring Severus as restitutor urbis. Although they undoubtedly alluded to his role in restoring order after the civil wars, the primary significance of the phrase was 'rebuilder of the city' in a literal sense, and would have created the expectation that Severus would follow closely in Augustus' footsteps."

Surely, Severus very publicly proclaimed his restoration of the Pantheon temple, a structure linked closely with the reign of Augustus, having been originally dedicated by his confidant Marcus Agrippa after the former's success at Actium which cemented his victory in the civil war with Mark Antony. The Pantheon was but one of many buildings erected by the Augustan regime in the Campus Martius, leading to a strong association between that Emperor and that place, an association that Severus perhaps was emphasizing with the orientation of the Forma Urbis. In so doing he placed himself in the same tradition.

Additionally, in analyzing the message and function of the great Severan plan, the building which was to house it must also be considered more carefully, as certainly the surroundings of the map could very much help to shape and color any viewer's experience of it. Unfortunately, not much can be conclusively known about the specific function of the room in which the map was installed. It has sometimes been identified as the office of the city prefect, but the evidence for this is almost nonexistent. While it may make a sort of sense for the map to be located in the office of the official in charge of the administration of the city, this identification has mostly been based on the fact that the room houses the map, a rather circular bit of reasoning. While the function of the map's specific room remains a matter of debate, more is known about the building as a whole.

29 Cooley, 393.
This structure has generally been identified as the Templum Pacis (the “Temple of Peace”) of the Flavian dynasty.

As Diana Kleiner relays, the Templum Pacis “was built first and foremost as a monument to the peace brought to Rome and the empire by the Flavian dynasty after both a civil and a foreign war. In this way, its message was comparable to that of Augustus's Ara Pacis Augustae.” That Severus was keen to link himself to the glories of the past Emperors, especially Augustus, has already been noted and here this tendency can be seen again, although with an even greater immediacy for the new ruling dynasty. Like Vespasian before him, Severus came to power and established a new dynasty after a terrible civil war, a connection that surely was not lost on either Severus or the Roman people. Indeed, by entering a structure dedicated to the goddess Pax, both the religious and social relationships of the figure enter into the discourse (figure 56). Thus, with two Emperors who ended civil wars now associated with this particular building, it perhaps would have come to symbolize even more strongly the unity of the Roman people and state. Indeed, this presentation of unity may be one of the primary ideological messages intended in the map, underscored by its location in the Templum Pacis.

This theme was emphasized not only by the temple's overall commemorative function but also by what else was located inside it; the Templum Pacis also housed “a library and facilities for the safe deposit of private individuals' valuables.” In this way, it displays a combination of the private and public, the individual and the state. Here, by again conjuring a text-world that explores the public social life of citizens (figure 57), the

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building proclaims how the ruling government protects and safeguards both the individual citizen and his prosperity as well as the Roman community and territory as a whole. By installing his monumental map here, Severus was co-opting this symbolism for himself. The map not only transported a viewer to a virtual space, but one which was shaped by Severan ideology, and in particular the ideology of a city and empire unified under the power of the emperor.

Additionally, the Templum Pacis “was famous for its eclectic collection of imperial loot and artworks; these objects referred not only to different places now under

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World-building elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong> Mythic past and present</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong> Divine realm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objects:</strong> Divine attributes, mythic objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enactors:</strong> Goddess Pax, other gods, goddesses, divinities, demi-gods, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fight, meddle in the mortal world, etc.</td>
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Figure 56. *Forma Urbis World-switch 6*
Roman control, but also their cultural pasts.”

By displaying these objects from conquered territories, Rome could celebrate the unification of the known world under its

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**Figure 57. Forma Urbis World-switch 7**

**WORLD-SWITCH 7**

(participant-accessible)

**World-building elements**

**Time:** Present

**Location:** Local community

**Enactors:** Viewer, community members (patrons, clients, etc.)

engages in public social life

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**Figure 58. Forma Urbis World-switch 8**

**WORLD-SWITCH 8**

(enactor-accessible)

**World-building elements**

**Time:** Past

**Location:** Judea, Temple of Jerusalem

**Objects:** Temple menorah, cultural objects

**Enactors:** Jewish population

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governance, a permanent reminder of the bringing together of disparate peoples under the Roman banner. In this context, a viewer can create both text-worlds relating to the military victories commemorated, but also worlds representing the realms and lives of those conquered foreign peoples (figure 58).

Perhaps the most famous of the spoils displayed here were the objects taken from the Jewish temple in Jerusalem (including the temple's famous menorah) after the emperor Titus put down a rebellion there in 70 CE. The display of this menorah and the other spoils from the revolt, themselves depicted in another imperial monument, the Arch of Titus, would have made the defeat of this revolt publicly and explicitly manifest. Thus, not only do does the Templum Pacis function as a symbol of a united Roman Empire, but also a symbol of the Empire's ability to keep it that way, a symbol of both foreign and domestic unity. In this way, any viewer of the Forma Urbis would also have not only formed text-worlds to negotiate the spaces of the Templum Pacis as he made his way to view the map, but these worlds would continue to linger with him while doing so.

A manipulation of time is but one way in which the Forma Urbis promoted the reign of the first Severan. Indeed, many of the characteristics of representation and their manipulation on the map also play into this theme. While the Forma Urbis could not have functioned as a cadastral map, it still follows somewhat in the tradition of cadastral conventions such as in its use of the bird's eye view perspective and the use of what are thought to be conventional mapping symbols for staircases and aqueducts. However, the map deviates from these traditions in several key ways. As noted earlier, whereas in traditional Roman cadasters buildings are depicted using a double outline, that is, two
parallel lines representing the thickness of the wall, the Forma Urbis uses only a single line for all features of the map. 33 Because of this, it becomes more difficult to distinguish building walls from other architectural features or even some non-architectural ones. Since practicality was presumably not a matter of concern here, this change was not necessarily an issue, but certainly to deviate so markedly from established mapping practice must have required a particular reason. Therefore, the greater confusion in distinguishing architectural features on the map must have been deliberate.

By blurring these distinctions, the Forma Urbis presents the city as a unified, collective whole, and not a collection of individual units belonging to individual private citizens. Thus, as Jennifer Trimble states, a “shared experience of space” 34 is emphasized, and is made virtually manifest in the mental realm of the viewer. Unity is paramount in this Severan monument, and certainly not an unexpected message after the civil war in which Severus seized power. By de-emphasizing the individual through removing his attachment to his household, the city (and therefore the imperial state) becomes the only available identifier, all space becomes "Roman space." As Brian Reynolds explains, “It is from this kind of outlook that one might derive the concept of the Plan as acceptable, even natural. If all space was Roman space, then the boundary between 'your' bedroom and 'the city's' street may have been considered entirely subsidiary to the classification of it all as Roman space.” 35

This emphasis of the public over the private is also carried through into other elements of the plan. While the map largely lacks inscriptions, it does not do away with

34 Trimble, “Process,” 97.
35 Reynolds, 134.
them entirely. However, overwhelmingly, the only buildings on the plan that are labeled are public monuments such as theaters, baths, and fora. In addition to being labeled these buildings are often further picked out and highlighted through the use of red pigment in their outlines as well as being distorted in scale; the size of many of these public monuments are considerably larger than than they should be in the scale of the map, literally magnifying them for the viewer.\textsuperscript{36} In this way, the public life of the city is underscored and given specific identity on a map that eliminates private declarations and distinctions of space. This distortion is certainly in keeping with J. B. Harley's view of maps as inherently political tools that deliberately distort for political ends.\textsuperscript{37} The Severan Plan must be seen to operate in this same tradition.

Ultimately, then, the Forma Urbis Romae proves to be a useful case study for the examination of both the creation and experience of virtual space in ancient Rome and how such space, its decoration, and the affect of each may be manipulated for political ends. Again we can see that virtual reality must not be seen as exclusively a denizen of the world of science fiction or the modern age, but can be applied more broadly to examine the ways in which humans interact with and are affected by the spaces around them. In the next chapter we will expand our focus from largely single image planes to entire three-dimensional enclosures, in particular the effect of entire room fresco ensembles as well as garden spaces, which utilize many similar features.


Figure 59. Forma Urbis Compiled Partial Text-world Chart
Chapter 5: The Virtual Enclosure

We have now seen how individual planes, especially wall paintings, despite being simply a two-dimensional surface could nonetheless engender a powerful “virtual” transportation. Now, we will expand our scope and consider how fully enclosed spaces, comprised of multiple image planes set together, could further enhance this transportative feeling and experience.

Considering the experiential quality of ancient spaces is an angle of inquiry that has expanded in scope and popularity in recent years. Recent works by scholars such as Ray Laurence, David Newsome and Michael Scott have begun to move away in key respects from John Clarke and Andrew Wallace-Hadrill's paradigm of understanding Roman spaces through a lens that favored social presentation, organization, and thematic meaning. Laurence, Newsome, and Scott have taken a so-called “spatial approach” to the study of the ancient world, looking at not only how spaces were established and used on a daily basis, but more importantly how they were understood by ancient users and how these understandings affected, and were symptomatic of, larger cultural and societal issues such as the interaction between the imperial center and the periphery of the Roman Empire. Scott claims a particular usefulness for this approach, stating, “because space, as physical and conceptual entity, does exist as a construct within all the types of evidence, a spatial approach, as a result, allows for a uniquely joined-up interdisciplinary
understanding of the dynamic, polyvalent ways in which the ancient world constructed, perceived and negotiated its ideas and values.”

However, approaches utilized by such scholars as Laurence and Newsome are still limited in much the same way that more traditional scholarship has been in trying to use spaces as a language of broader social markers and manifestations. I will demonstrate that the transportative desire, again, as demonstrated with single planes in previous chapters, continued to be the primary developmental impetus when spaces are considered in their full three-dimension extents, an engagement analyzable through Text-world Theory. We will consider this broad negotiating of space through several examples, though to prevent excessive redundancy their web of text-worlds will not be as totally expressed as in previous chapters.

Wall Painting: Beyond the Single Plane

Of course, the wall paintings discussed in chapter 3 was not confined to single walls and wall sections, as we necessarily divided it for discussion, but was oftentimes applied to all the walls of a room, an arrangement that no doubt can help to craft a desired experience for a viewer. Perhaps the most obvious and simplest example of so utilizing the walls of a fully enclosing three-dimensional space to create the impression of a change of location is the surrounding of a viewer on all sides by illusionistic images.

While a room painted entirely in a First Style ensemble, mimicking masonry, could, in evoking the world of the Greek oikos, create the impression of inhabiting an alternate location, it is, unsurprisingly, with the Second Style that this particular method

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of engendering a transportative experience sees its most explicit manifestation. In addition to images of architectural apertures overlooking landscape and cityscape vistas, the Second Style also produced more immersive room painting programs which “address[ed] the observer from all sides in a unity of time and place, enclosing him or her hermetically. This creates an illusion of being in the picture, inside an image space and its illusionary events.”² These frescoes encircled an entire room in order to create a unified interior space that attempted to link the world of the painting with the viewer's space.

One of the best preserved examples is a room from the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii (figure 60). The wall paintings in the room depict what has generally been interpreted as a scene of a Dionysian ritual and procession; it has been thought that the rites and sacred mysteries of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, could have taken place within the confines of this space, although what exactly they would have entailed remains, appropriately, a mystery. The frieze contains 29 life-sized figures in front of a bright red background and nearly fills the entire field of vision of the viewer, much as a 19th century panorama or a modern IMAX screen. As Grau explains, “The overall effect [of the mysteries room] is to break down barriers between the observer and what is happening in the images on the walls. This is accomplished by a suggestive appeal to the observer from all sides that utilizes illusionism techniques.”

Here then, rather than the painting working to blur the border lines between the real space of the room and an illusory space beyond the room it instead works to transform the space of the room itself into a virtual space. It transports the room to the world of the divine, to a world in proximity to the god.

The painted pilasters that break up the red background behind the figures also work to subtly frame the various groups of figures. This has the added effect of giving the sense that the painting is comprised of a serial sequence of images, almost like a

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3 Grau, 25.
4 I cannot help but see paintings like these in the mystery room of the Villa of the Mysteries and the proliferation of individual mythological scenes in Third and Fourth Style frescoes a further aspect of this projection into a divinely inhabited text-world, that of a personal heroizing. Certainly, to live as in the company of the gods and heroes denotes a particular claim of status. In Vergil's fourth Eclogue (the so-called “messianic” Eclogue, supposedly an allegory for the coming to power of Octavian, the first emperor Augustus), he writes in lines 15-17, “He [Octavian's supposed analog] will take up the life of gods and see the gods with heroes mingled and himself be seen by them...” It is not hard to imagine a viewer of room-encompassing frescoes depicting gods could picture himself in a manner akin to Vergil's character.
comic strip, progressing around the room and drawing a viewer's eye around with it. These scenes have sometimes been taken as different stages in the Dionyisiac ritual, or even, according to historian Paul Veyne, stages and elements of the wedding of an aristocratic girl.\textsuperscript{5} If the depicted scenes are stages of initiation or a wedding, a viewer may also conjure text-worlds representing his or her own journey through life and the depicted events (figure 61, e.g.).

![Wedding Day Text-world](image)

Additionally, elements of the frescoes work more directly to break down the barrier between the space of the image and the space of the room and invade a viewer's space. The painted figures stand on a shallow ledge-like (and stage-like) space above the floor level of the room. This arrangement makes it seem that their space is, while

distinct, in fact contiguous with that of the viewer; they might easily hop down to join
him (or he hop up to join them). While most of the figures have their attention firmly
within the action of their scene, one woman on the room's western wall gazes toward the
doorway, and therefore at any entering viewer, drawing his attention and linking him to
the painted goings-on. In the eastern corner of the room (one of the corners opposite the
entrance to the room and so most immediately visible to a viewer entering the space) are
depicted a winged female figure lashing the back of a crouching female figure on the
adjoining wall. Because of their positioning in the corner, the winged female's whip in a
way appears to cross the intervening space of the room to reach its target. Elements such
as these work to blend together the “there” of the paintings with the “here” of the viewer's
room and make the viewer a participant in the action (and indeed, some of the painted
scenes might illustrate the initiation rites actually performed for real in the very room),
thereby drawing him into the virtual text-world of the discourse.⁶

Such a populated composition as this is, however, comparatively rare in Roman
domestic decorative practice. Human figures are most often seen in the form of
sculptural images or in scenes of mythological narrative—the majority of domestic wall
paintings do not include such figures. These more common ensembles, instead of
depicting “commemorations and depictions of particular events [create] backgrounds for
the activities of life.”⁷ However, if we distance ourselves once more from the "social
use" paradigm of looking at Roman decoration, such non-figural compositions
nonetheless also work to purposefully draw in a viewer, just as we have seen the figural

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scene from the Villa of the Mysteries does. Instead of acting as a mere backdrop, sparsely populated images acted as points of insertion, as a type of envelope. By eschewing human figures in these cases, these compositions create a scene that a viewer can more easily modify for his own use to accommodate his imaginative projection into the variety of text-worlds that paintings might cultivate in his mind.

In any case, because of the forceful blending of viewer space and painting space here, the initial text-world of this discourse is one that vacillates between the space as room in the villa (figure 62), and the space as divine quarters. In diagramming these initial worlds, the latter might be shown with a dotted line, signifying its contemporaneity with the former (figure 63). From this initial amphi-text-world, the usual additions of worlds representing the divine realm and the realm of mythology, as we've already encountered, are also again conjured along with those representing the viewer's own experiences with ritual or weddings.

| TEXT-WORLD |
| (enactor-accessible) |
| **World-building elements** |
| **Time:** Present  |
| **Location:** Room in villa  |
| **Objects:** Furniture, accoutrements of daily living  |
| **Enactors:** Viewer, family, houseguests  |

*Figure 62. Contemporary Villa Text-world*
Additionally, the large picture window in the south-eastern wall of the room, which looks out onto a colonnaded portico and *vividarium* beyond, adds to the links between inside and outside. While such a large window might seem to call into question the privacy of a room that might have been the site of secret initiation rituals, it does nonetheless give those rituals greater context and meaning. For instance, because the room looks out onto what would have been a lush garden area, a viewer might have made a link between the blossoming nature out the window and the growth and (re)birth she could experience in the mystery cult of Dionysus. The setup of the room and surrounding areas of the villa focus attention onto the space beyond, almost pushing the viewer from his surroundings, from the here and now, to an elsewhere outside, in this instance strongly filtered through a religious and mythological lens.\(^8\) In this way, the large picture

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\(^8\) Such a “pushing” of a viewer through purposefully placed windows may also be seen at the House of the Mosaic Atrium at Herculaneum, which offered wonderful views to the sea. In this instance, the rather conservative quality of its wall painting may have helped to draw a viewer’s focus to the vistas.
window, if opened, would cause a world-shift to the landscape outside the room (figure 64).

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<table>
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<tr>
<th>World-building elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time:</strong> Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location:</strong> Outside landscape/natural world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objects:</strong> Trees, plants, birds, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enactors:</strong> Animals, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 64. Outside Nature World-switch*

This “immersive” type of second style painting can also be found outside the area buried by Mt. Vesuvius. In the modern village of Prima Porta, about nine miles from the city of Rome, are found the remains of the villa of Livia, wife of the first Roman emperor Augustus. Archaeological excavations at this villa have produced many fine Roman art objects, including the famous statue of Augustus as *imperator* as well as a series of illusionistic paintings of garden scenes (figure 65). These paintings, like the Dionysian scenes from the Villa of the Mysteries, cover the entire walls of a large room (this one being 5.9 by 11.7 meters). While, as we have seen, landscape vistas are not uncommon in Italian Second Style painting, the garden paintings at the Villa of Livia take a quite different approach. Instead of the landscapes being visible through colonnades or other architectural framing, they surround the whole of the room unobstructed. In this

The room itself becomes a terrace, or possibly a grotto or pergola from which one can look into a fairy garden, where romantic nature runs wild, and where one can smell the perfume of the flowers and watch birds peck at their ease or hide in the shrubbery; where fruit is left unplucked to ripen and go to seed. Nothing detracts from the sensation that one is actually strolling along the path in front of the flowers and shrubs...The walls themselves have disappeared. The vistas are not seen through the usual series of openings; the visitor is actually transported out of doors and given a unique and completely unexpected experience.  

Thus, a viewer is quickly taken from the initial text-world of this discourse, the place and present reality of the villa (figure 66), to one set in a lush and verdant garden, teeming with life and color (figure 67).

Such a style is not unique to Livia's Villa, however, and examples can be found in

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such far-flung places as Britain, where, for example, the Flavian period palace at Fishbourne exhibits similar garden painting.\textsuperscript{10} At Pliny the Younger's Tuscan villa, the garden pavilion also provided such a transportative surround, which, by limiting views and sightlines outside the pavilion, made any guest lounging on a dining couch feel lost, deep in some mystical wood.\textsuperscript{11} Indeed, elements reflective of grottoes and gardens are not uncommon in Second Style ensembles, such as can also be seen at the House of Neptune and Amphitrite at Herculaneum, but these tend to be more ad hoc tableaus rather than such imposing unities of place and focus.\textsuperscript{12} Certainly, while other later garden paintings also actively work to bridge the gap between the physical space of a room and the

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|}
\hline
\textbf{TEXT-WORLD} \\
(participant-accessible) \\
\hline
\textbf{World-building elements} \\
\hline
\textbf{Time:} Present \\
\textbf{Location:} Villa at Prima Porta \\
\textbf{Objects:} Furniture, etc. \\
\textbf{Enactors:} Viewer, guests, etc. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textit{Figure 66. Initial Text-world, Garden Room}

illusory space of wall paintings, in which, for instance, painted images of fountains appear to spout into real functioning gutters in the pavement of the room, the use of wall decoration as a swallowing envelope is most fully realized here.\(^\text{13}\)

The virtual quality of the illusory garden space created by the room at Livia's villa is further emphasized by the fact that the garden it creates would be impossible to reproduce in the real world. As Grau explains, “Although the picture's flora and fauna are painted exactly true to their natural size, it is nevertheless an ensemble that does not occur in this form in nature. Selection and combination present an ideal that improves on nature.”\(^\text{14}\) In the paintings flowers that bloom at different times of year are shown all in bloom at once, creating, as Mabel Gabriel describes, “a fairy garden where, under the touch of the artist, plants, flowers, and birds live together at all seasons in joyful

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\(\text{14}\) Grau, 29.
harmony.” So not only do we have the formation of virtual space, but now also the formation of virtual time, a time that exists outside the normal flow of the natural world, and one that causes a viewer to further expand his web of mental text-worlds to encompass all the currently created worlds at different points in time.

However, while such immersion can be a useful tool (and to be sure, an illusionistic space may help to attract a viewer's attention and thereby facilitate his engagement and projection), we do not want to get preoccupied with it as the only path to a virtual experience. It and Oliver Grau's approach to the creation of the virtual can be expanded beyond its limited scope. Grau's “primary interest centers on the picture's function as an illusion.” However, as we saw in chapter one, mimetic illusionism can only take us so far in both defining the virtual and in creating transportative experiences. Grau is too focused on the ability of a space to “involve the observer” in some way, such as “panoramic images, specific colors, and dramatic gestures.” But this again tells only part of the story by prioritizing the features of the space rather than the mental negotiation a viewer goes through while experiencing it.

If a Text-world Theory approach is all about “projection,” Grau's approach can be said to be all about “integration.” Grau writes, “Illusionistic painting techniques create an artificial space into which the observer is 'integrated.' Completely filling the field of vision, there is no possibility for the observer to compare extraneous objects with the scene.” This understanding if flawed for two main reasons.

First, to state that there is no possibility for a viewer to compare the scene with

15 Gabriel, 11.
16 Grau, 27.
17 Ibid., 29.
18 Ibid. 31.
other objects is not tenable. Even if, having filled a viewer's entire field of vision, an
immersive environment allows no sight outside the space, a viewer will nonetheless bring
with him into the space the collected memories and experiences of his life to that point,
memories and experiences he will, both consciously and subconsciously, compare to
what he sees. Far from impossible, constant comparison is the manner in which humans
make sense of things (see again the “mental scripts” described in chapter one). A Text-
world Theory approach not only accounts for such comparison and interaction, but, in
fact, revolves around it. Relying on the crutch of visual illusionism as Grau does will
only ever produce an incomplete picture of the experience of a viewer and the
transportative power of the spaces.

Second, if a viewer is integrated into a virtual world then that world would come
to take over his reality; it would, if the integration is flawless, replace it, and create a new
“second reality.”19 Such a replacement has much less impact on a viewer as it is by its
very nature less noticeable. When a viewer projects himself, however, he leaves a part of
himself behind in the “real” world; there is created a sort of dual self split between the
originating real world and the virtual world into which the projection is targeted. This
allows a viewer to both more readily identify the virtual world as such, but also facilitates
connecting this initial text-world to others through similar dualistic bridging.

Trying to create a greater engagement with a virtual elsewhere space by
surrounding a viewer with a continuous, unified scene is comparatively uncommon, and
generally only found in the Second Style. Wall painting ensembles, as we saw in chapter
3, tend to be comprised instead of collections of individual elements. However, the

19 Grau, 32.
multiple walls of a room or other enclosure, of all manners of painting decoration, may also work in more subtle fashion, which again may be understood in reference to Deleuze's notion of the out-of-field. If the field of vision of a viewer acts as a frame, then the walls of a room not in this field act similarly to spaces out of scene in a film. Just as a camera frames and moves in cinema, these other portions of a room will come in and out of field as one moves one's gaze around the space. Even images that are otherwise not immediately connected, such as independently framed mythological or landscape scenes, may in this way create a connected mental landscape, just as a single image may do, but now with even greater and more immediate force.

A pictorial example of such a space building technique may be seen in a section of wall fresco from the famous House of Publius Fannius Synistor at Boscoreale. In a fresco from the cubiculum reconstructed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, seen already in chapter 3, an architectural structure is clearly shown as the composite of individually rendered units, whose differing color, shading, and perspective add to the ad hoc effect of the composition.

This type of perception and mental building would in fact correspond to an ancient conception of space and vision. The importance for framing and views in domestic architecture is well attested in the writings of Cicero, Statius, Vitruvius and others. In his seminal 1959 article "Bildraum und Realraum in der roemischen Architektur," Heinrich Drerup articulated the concept of the Durchblick, or “view through,” that is, of the axiality of the Campanian domus and the Roman preoccupation with sight lines\(^20\) (such as can be easily seen, for example, in the framed views through

\(^{20}\) Heinrich Drerup. “Bildraum und Realraum in der römischen Architektur.” Römische Mitteilungen 66
the House of Menander at Pompeii\textsuperscript{21}). Such a model of the understanding of the organization of these spaces continued to dominate scholarship for decades. In 1980, Drerup’s initial expression of this axiality as a direct linear progression to a specific destination or “goal” was modified by the more subtle articulation of Lise Bek in her book \textit{Towards Paradise on Earth: Modern Space Conception in Architecture}. Bek, informed by her examination of ancient notions of vision, explains that, for the ancients, a visual impression was an image for the eye much like a signet seal makes an impression in wax. While such an impression has the appearance of having the characteristics of depth, it in fact has no measurable spatiality. Thus, Bek sees Roman architectural axes not as direct linear progressions, but rather as a series of articulated visual planes stacked one behind the other.\textsuperscript{22}

David Summers conceives of painted images in a similar fashion, treating the virtual plane of the wall “as if divided by transversal lines parallel to the plane of the format.”\textsuperscript{23} In this way, figures, objects, or spaces intended to be understood as lying behind one another occupy these parallel planes receding from the initial plane of the surface of the artwork, or what Summers calls the virtual coordinate plane. For example, Summers points to a section of fresco from the Room of Masks in the House of Augustus in Rome depicting a \textit{scenae frons}-like architectural colonnaded portico. Summers writes, “the centre of the portico... implies a set of receding planes, each an optical plane connecting areas presumed to be parallel and of equal size.”\textsuperscript{24} The use of such a schema,

\textsuperscript{1959}: 145-174.
\textsuperscript{21} Clarke, \textit{Houses}, 14-16.
\textsuperscript{22} Bek, 201-2.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 500.
according to Summers, unifies the virtual space by giving it optical coherence. While I would question Summers' placement of an overriding importance on the optical in the creation of the virtual, nonetheless his clarification is valuable.

In light of this understanding of vision, the fact that fresco ensembles such as the garden room of Livia often incorporate a painted fence or low wall may also take on additional significance (Livia's garden room has both a latticework fence in the painting foreground and another further into the middle ground). The use of these illusory boundary walls, especially in a composition such as in Livia's garden room in which the physical walls of the room are entirely painted away, acted as a necessary separation boundary between the space of the viewer and the fictive space depicted on the walls, that is, a distinct separation plane that needed to be crossed to enter deeply into the painted fictive space. This would be in keeping with Bek's planes theory of ancient vision; there needs to be a plane to cross (a threshold of some kind), otherwise the unarticulated space remains amorphous and undefined, and thereby solid and impenetrable. A wall is needed (ironically) to make it permeable. After all, if there is a fence, then there must be the other side of that fence, or at least thus seems to be the case to a human viewer. The framing of individual landscape scenes in the Third Style function similarly to create a threshold plane, to create a new plane added to the stack, so to speak, to continue the space of the viewer. Otherwise, the space depicted in the image would remain in the viewer's current space as mere image, rather than be seen as a new space added onto it.

As wall painting styles departed from the fictional vistas of the Second Style to the more abstracted Third, Fourth, and later styles, Deleuze's second function of the out-
of-field, the imposition of the transpatial, may have also taken on additional power. By moving the painted images of a room away from mimetic vistascapes to sometimes flat abstracted visual fields, a room may become in Deleuzian terms an ever more closed set, sealed off from an outside world and reflecting, therefore, ever more strongly an internal one. As the single image of the Forma Urbis Romae created such an effect, here it is even more pronounced with the literal surrounding of the viewer.

Architecture and Sculpture

Painting and physical architecture could also work more closely in concert to create illusory effects, especially the impression of the existence of space where none existed in reality. For instance, in the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto at Pompeii, the main axial line of sight through the house included a garden beyond the house's *tablinum* that was flanked on one side by a single row of columns which culminated in an engaged half-column on the far wall, decorated with a garden painting, “fool[ing] the casual viewer into thinking that the house was larger, with a complete peristyle.”

Such a blurring of reality and blending of real architecture with painted fantasy has numerous other examples in Roman domestic contexts, including at the House of the Mosaic Atrium at Herculaneum and the House of the Labyrinth at Pompeii.

Purely physical architectural features could also achieve similar effects to the surround created, for example, in the garden room at Livia's villa. A room in Nero’s Domus Aurea possessed a vault that was covered in pumice stone to give it the

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appearance of a naturally formed grotto. In the center of this particular vault was placed a mosaic panel which depicted the cyclops Polyphemus in a scene from Homer's *Odyssey*. The cave-like setting of the mosaic was no doubt also intended to recall in part the cave of Polyphemus (a theme encountered also at the dining room of Tiberius at Sperlonga, this time set in a natural cave). Thus, the viewer's physical setting reflects that of the depicted mythological episode, and thereby makes simpler the projection from the one to the other.

Religious structures also commonly tap into this desire for transporative projection. The Pantheon in Rome, for example, with its lustrous marbled interior and the shifting spotlight-like effect of its oculus, would have created (and to a point still does create) a suitably mysterious and mystical effect within its cavernous interior, suitable to its religious function. This type of practice could also be found much earlier in Greece (and indeed in Egypt and other early civilizations), at temples like the Parthenon in Athens or the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, whose reflective pools and enormous chryselephantine statues of their respective patron deities would have made the power and presence of the gods explicitly manifest to anyone standing in their presence (a effect also utilized by later Roman emperors for their own persons, such as with the giant acrolithic statue of Constantine in the Basilica Nova in Rome).

The solidity of physical architectural elements, and, as we shall see, sculpture, also lends to it an immediacy and intrusive presence which forcibly populates a viewer's text-world. Furthermore, as a painted image of an object or activity can be understood as a sort of "freezing" or "petrifying" of the depicted (in a way storing the experience to be

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re-experienced at will), so too can sculpture or other objects. For instance, the stone benches found in Etruscan tomb vestibules are "petrified" versions of wooden furniture found in the houses of the living. This same sentiment no doubt in part infuses such objects as the Simpelveld sarcophagus in Leiden, the interior of which is an elaborately carved depiction of a bedroom, complete with a miniature image of the deceased reclining on a couch among furnishings and other accouterments.

Perhaps one of the most emphatic “petrifications” of this sort is the famed Ara Pacis Augustae in Rome, the altar to Peace dedicated by Rome's first emperor. Along the interior of the marble precinct wall surrounding the altar itself are sculptural imitations of wooden precinct walls, resplendent with garlands and bucrania, a temporary structure frozen and made permanent. This is, of course, not a new occurrence; the Hellenistic period propylon of the Sanctuary of Athena at Pergamon likewise exhibits a recreation of the temporary in the permanent with carved garlands and bucrania. In the case of the Ara Pacis, this makes literal Augustus' boast of having turned Rome into a city of marble—what would have been wooden temporary structures have been lithified and made permanent.

This desire to make permanent may also carry over into domestic architecture in light of Andrew Wallace-Hadrill's elaboration on the ancient practice of recreating elements of public architecture inside domestic spaces, an act, according to him, of primary importance in the choices of decorative schemata. He sees this drive in all styles of mural painting and claims, for example, that what have usually been seen as adoptions

28 McKay, 57.
29 Ibid., 138-9.
from Greek domestic architecture, such as First Style fake masonry and the columned portico and peristyle, actually allude to Greek monumental public structures. The drive to recreate elements of public architecture and public spaces is, according to Wallace-Hadrill, based on the grandeur and prestige this allusion provides. For instance, the columned and vaulted plans of the so-called oecus corinthius described by Vitruvius (and seen, for example, at the House of the Silver Weddings at Pompeii) recalls descriptions of the lavish festival pavilions of the Ptolemies and other Hellenistic kings. Thus, such practices may be enmeshed in the same conjuring of text-worlds we've encountered previously, text-worlds related to the larger social milieu of well-off patrons as well as boulomaic modal-worlds expressing desire for the grand lives reflected in the Hellenistic monarchies.

Emmanuel Mayer has recently challenged this orthodox approach that values the socio-political aspect of the choice of decorative schemes, emphasizing instead the predominance of the development of what he terms the "personalized mode of viewing." Because mythological wall paintings and statues can be found in houses of all sizes and wealth-levels, and because they all seemingly derive from the same visual tradition, Mayer doubts the tenability of always associating such images with the social practices and rituals of the wealthy elite, such as the salutatio between clients and patrons, or lavish convivia banquets.31 Instead, in the majority of houses where wall-painting is found (those of the well-off but not super wealthy "middle classes"), decoration was chosen primarily for its "pleasant" and "atmospheric" quality that viewers "could enjoy

and fill with meaning."\textsuperscript{32}

Even though Mayer admits that ancient domestic spaces were not purely private spaces as our modern homes usually are, he emphasizes that they still were spaces intended to be lived in, and so it is not unexpected that decoration would have been chosen to appeal to a house's permanent residents and owner just as much if not more so than any temporary visitors.\textsuperscript{33} In some ways, Mayer's stance echoes earlier statements by scholars such as F. E. Brown, who "discriminated between typical features of Roman architecture and design, as stylistic markers, and what he perceived to be the underlying distinctive operation of Roman architectural intention, where design moved beyond the materialities of composition toward the constitution of a desired effect."\textsuperscript{34} Such an understanding of the priorities of ancient patrons of domestic decoration adds additional weight to the appropriateness of conducting a Text-world Theory analysis on these ancient paintings in that it allows for more individualized and nuanced experiences of the images depicted, and indeed requires that such personalized experiences were one of the primary factors in their production.

Additionally, Mayer's re-evaluation also frees us from the conundrum of repeated stock iconographic types. After all, if wall-painting was intended in large part to create transportative experiences of varied types among viewers rather than, for instance, simply reflect room activity or social ritual, one might expect greater variety of forms and patterns. Mayer argues, however, that the meanings of such stock types can be changed, altered, and multiplied depending on how they are employed within a decorative schema.

\textsuperscript{32} Mayer, 167.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 172.
As Mayer ponders, “Is a pretty boy sitting by a pond still Narcissus if he is not entranced by his own reflection?” In this way, an endless variety of text-worlds can be triggered from a comparatively limited repertoire of stimuli.

While Wallace-Hadrill focuses primarily on the social aspect of the bringing the public into the private sphere, these elements may also play another important role in light of our current discussion into the importance placed on the transportative experience. The “petrification” of the temporary or the recreation of the public both serve to capture a moment and a place and make them permanent, and, most importantly, by placing the re-creative elements in the home, make them able to be re-experienced, partly physically (with physically present three-dimensional architectural features), but mostly mentally by again triggering more forcefully the creation and projection into a mental text-world.

Additionally, sculpture (the "lithification" of life par excellence) also commonly graced these Roman spaces, adding character and aiding in the creation of appropriate triggers to help guide the creation of appropriate text-worlds by a viewer. Surprisingly, though wall-painting commonly incorporated architectural elements or vistas, depictions of sculptures in murals themselves are relatively uncommon, especially in the elaborate ensembles known from written sources. While, as Vermeule postulates, these may have been “too much or too specific for the mural decorators,” it may also have allowed for greater correspondence and interaction between the paintings and any actual sculpture contained within the room or garden, more forcefully joining the physical space of the

35 Mayer, 176.
room with the fictive space of the wall.

In any case, there is no doubt that oftentimes great care was taken in the choice of sculpture to adorn any given space. A statue of a nymph seated on a rock, for example, graced the “studium” of the emperor Domitian, a statue that would have appeared perfectly at home in a garden setting because of both its subject and its presentation on a base simulating a natural rock.\(^37\) Arranged sensitively, one entering the space would almost “encounter” the figure, rather than simply view it. A monumental sculpture of the landing of the Greeks at Troy placed in the Baths of Caracalla, to point to one more example, likewise utilized its setting to maximum effect and immersion, situated as it was surrounded on all sides by water.\(^38\)

Statues could also add impactful and explicit presence to a space. For example, at the Theater of Dionysus at Athens, statues of Hadrian, Trajan, Antoninus Pius and others were placed, some seated, behind the thrones for the religious and civic officials in the fourth row of seats, as if the emperor "was intended to be a perpetual spectator at events in the theater."\(^39\) In this case, the person of the emperor would be inserted into text-worlds created in the theater, both as object and, in some cases, as an enactor. The text-world of political life at Rome and the broader empire of which Greece was now a part would also have then found a place in the growing tapestry of created worlds.

Roman garden sculpture in particular was chosen with a careful consideration of setting. Such sculpture was heavily influenced by, if not explicitly copying or incorporating, Hellenistic garden or public sculpture. These figures, exemplified by the

\(^{37}\) Vermeule, 52.
\(^{38}\) Ibid., 59.
\(^{39}\) Ibid., 85.

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output of Rhodes, commonly were perched on bases sculpted to look like a rocky outcrop or other landscape feature, helping them to blend in with (or at least give the impression of belonging to) the landscape that surrounded them.\textsuperscript{40} An example of such a work is the so-called Spinario, or Boy with Thorn (figure 68), which depicts a young boy seated on a rocky outcrop removing a thorn from his foot. Sculpture set up in this manner, that is, not simply to be viewed, but rather \textit{encountered}, added greatly to the immersive effect of the garden, if not always mimetically then at least thematically.

Additionally, mythological and religious sculpture would not have been the only variety utilized. Commonly placed in peristyles were figures of animals of various sorts, bringing a touch of rustic nature into the home.\textsuperscript{41} Included among these were such creatures as stags, boars, dogs, and even bears (one of which led to the unfortunate death of a friend of the Roman poet Martial when he jokingly put his hand in the mouth of such a bear only to bitten by a snake sleeping inside).\textsuperscript{42} Painted animals, too, could complement their more corporeal counterparts, with nearly life-sized examples "rather startling if come upon unawares."\textsuperscript{43} This evidences the fact that, as John Clarke comments, “Romans expended great care on the disposition and decoration of their domestic spaces because they valued spaces that were appropriately located and decorated to fit their assigned activity.”\textsuperscript{44}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{43} Wilhelmina Jashemski. "The Campanian Peristyle Garden" in MacDougall, \textit{Ancient Roman Gardens}, 41.
\bibitem{44} Clarke, \textit{Houses}, 1.
\end{thebibliography}
concluded that these transportative spaces were deliberately made to function as such.

In this vein, Wallace-Hadrill has argued that the use of Greek decorative and architectural elements in homes and especially in villas was not simply derivative imitation, but rather a "purposeful evocation of the alien" that allowed a Roman to incorporate foreign elements into his life and behavior without compromising his identity as a Roman. The same focus on decorum that controlled much of Roman life could be used to excuse deliberately un-Roman behavior as long as it was conducted within a proper setting. By creating "Greek" settings evoking, for instance, the institution of the gymnasium, a Roman could affect Greek behavior unproblematically.

Following this line of argument further, Wallace-Hadrill turns a new critical eye to Vitruvius's ten books on architecture, arguing that Vitruvius, for all his conservative traditionalist veneer, was in fact crafting a revolutionary new Roman identity. Vitruvius's approach and codification of Roman "custom" allowed for a carefully considered placement and assimilation of the "other." By outlining how foreign Greek elements carefully incorporated, both ideologically and physically, within a building, along with proper ratio, could be integrated into Roman tradition or consuetudo. Thus, the other is incorporated into one's own identity.

The cultural revolution of the Augustan age saw the perfect confluence of forces to allow for such an inclusion, as it allowed Vitruvius the opportunity to create a remarkable reinterpretation and grounding of "Roman" identity. In the same way, the proper use, placement, and consideration of elements of the virtual elsewhere may allow for a more complete or understandable or unhindered assimilation of it to the experienced reality of a viewer. There develops a greater ability to internalize the "elsewhere" (and the suitable actions that accompany it), that is, to more easily project oneself into the virtual.

Cornelius Vermeule has described the particular Roman love of repetition and mirror images in decoration, especially statuary. Repetition through symmetry, especially, was a common tool in the ancient architect's repertoire and one that was chosen for its force of impact rather than out of simple convenience. Groups of repeated statues could certainly create an impressive scene. Repeated images of the Emperor

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46 Wallace-Hadrill, Revolution, 209.
Hadrian in the precinct of Olympian Zeus at Athens, for example, would have produced a stark manifestation of the presence of the emperor and, more importantly, his imperial power. This repetition was neither strictly a Greek nor Roman phenomenon, though the repeated figures of lions on the terrace of the Temple of Apollo at Delos may have set one of the earliest precedents. The ultimate source may have been Egypt, where the common multiplication of images of the pharaohs made a marked impression on visiting Romans.48

This desire for repetitions or doublings carries over into decidedly less physical elements in the realm of reflections. Fountains or other water basins located next to statuary would have reflected its image, creating virtual copies and further repetitions which "add[ed] to the alluring quality of the scene," and, as Linda Farrar speculates, thereby "double[d] their value" in the minds of Roman viewers.49 In any case, this combination of physical and illusory statuary would have further helped to obscure the boundary between the real and the virtual in the environment and opened up the world of the discourse to include the text-world representing that space that is shown in the reflection. This "mirror-world" both doubles the real world while simultaneously creating a new and different one, an interplay that could be complicated even further. At the House of the Large Altar at Pompeii, one such wall-painting that was reflected in a nearby basin of water was none other than one depicting Narcissus gazing at his own reflection in a placid pool; the house's "main representation interest" was thus "in mirror images per se."50 One might even say that viewers were intended to reflect on reflections,

48 Vermeule, 89.
49 Farrar, 99.
50 Mayer, 175-6.
gazing at the reflection of another gazing at a reflection.

The creation of doubles is indeed central to Deleuze's conception of the virtual. For him, all actual things have a virtual double, “which barely diverges from it at all.” As an example Deleuze points, again in the footsteps of Bergson, to memories. He states that all perceptions of things have a memory “as a sort of immediate, consecutive or even simultaneous double... [f]or, as Bergson shows, memory is not an actual image which forms after the object has been perceived, but a virtual image coexisting with the actual perception of the object. Memory is a Virtual image contemporary with the actual object, its double, its 'mirror image.'”51 Thus, images of statues or paintings reflected in nearby pools or basins of water are, in a way, reflective of the mental processes of perception itself, the physical statue representing the actualized version of its virtual self-represented in the shimmering and shifting reflection in the water. Such a reflected image might prod a viewer to become consciously aware of the doubling already going on inside his head from the mere perceiving of the scene.

_Gardens as Virtual Space_

Finally, we shall turn our attention briefly away from architecture and architectural decoration (especially wall painting), and consider more closely another type of Roman space that is particularly illustrative of transportative engagement, the garden, a space which has received comparatively less attention than Roman houses. While houses must always in part serve the utilitarian function of providing shelter in

which to live, gardens, at least the decorative gardens that develop in the early empire, are less confined, and can exist as deliberately othered “elsewhere” spaces. As Katherine von Stackelberg has stated, “Gardens are about creating a sense of place.”

The study of Roman gardens began in earnest with the work of Wilhelmina Jashemsky and her study of the gardens of Pompeii. Using new archaeological techniques, such as taking plaster casts of preserved root cavities, Jashemsky brought the gardens of the city back to life and initiated a new focus on the analysis of the importance of the garden as both a physical space and a social construct. Scholars like Patrick Bowe and Linda Farrar have continued to examine how garden spaces were constructed and arranged, their earlier influences (especially Greek and Egyptian), and how such spaces were interacted with.

More recent are the works of Victoria Pagán and Katherine von Stackelberg in their respective works *Rome and the Literature of Gardens* and *The Roman Garden: Space, Sense, and Society*. Each book attempts to understand the garden as a product of the Roman social milieu, as a “culturally laden imago,” as Stackelberg puts it. Stackelberg’s look at the garden is especially useful for her theoretical approach, in particular her use of Michel Foucault’s notion of the heterotopia, a space of “otherness” that is neither here nor there, both physical and mental. Such a space would no doubt work even more strongly to facilitate the types of mental projection with which we have been dealing. While Pagán’s focus is more literary, constructing ancient ideas of the garden from its representation in the written sources, both authors attempt to paint the

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53 Ibid., 142.
garden as a particularly amorphous space, where transgression could occur, even including in some cases the inversion of gender roles.54 Indeed, Mary Beard has articulated that there were two primary identities of gardens in the Roman world: the practical (e.g. vegetable) garden, requiring tending and labor, and the luxurious pleasure park of the elite. These identities, however, could often be ambiguous (indeed both were referred to by the same Latin word, hortus), with the one always threatening to transform into the other.55

Furthermore, Beard sees the garden as a prime space for acts of image making and self-fashioning. Beard also argues that gardens were an important place of imperial representation for the city of Rome and, more specifically, for the emperor himself; gardens were spaces where an emperor could attempt to convince himself of his position and ideology. Beard writes, “In the midst of all the tensions, ambivalences and stage-set displays of the horti, they acted as a location for the creation, definition, and negotiation of the emperor as individual, as imperial subject. They were the place where the emperor could see himself as emperor and so learn to be the imperial subject.”56 There is no reason to think that less august builders and visitors of garden spaces could not use them similarly, as spaces to experience the self through imaginative projection. The amorphous nature of the garden would have been fertile ground for all manner of transportative fashioning and refashioning, and would have been in keeping with the same manner of fashioning behavior through deliberate evocation and the careful incorporation of Greek elements into Roman consuetudo described by Wallace-Hadrill.

56 Ibid., 32.
The recent book by Diana Spencer, *The Roman Landscape: Culture and Identity*, also provides useful new angles of looking at constructed Roman landscapes, both physical and painted, that can reinforce a Text-world Theory analysis. Perhaps most significant is her explanation of the narratology of the landscape, that is, the manner in which a viewer inserts himself into a landscape image and thus comes to both interact with and understand it.57 A physical garden space can build upon this narratology; a viewer admiring the splendid scene at the entrance to a garden could then literally step through and beyond the frame of the “image” and physically enter the presented world.

![Gateway, Garden of the House of Octavius Quartio, Pompeii. Copyright Yuan-Ping 2007 (http://flic.kr/p/DR3oR), used under CC license https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/legalcode](http://flic.kr/p/DR3oR)

**Figure 69.** Gateway, Garden of the House of Octavius Quartio, Pompeii. Copyright Yuan-Ping 2007 (http://flic.kr/p/DR3oR), used under CC license https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/legalcode

This framing of the entrance to the garden space served to heighten the sense of the
garden as a virtual and alien space by presenting it as distinct and separate from the space
of the rest of the dwelling or other surround in the “real” world in the same manner as a
painting's frame demarcates its world from its surroundings. Indeed, an architectural
gateway into the garden of the House of Octavius Quartio at Pompeii (figure 69) uses a
design similar to the Second Style wall-painting from the House of Publius Fannius
Synistor (see figure 23).

The House of Octavius Quartio (also known as the House of Loreius Tiburtinus)
at Pompeii is truly a fascinating case study of the forcefulness of a garden space and
deserves further discussion here. This city home was remodeled after the earthquake of
62 CE at which point it was expanded to encompass almost an entire insula, a rectangular
city building plot, of which over two thirds is devoted to a garden area. The wall
surrounding the garden was painted with imaginary landscapes and foliage, in a manner
reminiscent of the garden room of Livia, further helping to blur its spatial boundary and
create an immersive effect.

In this garden, the owner attempted to cram together elements from much larger
country villa gardens, including a euripus (a canal evoking famous rivers, this one much
too large for the size of the garden), a peristyle (truncated to fit the space), and a
biclinium outdoor dining area (stuffed into the back of the garden), among others. Here
again, the owner of this house and other similar house gardens in Pompeii were often
most interested in trying to recreate not necessarily an exotic locale for its own sake, but
rather trying to create the impression of a luxury villa garden and the styles popular in
them, thereby giving the impression that they belonged to the upper class of wealthy aristocrats.\textsuperscript{58} Even though their own wealth could not compare to that of the traditional landed aristocracy, they could at least try to surround themselves with the trappings of the elite, if only simulated.

John Clarke expresses the traditional view that these \textit{nouveau riche} Romans wanted to surround themselves with all the "trappings of wealth" they believed commensurate to their new economic station, much like Petronius's buffoonish Trimalchio. He writes, "The garden architecture, sanctuaries, fountains and resting spots, picture galleries, real and painted statues, landscape views, and even painted wild animal parks (\textit{paradeisoi}) were all ways of possessing a bit of the luxury villa."\textsuperscript{59} In this way, these urban house gardens can be conceived of as “virtual villas.”

Of course, this orthodox understanding has been recently challenged by Mayer, who, while conceding that specific elements of the garden and decoration of the House of Octavius Quartio come from aristocratic precedents, contends that "their unusual scale and peculiar arrangement makes one wonder whether the owner of the house deliberately referenced the lifestyle of the educated rich—and in doing so demonstrated that he could only afford a scaled-down version of it."\textsuperscript{60} Additionally, John Clarke has suggested that the oversized garden with its water channels was in some way related to the cult of Isis and that it was ritually flooded to symbolize the flooding of the Nile.\textsuperscript{61} This would open an entire additional realm of text-worlds related to the divine realm, in particular Isis and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58} Paul Zanker, \textit{Pompeii: Public and Private Life}. Translated by Deborah Lucas Schneider. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998, 147. See also Jashemski, \textit{Gardens}.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Clarke, \textit{Houses}, 24.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Mayer, 201.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Clarke, \textit{Houses}, 194.
\end{itemize}
Egypt, as well as religious ritual.

Regardless, this cramming together of features would have made a forceful impression on a viewer. However, what appears at first glance to be an incongruous cramming of ill-considered elements might make more sense in the context of contemporaneous wall-painting practice, which in the so-called Fourth Style likewise combined elements of all previous styles. Such a mixing together would have allowed for an excessive number of potential world-shift triggers for a viewer, and certainly speaks to one potential extreme in the development of schemata that cater to this transportative desire.

Indeed, we might see the formal Roman garden as being the next logical step in the development of the Roman desire for the virtual as seen in the evolution of wall-paintings. The painted vistas beyond painted architectural frames coupled with a desire to be able to actually step through the frame into the virtual world could lead to the desire to create real architectural frames with garden spaces beyond. This is not to say that these paintings were the direct antecedent to ornamental gardens, but rather that they both speak to the same tendencies of Romans at the time. These gardens, then, act as virtual areas in which the viewer can freely move, freed from the tyranny of the fixed viewpoint of a perspectival painting. In such a painting:

[N]ot only the painter but the viewer of perspective was 'immobilized by the logic of the system.' While the viewer's immobility had a degree of leeway to it, the visual system of easel painting assumed a fixed viewing position: the viewer stands in front of the painting and looks into its frame... the frame itself suggests a common position for viewing: separate from yet facing it.62

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With the creation of a garden space the viewer admiring the splendid scene could literally step through and beyond the frame of the “image” and physically enter the world that was presented in the frame. This framing of the entrance to the garden space served to heighten the sense of the garden as a virtual and alien space by presenting it as distinct and separate from the space of the rest of the dwelling in the “real” world in which it was constructed, in the same manner as a painting's frame demarcates its world from its surroundings.

Therefore, Roman gardens can be conceived of as creating a virtual “elsewhere” that unlike wall-paintings could actually be inhabited by the viewer in an interactive and immersive environment. Wall-paintings such as those from the Villa of Livia and the Villa of the Mysteries already demonstrate this desire for an immersive experience, but such an experience was hindered by the limitations of that medium. Certainly, such an intentional evocation of another place is not limited to domestic gardens, but finds its way into public and political structures and spaces as well. For instance, the famous Portico of Pompey the Great in Rome was planted with plane trees that were brought back from his eastern conquests (transporting the East itself to Rome) among which were interspersed mythological sculptures of Pan and Daphnis, in a way elevating Pompey’s own accomplishments to the realm of myth and legend.63

Certainly, gardens did not originate for this “virtual” function. The decorative Roman gardens developed from a mixing of foreign influences with the long tradition of Italic gardening for more mundane and practical purposes such as food production. This practical agricultural function remained their primary aspect until the first-century BCE,

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up to which point nearly all Roman gardens were small functional cottage affairs, providing welcomed self-sufficiency.\textsuperscript{64} Indeed, the strong agrarian roots and ethos of the Roman people played a large role in the development and decoration of gardens, with gardens in city houses allowing an urban dweller to possess his own piece of the countryside, and thus, allowing for an easy projection into a text-world set in that idyllic country and pastoral world.

The Roman-style decorative garden develops from a mix of various domestic and foreign influences (including Greek, Egyptian, and Near Eastern), but it was the Greek that would have the largest influence on the replication of sacred and mythological space in a private garden. While the fairly dry climate of mainland Greece (as well as the lack of technology such as aqueducts to move large quantities of water) did not lend itself to a large proliferation of ornamental planned private gardens, nevertheless natural settings had long been associated with the divine and the use of natural settings, such as caves, grottoes and groves, as sacred spaces was prevalent.

Patrick Bowe claims that these “natural shrines,” along with Greek cemetery decoration, “should perhaps be considered the antecedents of the Roman gardens.” Indeed, Greek colonists were the first to create planned decorative gardens in Italy (the earliest record of which dates to the third-century BCE on Sicily, built by the Greek tyrants of Syracuse), which naturally contained vestiges of these natural shrines in the form of \textit{nymphaea}, small shrines to lesser nature deities.\textsuperscript{65} The importance of natural landscapes for the Greeks is perhaps best demonstrated by the Rhodians, who “were

particularly sensitive to the appeal of natural landscape,” creating at sites like Rhodini, near the city of Rhodes, romantic parks with steps hewn from the rock and filled with grottoes and statuary.66

These natural sacred spaces would often be adorned with sculpture to enhance their monumentality, a practice that can be attested as far back as the Archaic period. One of the most famous examples from this early date are the sculptured lions arranged on the terrace overlooking the Sacred Lake on the island of Delos, mentioned earlier. Over time this architectural elaboration and enhancement of natural spaces would become a defining feature of these sacred places. For example, at the famous sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma the original sacred grotto and grove would become completely surrounded and subsumed by the architectural elaboration of a massive temple, enhancing the transportative effect of the grove-like space.67

Although direct archaeological evidence is scant, the literary sources give an account of another interesting example of the recreation of mythological space in a Greek garden. The sources relay that in Athens a man named Theophrastos, supposedly a student of Aristotle, purchased a private garden which he dedicated to the Muses, erecting a shrine to them within it. Brunilde Ridgway comments, “It is tempting to visualize the area as a sort of three-dimensional 'Apotheosis of Homer' relief,”68 referring to a famous relief carving by Archelaos of Priene in the British Museum showing Ptolemy and his wife with a poet, flanked by characters from Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, and a procession approaching the altar of the Alexandrian Homereion. If this association is true, then

66 Ridgway, in MacDougall, 13.
67 Ibid., 19.
68 Ibid., 17.
Theophrastos recreated a specific mythological event in his garden, with all the sculpture and decorative design working together to create the sense and character of that moment. The immersive quality of these sacred garden areas, or gardens of any theme, would have been greatly enhanced by the use of sculpture, as was mentioned earlier, which allowed gardens to be populated with figures appropriate to their theme, from mythological and divine figures to animals and genre scenes. Of course, even with these types of creatures a divine connection could be intended. Stags, boars and dogs are all characteristic of the hunt and so may also act as attributes for the goddess of hunt, Diana.\footnote{Linda Farrar. \textit{Ancient Roman Gardens}. Stroud: Sutton, 1998, 114.}

In most houses at Pompeii, this garden sculpture was placed facing in towards the center of the garden, emphasizing the views facing outward from them and often standing in the primary lines of sight.\footnote{Ibid., 99.} This surrounding of a viewer by emphasizing an outward field of vision enhanced the feeling of projecting oneself into another place. The very structure of the space drew a viewer's attention from the “here” of the garden space to its limits and the “there” beyond them.

Having mentioned the goddess Diana, the themes of the wild and the hunt bring us to another type of elsewhere often created in Roman gardens, that of the foreign and exotic locale. With themes of the hunt a garden might alternatively be trying to create in miniature a Hellenistic \textit{paradeisos}, the sprawling hunting parks of the Hellenistic kings, again potentially creating a false sense of class and status.\footnote{Ibid., 114.}

Another good example of such an attempt to recreate a fantasy exotic elsewhere can be seen in the common use of Egyptianizing motifs.\footnote{See especially McKenzie, part 3.} Certainly, the influence of
Egypt played a major role in the development of the style of Roman gardens. While the main feature of many Roman gardens, the peristyle, was a Greek contribution, many characteristic features of Roman gardens could be seen in their Egyptian counterparts hundreds of years prior, including symmetrical arrangements populated with fountains, and the holding of gardens in an internal atrium or courtyard.\textsuperscript{73} Egyptian stylings can be first seen, again, in Roman wall-painting, with such styles becoming especially popular after Egypt was annexed into the Roman Empire in 31/30 BCE.\textsuperscript{74} Wildlife of the Nile delta graced numerous paintings and mosaics in Pompeii, flora and fauna totally alien to the Italian countryside in which they now found themselves (figure 70).\textsuperscript{75}

This taste continues into the gardens as well. In the realm of sculpture, a particularly interesting example of an Egyptian subject is the statue type of the African

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{nilotic-mosaic-house-of-the-faun-pompeii}
\caption{Nilotic Mosaic, House of the Faun, Pompeii (Naples National Archeological Museum: inv. 9990)}
\end{figure}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\itemBow, 4.
\itemLing, 39.
\itemMary Hamilton Swindler. \textit{Ancient Painting: From the Earliest Times to the Period of Christian Art.} New Haven: Yale UP, 1929, 316.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
acrobat. An example of this type found in Rome and now in the British museum shows an African in a handstand pose on the back of a crocodile (figure 71), which would more than likely have had a fountain spouting from its mouth. Of course, this sculpture and others like it are not attempting to create a truly realistic mimetic recreation. It is not trying to fool your eye into thinking there really is an acrobat on top of a crocodile in front of you, but rather it is in this case attempting to evoke the character of the exotic

Figure 71. Acrobat on a Crocodile, British Museum (1805,0703.6). Image copyright Trustees of the British Museum (www.britishmuseum.org), used with permission

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place it represents, or at least the character that wealthy Romans imagined it to have. In this way, we can see that the virtual spaces created in Roman gardens were not always, if not even mostly, about a mimetic recreation of a place, but rather about the arrangement of a suitable number of signifiers to allow for a journey of the imagination (if not the body). This is, of course, not to say mimetic representation never occurred. A notable example of this in regards to this same Egyptianizing crocodile theme would be the naturalistic sculptures of those creatures from the villa of the Roman emperor Hadrian at Tivoli.

Hadrian's villa also sports a particularly striking and enormous example off what are perhaps the most obvious and imposing examples of the desire to recreate foreign locales such as Egypt in a Roman garden, that of the euripus (figure 72), which takes the form of a narrow, elongates water channel or pool. The Roman orator and statesman Cicero tell us that these channels (whose size generally restricted their use to only to larger gardens), were intended to recall actual famous water channels of the period, the Nile River and Canopus canal in Egypt, or the Euripus River in Greece (for which it was named).76

Furthermore, the villa at Tivoli is perhaps the most striking (and certainly the largest) example of the use of gardens to create “elsewheres.” As Patrick Bowe explains, the emperor's residence within Rome was too “politically charged” to deviate too far from established norms and sense of propriety (as Nero discovered to his detriment). But out in the country at a secluded private villa estate, an emperor (or really any wealthy members of the elite engaged in public business at Rome) could create spaces that

76 Farrar, 73.
conformed to and expressed his “private personality.” In the case of Hadrian, this “private personality” was one that did not care much for the city of Rome. In his villa, then, and especially in its sprawling garden complexes, Hadrian sought to transport himself to other locales. The ancient writer Aelius Spartanus relays that Hadrian purposefully recreated in his villa a number of famous sites, especially from the land of Greece of which he was so fond, including "the Lyceum, the Academy, the Prythaneium, the Canopus, the Pecile, the Vale of Tempe, and even Hell itself." We have here, then, a combination of real and mythological places recreated together in the same location.

This villa displays much of the same tendency displayed in the paintings from the Villa of

Figure 72. Euripus, Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli

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77 Bowe, 62-3.
Livia, which depicted combinations of flora and fauna that would be impossible in reality, taken to its logical extension and extreme in three dimensions.

In the end, we can see how Roman gardens, as well enveloping wall painting programs indoors, were used to create environments that were intended to transport the viewer to another place, to an “elsewhere,” whether that be a mythological, foreign, or class based one. These spaces, oftentimes elaborated with sculpture and mosaic, in creating an environment that could be entered and surround a viewer, provided even more forceful engagement through which a viewer could create the mental text-worlds needed for a transportative experience. In the next chapter we will consider a particularly evocative example with a case study of the Villa Poppaea at Oplontis.
Chapter 6: The Villa Poppaea at Oplontis

While the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum draw the largest crowds of tourists to the warm Campanian sun, another site, equally well preserved, may provide one of the most compelling and intriguing case studies of the use of sets of wall-painting to affect a virtual experience, that of the villa complex at Oplontis in the modern town of Torre Annunziata. Only small handfuls of visitors, not the suffocating throngs of the more famous sites, roam the grounds here, but contained within its walls are some of the highest quality examples of ancient fresco found anywhere in the Roman world.

The villa at Oplontis is one of the few excavated examples of a Roman luxury villa. Because of its large size and particularly lavish decoration, the villa has frequently been hypothesized to have had imperial connections. Most commonly proposed is a link to the wife of the emperor Nero, Poppaea Sabina, a connection based only on two minor archaeological finds—an amphora inscribed with the name of a freedman of the empress and a *dolium* jar bearing the stamp of a factory owned by her.\(^1\) Whether the villa was ever actually owned or occupied by Poppaea Sabina is impossible to say, but the stately demeanor of the complex is undeniable.

More accurately referred to as Villa Oplontis A, the site was first excavated in 1964. Work continues in the present day under the direction of John Clarke and Michael

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Thomas of The Oplontis Project, whose upcoming publication of the site aims to be the most complete record yet of its archaeology and chronology.

The earliest portion of the villa dates to the first-century BCE. This original core was comprised of the Villa's central and largest atrium and surrounding rooms (see figure 98, room 5). The villa was expanded during the Augustan age and again in the middle of the first-century CE, when it reached its maximum extent, adding a bath complex, eastern servants wing, and swimming pool complex. These later additions were decorated in the wall painting manners prevalent at their respective times, the Third and Fourth Styles. The earlier styles of the previous areas were not updated, however, and in fact were carefully maintained and restored.2 Roughly half the villa has been uncovered at the site, with the remaining half either destroyed by sixteenth-century construction or covered by the streets of the modern town built over top of it. This has made it difficult to get an accurate sense of the villa's entire extent and arrangement, and whether or not the villa had a western wing symmetrical to its eastern one.3

Discussing the entirety of the experience of the decoration of the villa and the interplay between its various parts could easily comprise its own book; we will here only look at a selection of some of the most striking and relevant examples of the way in which Oplontis manipulates and engenders virtual travel and perception.

Second and Third Style Painting

The largest room and original nucleus of the earliest phase of the villa is the large

atrium at its center, designated room 5 (figure 73). A standard impluviate atrium, room 5 is lavishly decorated with Second Style fresco depicting an illusionistic architectural facade. A series of metal doorways sit atop a raised podium, separated with columns of colored marble on sections of the podium painted to look as if they jut out into the viewer's space (figure 74). The vertical emphasis of the composition complements the high ceiling in the atrium and lends an even greater sense of grandiosity to the space. Tripods placed on the podia lend a sacred character to the space, deftly drawing in the myriad text-worlds related to religion, mythology, and the world of the divine.4

4 As Bergman exclaims, “The very act of looking into painted vistas to gaze upon gold statues peering
Similarities in style and in the elements chosen in the painting of Oplontis Villa A and of the Villa of Publius Fannius Synistor, the cubiculum of which was discussed in chapter 3, have led many to posit both sites were painted by the same workshop.\(^5\)

Second Style paintings such as these at the Villae Poppaea have been used as ammunition to attack the long-held conclusions of scholars such as J. Engemann and P. W. Lehmann that the illusory vistas that such paintings delivered were used as a type of


Oplontis and the Villa of P. F. Synistor share many common transportative elements, including the use of floating monochrome landscapes, as discussed in chapter 3.
wish fulfillment, representing luxury villas and views that were unobtainable and unaffordable to the painting's owner, a quality that I, too, touched on in earlier chapters.⁶ As Mantha Zarmakoupi articulates, because the villa at Oplontis was so large and lavish, and thus precisely the type of luxury country villa that Second Style paintings were supposedly imitating, its paintings cannot have been intended to function in that manner—the villa would have had no need for them. Thus, as Zarmakoupi argues, these paintings were “not intended to invite the viewer...to illusionistic architectural or landscape vistas,” but rather intended to “reflect the political and social desire of members of the aristocracy to represent themselves as inheritors of Hellenistic culture.”⁷

While I do not doubt that Second Style paintings could have been used as markers of social status (indeed, those of lesser means utilizing the style in their smaller homes would certainly have wished for as much), to dismiss entirely the invitational quality of such paintings and their ability to create a transportative experience is untenable at best, and daftly reductionist at worst. There is no reason to think that such complex paintings could not have functioned in many different ways depending on the day, time, or mood of the viewer. And in any case, that villas like Villa A at Oplontis were deliberately self-referential (a device that existed as a literary topos, as in, for example, Varro's De Re Rustica, and was also a common decorative feature⁸), does not diminish the evocative power of their decorations.

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⁸ Zarmakoupi, 50.

Bergmann, 100.
Just because a villa the size of Villa A at Oplontis was not in need of artificial expansion through paintings does not mean that a viewer inside one of its decorated rooms would still not have enjoyed the mental exercises of engaging with the paintings. To use a modern example, Zarmakoupi's argument is like saying that an NFL football player would never have need or desire to play a football video game on an Xbox. After all, he does the real thing; what need has he of some simulation? Additionally, the common Second Style theme of the *scenae frons*, though certainly not a wish fulfillment in the same way as vistas of villas or gardens, possesses a strong transportative pull. John Clarke has argued, for instance, that the inclusion of figures in painted *scenae frons* scenes was a deliberate strategy to “[bring] the viewer into the wall painting.”

Throughout the villa at Oplontis, but perhaps most readily apparent in the atrium, is the preponderance of doors and gateways in the villa's Second Style painting. A closed doorway, in addition to merely giving the impression of a crossable threshold leading to another space, can in its own way encourage both a lingering gaze and a desire to mentally project oneself to the virtual space beyond it. After all, a human being is by nature a curious creature, and a closed door will naturally cause a viewer to wonder what lies on the other side. Such an image is a particularly potent in the number of text-worlds it can add to a discourse, as the number of locales and objects concealed by its fictive door are essentially infinite, limited only by the viewer's imagination. Thus, these types of images can produce much more dense, saturated text-world webs than the most creative of painted wonders. The row of painted doorways in the atrium leads ultimately

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to real ones at its southern end which lead to other parts of the villa. The real, functional exits are presented as a continuation of the fictitious ones, the one picking up where the other ends. This helps to creates a particular fluidity of movement from one text-world to the next.

Fluidity of transitions from text-world to text-world might indeed be the watchword of the decorative program of the atrium. For instance, small glimpses of possibilities of what may lie behind the doors and gates may be given in other elements of the decoration of the atrium. Above the painted doors were painted small framed landscape and architectural scenes, arranged in such a way as to almost suggest a label for the place to which to the closed door leads; the juxtaposition of the scene with the doorway invites a viewer to link the text-worlds of the two elements together and allows for less strenuous mental leaps back and forth between them. Furthermore, round shields with female heads hang in the upper zone of the painted wall to either side of the central doorway. The heads of each are tilted such that their faces all gaze toward the small landscape above the door, further drawing attention to that scene as well as the doorway generally. Gazes populate many rooms of the villa; even First Style blocks occasionally contain figural representations (figure 75).

The Roman love of framed axial views has been touched on before, but Oplontis provides another striking example (in fact more than one, as we will see). The atrium opens onto a transverse space to its north, past that to a viridarium garden, enclosed on all sides but open to the sky, and finally to a monumental hallway that opens to the outdoors. While windows give a view through the entry hall, the garden, the transverse space, and
into the atrium, that space is physically inaccessible along this axis. This lack of passage must have been especially confounding given that the exterior of the large hall (figure 76), with its enormous columns and piers, resembles a *propylon*, or monumental entry gateway.

Disorientation and confounding seem to be the order of the day in entering the villa. To progress, one needs to enter the villa through one of two narrow, and quite dark, passages that run along either side of the entry hall and garden. As Clarke explains, “The process has become one of finding the axis visually, then losing it in the dark corridors, only to realign oneself with the visual axis in the comforting symmetry of the traditional atrium.”  

that is glimpsed, lost, and regained as one moves inside. Bettina Bergmann has described this blocked axis as creating a “disembodied eye,” that is, a gaze that cannot be physically followed by the viewer’s body.\footnote{Bergmann, 107.} Such an arrangement naturally forces a viewer to proceed in his imagination, that is, mentally, thereby facilitating his projection into a text-world.

To the west of the atrium is another large room, designated room 15, decorated in lavish Second Style painting. A reception room or banqueting room, it had originally commanding views of the sea through its open southern wall. Only the painting of the room's eastern wall remains preserved, presenting an elaborate \textit{scenae frons} scene (figure

\footnote{Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, 22.}
In this case, it is a garden space that mirrors the real plants and fountain visible from room 15 to its north (figure 78). This elsewhere, however, is perhaps more specific than those hinted at in the atrium. The scene in room 15 is saturated with religious and mythological items and references. Beyond the central gateway inside the fictive porticoed garden stands a tall tripod on a pedestal. This has led to the space being identified as a sanctuary of Apollo, and indeed a cultic torch lies in the open gateway, pointing to the aperture.\textsuperscript{12} As we have seen, text-worlds related to myth and the world of the gods are common and provide an easy entry point for a viewer, since they depict

places and elements both strange in their evocation of the otherworldly and familiar in their ubiquity in contemporary life and culture.

That Room 15 was intended to encourage a viewer to ponder these differing transportative experiences is evidenced by the inclusion of a stone faux partition screen in the room's southern wall (figure 79). This faux partition is a lithified version of a wooden valva, which was used to screen off a section of a room, commonly the tablinum. Pliny the Younger boasted of his tablinum that has such valvae on every side of the room, which could be then opened in a number of different arrangements to allow for different views of the surrounding countryside.\textsuperscript{13} The faux partition at Oplontis, then, would have

called to mind this shifting and opening of views, an act that mirrors, in a way, the shifting focus of moving from differing text-worlds while encountering the various elements of a decorative ensemble.

On of the most intriguing details of the fresco painting on this wall is also one of its smallest, a detail that might be glanced over without a longer, more sustained look. In the upper zone of the wall, where the imaginary painted colonnades intersect with the plane of the wall are situated two shuttered panels, flanking the central architectural gateway, and painted to look as though they rest atop the cornice of the portico. The shutters are open to reveal landscape images behind (figure 80). Painted panels such as

![Figure 79. Faux Valva, Room 15](image-url)
these represent real panel paintings with wooden shutters that could have been opened or closed, referred to as *pinakes*. As Roger Ling explains, oftentimes, and in this example at Oplontis, the panels “are also painted in a sketchy, almost impressionistic style, with figures indicated by bold strokes of light and dark colour, so as to distinguish them from the carefully painted forms of the illusionistic architecture within which they were set: this architecture is supposed to be ‘real’, whereas the pictures are deliberately characterized as paintings within the paintings.”\(^{14}\) Other examples of this sort can be found in frescoes preserved in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples from the House of Adonis (figure 81) and in situ at the Villa Farnesina.

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The examples from Villa A at Oplontis, however, can give a different impression than that of shuttered paintings. Though rendered in the “sketchy” style of similar pinakes, instead of giving the impression of representing a painting, it instead resembles the indistinct quality of an atmospheric perspective, especially at their rather removed distance from a viewer. In this way, they appear to contain a true landscape beyond, as if they are windows looking out over another vista. These vistas would of course not make logical sense as windows overlooking a landscape contiguous with the architectural setting in which they are found. Instead, they can be conceived of as glimpses into parallel text-worlds, or text-worlds branching off from the primary one of the world of
the painted sanctuary. Indeed, both *pinakes* in room 15 are faced and angled such that they are facing down toward the painted gateway in the center of the wall. This visually links them together and causes a viewer to see the shuttered scenes more as gateways themselves than as pictures hung on the wall.

This same transformation and use of painted *pinakes* can also be found in room 23, painted in an elaborate *scenae frons* type of Second Style fresco (figure 82). Above the central stage area of the western wall (the primary wall of the room, opposite the room's entryway), are situated two open *pinakes* flanking a theatrical mask between them (figure 83). Instead of depicting landscapes, however, this time two full-length figures (a man and a woman) are shown facing outward against a solid blue background. The two
figures appear to be addressing one another across the intervening space. The hand on the outstretched right arm of the male figure comes ever so close to crossing the threshold of his frame (and in its proximity to it, that it does not in fact cross is of little importance given the mind's desire to fill in the motion of the arm across the line). Furthermore, pinakes such as these two, in being relationally the size and shape of doorways for the figures peering out of them, may be more relatable, for example, to the open doorways in the porticoes flanking the central scena frons in a painting from the House of Marcus Lucretius Fronto (see figure 38, chapter 3), than to traditional shuttered paintings.¹⁵

The later additions to the villa, done in Third and Fourth Style painting also

exhibit transportative qualities, as was discussed in chapters 3 and 5. A particularly striking example can be found in room 38, a small chamber off a hallway leading from the atrium core to a large peristyle courtyard to its east. This room amply demonstrates the enveloping power of the Third Style of wall painting, and the variety of technique that can be found at Oplontis. Almost every square inch of this smallish room is painted in a vivid red composition (figure 84), including the ceiling, which is one of the best preserved of such surfaces at the site (figure 85). The walls and ceiling are divided into sections, each framed by a thin outline. This red zone sits atop a narrow black lower zone along the bottom of the walls which is painted with images of plants and flowers (figure

Figure 84. Third Style Painting, Room 38
86). This both serves to present a focus for the creation of text-worlds set in gardens and nature, as we've encountered before, but also gives the impression that the rest of the room and its decoration has grown up out of the ground itself; this impression is further underscored by the presence of an architectural pavilion painted on the room's northern wall (figure 87). The svelte columns of the Third Style structure sprout plant-like from the very ground, the only decorative element from the red zone to pierce the lower black band and touch the floor.\textsuperscript{16}

In the center of each framed section of the red zone float small images of

\textsuperscript{16} This reference to growth permeates the decoration at Oplontis. Painted climbing vines in the fictive columns of Second-Style compositions are produced in reality with living vines that grew from pots in the ground (the remains of which were discovered during excavation) around the columns of the large peristyle garden, for instance.
Figure 86. Black Lower Zone, Room 38

Figure 87. Detail, Painted Pavilion, Room 38
animals, a motif that can be found throughout this wing of the villa (the most famous examples of which might be the villa's well-preserved paintings of birds). Images of odd (if not impossible) architectural constructions in a nearby hallway also seem to be “condensation nuclei” of sorts (figure 88). They give the impression of an architectural system collapsed in on itself and condensed, able to be unpacked in myriad viewer-created text-worlds. Here again, these solitary images act as a sort of focal points to draw the gaze and stimulate the imagination to build text-worlds around and involving them.

Figure 88. *Abstracted Architecture Motif, Hallway 24*

Such a ploy to encourage text-world building is more obvious when these nuclei are in fact entire landscapes in their own right, as can be found in the long portico flanking the swimming pool to the villa's east. One example (figure 89) depicts a scene
of small boats plying a river or coast, a scene that no doubt was meant to create a linkage to the large swimming pool that it faced, tying together these elements of the viewer's surroundings. In all these cases, floating in a flat, solid-colored surround draws attention to them and also, in a way, connects them. The solid space might even be conceived of as a visual representation of the “Open” of Deleuze, the connections that link all sets of elements and thereby create the “Whole.”

Figure 89. Landscape Scene with Waterway and Boats

The “Zebra Stripe” Pattern

One of the most intriguing elements of the decoration at Oplontis is the use in
certain areas of the villa, especially the eastern wing, of a stark and simply-rendered black and white striped design (figure 90), which may have been intended to give the impression of certain kinds of veined marble.¹⁷ Several variations of the stripes can be

found, distinguished primarily in the orientation of the stripes—arranged vertically, horizontally, diagonally, or in chevron, diamond, or whorl patterns. That a reference to marble or stone was at least vaguely intended is also supported by the depiction of these striped fields in either large panels resembling wall revetment or in brick-like patterns of

¹⁷ Fergola, 54.
divided blocks (figure 91). Additionally, it is clear that the more abstracted nature of the pattern must have been deliberate, as much more mimetic painted marble veining can be seen elsewhere at Oplontis. To what *purpose* this pattern was chosen, however, is not as clear.

![Figure 91. "Zebra Stripe" Pattern in Blocks](image)

Existing in stark contrast to the lavish Second and Fourth Style wall painting elsewhere in the villa, especially the western wing, this black and white striped “zebra” design has usually been seen as the less elaborate (and expensive) painting appropriate to the areas of the villa utilized and occupied by servants or slaves, those quarters that would therefore not necessitate or deserve the highly decorative and detailed frescoes
found elsewhere, which would have been enjoyed by the villa's patron, his family, and house-guests. Indeed, the design and color is well-suited to hiding the dirt and damage expected in high-traffic areas of the villa. This basic understanding has been altered and expanded in more recent investigations, which see these designs as indicative of spaces accessible to the public or common areas.

It has also been argued that these designs could have functioned as “directional markers” to guide movement through the spaces of villa. These markers could have been directed specifically at servants and slaves, alerting them to the areas of the villa that they were permitted to enter and in which they could carry out their duties. Certainly, at the villa at Oplontis, the zebra stripe pattern is found in back corridors that lead to the more lavishly decorated rooms facing the large water pool—corridors that would have easily allowed servants to tend these rooms while remaining mostly unseen. However, as Mantha Zarmakoupi has pointed out, in other areas of the villa, this zebra pattern exists beneath Fourth Style paintings in hallways that are much too large and prominent to have been used by servants alone. Thus, such designs could have served as “directional markers” more generally, for groups beyond slaves and villa staff, including even guests and family members.

The power of decoration to engender or inhibit movement through a space has

19 Zarmakoupi, 52.
21 Zarmakoupi, 52.
already been mentioned, and certainly, in addition to the receding planes of vision that can be found all over the villa's decoration and layout discussed above, other, more subtle, decorative elements at Oplontis help lead viewers from room to room. For instance, in the rooms near the swimming pool a thick stripe of green between the upper and lower bands of fresco continues through multiple rooms (figure 92), subtly joining them together and drawing a viewer from one to another as he follows the leading stripe.

However, while the arguments for this pattern having been employed in public areas of the villa and to visually mark and guide through certain rooms are undoubtedly correct, at least in certain instances, there is more at play than has been generally thought.
Especially in the peristyle garden (figure 93), which is decorated almost entirely in this manner (including both upper and lower zones of the walls and even the pillars themselves) this zebra stripe pattern adds an humming sort of dynamism to the space. The design creates an almost animated sense of movement, as certain optical illusions do—the lines and swirls pulse in an almost hypnotic manner.

![Figure 93. Peristyle Garden](image)

This achieves two primary effects for a viewer. First, it serves to disorient him slightly, surrounding him with an enveloping noise, as if he were lost in the black and white static on a television set. Disoriented in such a way, a viewer is distanced from the reality of his everyday world and can more easily imagine a virtual elsewhere and be
swept up into it, carried away in the movement of the stripes.

The eastern peristyle courtyard deftly takes advantage of this effect and directs a viewer to the virtual elsewhere it intends. While the walls and columns of the courtyard are painted in zebra patterns, the inside of the low bounding wall of the garden is painted in a more mimetic style. Plants and wildlife, reflecting the real garden that would have originally grown there, are foregrounded against a vivid red background, similar to the manner of the garden rooms elsewhere in the villa, discussed below. This bright painting and the real fauna bounded by it, lit by the sun streaming in from the open roof, would have created a stark contrast to the zebra patterns circling it. This beacon of color in a mostly black, white, and grey enclosure would no doubt have drawn a viewer's gaze to it. Disoriented by the zebra patterns, he would have intuitively turned to the garden. The gold and red “mortar” lines between block of the “zebra” marble echo the color of the painting inside the garden area, further highlighting that space. This replicates, in a way, the beacon-like quality of the old main atrium, discussed earlier, which served as an anchor of familiarity in orienting a viewer to a visual axis after he was disoriented in the surrounding dark corridors.

A fountain also stood in this peristyle garden, adding the sound of flowing water to the environment. The fountain was likely decorated with marble sculpture and was painted with images of marine life.²² Light reflecting off the water in the fountain's basin would have dappled the already light and dark stripes on the walls, further adding to the animated quality of the walls as the reflected light moved and danced across them.²³

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²² Fergola, 62.
²³ The portico along the Villa's northern wall, too, used light and shadow to encourage movement along them. As Bergmann notes, the vertical forms of the columns were echoes by vertical bands of color in the accompanying fresco, and thereby “articulat[ed] rhythms of ambulation for the pedestrian.”
Interestingly, the fountain was built to accommodate an existing tall chestnut tree that grew in the garden. The placard erected in the garden by the office of the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Napoli e Pompei states that this was because “in ancient times falling a tree was considered inconceivable.” Inconceivable or not, it did serve to blend the natural and the man-made together, perhaps reducing slightly the artificiality of the garden. Bettina Bergmann has argued that the tree was a deliberate allusion to the literary topos of incorporating a tree into the home as a visible marker of piety. An object as simple (and practical) as a garden tree, then, can carry with it the kernel of multiple possible text-worlds, including the natural, literary, and religious. This last link is further reinforced by the tree and the villa's lararium being on the same visual axis.

The small bounding wall that separates the central garden from the rest of the space also functions similarly to the painted gateway and door elements of the fresco in the atrium. Each gives a marker of a threshold, dividing one space from another. In the case of the atrium this is a fictive space; in the case of the garden courtyard this a real, physical one. In each case, the act of separation into a distinct other space creates, as discussed in chapter 3, the ability to leave the present space and go into the space on the other side of the threshold, whether physically or purely through the imagination.

This pulsing sense of motion lies in contrast to much of the rest of the painted decoration of the Villa. Bettina Bergmann has described the decorative programs at Oplontis as integrated through the quality of “arrested animation” and the collapse of time. The images of always-fresh fruit, birds “frozen” in mid-flight and fountains in mid

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Shifting light and shadows caused by the movement of the sun created an “environment harmonious with [the pedestrian's] movement, seeming to become one with the setting.” Art and Nature, 99-100. 
24 Bergmann, 93.
flow, “engag[e] the viewer in suspense and in the protracted observation of signs of time and life...resulting in an intensification of taste and vision, a visual delectation.”

Moving into an area painted in zebra stripes from one painted with a Second or Third Style “still life” would have added to the disorienting effect.

While not as potent, an air of animation may also percolate beneath the surface of another decorative style found in places within the villa grounds, namely the use of red-outlined rectilinear blocks on white backgrounds. This design (figure 94) is used primarily in outdoor areas of the villa (though it does have echoes in the gold dividing lines between the zebra stripe “blocks” in the peristyle garden). While these painted blocks do at first glance give a fairly solid and stolid appearance, when contemplated from the perspective of the *longe durée* of wall-painting development, the motion underlying them becomes more apparent. These red stripe white blocks are somewhat reminiscent of the later Severan period “linear style” of wall painting, which likewise used red lines over a white background, albeit more loosely and organically rendered. This Severan style has been described in similar terms of agitated animation (as was mentioned earlier in chapter 3). As Clarke comments, “The Severan panel style loosened up the axial symmetry and rectilinear grids that had been the rule for centuries, so that now the artist's touch was evident in the freehand division of the wall surface into panels.”

The grids at Oplontis are an initial step toward that Severan “looseness.”

In some examples at Oplontis, such as seen in figure 94, the red and white style is

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25 Bergmann 119. Bergmann also offers this effect as a possible reason for the extensive use of *trompe l'oeil* painting at large villas like Oplontis, where lavish spaces and prestige items are to be found in reality.

situated above a lower zone painted with a scene of a lattice-work fence in front of a series of small bushes or trees. Birds flit in and around the foliage, adding a life and vigor to the composition. The inclusion of this zone adds again both the deliberate evocation of threshold and the use of garden imagery to encourage a viewer to create transportative text-worlds. These, coupled with the sense of floating animation given by the red on white painting above it (admittedly more subtle and less affecting than its later Severan descendants) capture a viewer's attention, feed him a kernel around which to create an elsewhere text-world, and give him the animating energy to spark the

Figure 94. Painted Red Grid Design
transportational impulse.

**Garden Rooms and Pool Area**

The later eastern wing of the villa houses another intriguing feature of its architectural layout. Here, running along the north-south orientation of the wing are a succession of enclosed garden rooms. Like the larger garden to the north of the atrium, these rooms are often open to the sky, and all are similarly not able to be entered.²⁷ Their walls were painted in a golden/red color, the color of a constant sunset or sunrise, behind images of plants, trees, birds, and fountains, extending into the walls the real planted gardens they encircled (figure 95). These “physically unobtainable “constructed views are juxtaposed with framed views of the villa's functioning gardens and surrounding nature as well as with entirely fictive paintings.²⁸ Viewing them together, these three elements can be understood as a type of sequence or spectrum of “virtuality,” in which a viewer can move from completely fictive spaces to completely real ones, further blurring the distinction between them. As Bergmann surmises, “The outdoor gardens must have appeared like paintings that can be entered.”²⁹

The small landscape paintings along this portico also create an opportunity to contemplate this blurred spectrum. An attuned viewer may recognize the shift to a space with a fictive garden in a real colonnade from one, in the old atrium core, with a real

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²⁷ Such a space is not limited to Oplontis; a curved, open-topped garden room similar to the large viridarium in the northern part of the eastern wing at Oplontis is quite similar to a garden room at the not distant Villa San Marco at Stabiae.
²⁸ Clarke, *Houses*, 22-23. Clarke comments, “Clearly the architect was mirroring nature in theatrically lit painted tableaux that mimicked the real garden views visible through other windows.”
²⁹ Bergmann, 112.
garden surrounded partly by a fictive peristyle (figure 96). In this way, and in evoking their own painted elsewheres, these painted landscapes serve to “optically exapan[d] the immediate frame of reference.” Such conditions are ripe for the forming and expanding of a web of text-worlds. While a solitary image or garden space can, by still entering into a discourse with a viewer, cause the mind to project itself into an instigated text-world, by bombarding the viewer in this way with competing views, this arrangement accelerates

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30 Other echoes that link sections of the villa are also available for the close observer. For example, marble statues of centaurs that originally stood in the garden to the north of the atrium appear again as supports for fountains in the painted garden rooms of the eastern wing. Bergmann, 115.
31 Bergmann, 102.
the process by forcibly shunting out of the here-and-now through constant imposition of other vistas.

It is in this part of the villa with the series of enclosed garden rooms that Lise Bek's description of the ancient understanding of vision as a receding series of planes is perhaps most clearly invoked. Standing at the far end of the eastern wing and looking down its length, a viewer is able to see through each successive garden enclosure (figure 97) until reaching the southernmost one, an almost niche-like recess in a wall that acts as a painted backstop. This tunnel-like effect works to create an elongated sense of depth down this visual axis—an axis that, because of its trajectory through both rooms and

garden areas, also obscures the demarcation between enclosed and open spaces.\(^{33}\)

Additionally, this repetition of painted garden rooms and real gardens creates an impetus for physical movement in a viewer as he is drawn from one to the next in the course of an *ambulatio* along the colonnade of the eastern wing. This desire to progress and move both serves to further animate the grounds as well as to make the fictive settings more engaging and, therefore, more transportative for a viewer and his imagination.

Moreover, if we take a broader view of the expansion of the villa over time, a more advanced and all-encompassing project of movement might be adduced. The villa

\(^{33}\) Bergmann, 114-115.
expands out from the old atrium core to the east over time, adding the eastern wing and swimming pool garden area. While the old core is painted primarily in a Second-Style manner, the later additions utilize the Third and Fourth. A simple application of the changing styles of the times might play a part, but the desire to create a transportative experience might also have had an influence. As one moves east through the villa one travels from the illusionistic painting of the atrium, depicting an elsewhere space, to the long swimming pool and outdoor gardens—the elsewhere manifest. In the atrium a viewer is treated to a visual axis that frames a small enclosed garden and views of the sea.
outside the villa. Moving to the east the viewer encounters the swimming pool which becomes the new sea in the new wing, a sea tamed and controlled. Garden sculptures here would have added to the immersive quality of the space, “animating the grounds.”

In the next chapter we will look more closely at this engendering of movement within and between spaces and the powerful role it can play in the creation of linked mental text-worlds and the transportative, virtual experience, they allow.

34 Bergmann, 95.
Chapter 7: The Virtual Journey

We will now expand the scope of our discussion even further and consider more specifically the interaction of multiple spaces and the movement of a viewer within and between them, movement that is both produced by and helps to produce a virtual experience. A static image, as we have seen, can possess great transportative power, but incorporating and encouraging movement can further help to engage the viewer. Indeed, performance theorist Erika Fischer-Lichte has argued that the process of physical movement is a powerful tool in letting loose the imagination.¹

Indeed, one's position in a three-dimensional space and movement through it forms, in large part, the basis for our understanding of space and time. This nature of our perception, one that links physical spatial relations with temporal ones, is perfectly understandable given both our inhabitance of a three-dimensional world and the necessity of using ourselves as the reference point through which we engage it. Simply put, in human perception, that which is physically behind us is seen as in the past, that in front of us in the future. The further away it is in either direction corresponds to how far in the past or future it is.² It is no surprise then that art might be able to tap into this inborn tendency.

Without a doubt, space and the movement within it occupied an important place in

Roman thinking. For instance, in Roman religion (and its Etruscan antecedent), a *haruspex* (a seer who utilized atmospheric omens and animal livers to foretell the future) had to position himself properly in space in order to be able to read portents. Each zone of a mystic circle formed around him belonged to a specific deity, and signs read in different zones would lend themselves to different interpretations. Such a preoccupation may have found its way into more mundane aspects of Roman life as well, including the design of the Roman house. John Clarke has compared the Romano-Etruscan soothsayer, standing on the raised platform of the temple and delimiting the sacred boundary of that space, to the Roman *patronus*, standing in his *tablinum*, and likewise from there circumscribing the space of his realm of control, and “controlling the axis of entry that formed [the *tablinum's*] link with the business of the outside world.”

Similarly, Andrew Wallace-Hadrill claims that the power of a house's decoration, in reflecting the styles of public architecture and thereby creating a sense of luxury, also creates a condensed palpable sense of the power of the *patronus*.

Scholarship relating to Roman interior spaces (especially the decorated interiors of the well-preserved Vesuvian towns) continues to be a productive arena, but most scholars have until now focused on individual mural paintings within buildings or, at most, individual rooms, and in any case have focused more forcefully on the relation of architectural spaces to their function within a Roman socio-cultural milieu. Less has been done looking at how all the rooms within a house or other structure work together to create a unified interior experience or how particular decoration could have been chosen

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precisely for its role in encouraging movement with the goal of creating a transportative experience.

Again Wallace-Hadrill, whose views have become the voice of orthodoxy, states that the primary role of art and decoration, especially in domestic spaces, was to structure the social environment of that space. Thus, art for Wallace-Hadrill is a tool that can be used by scholars to decode the development of this social structuring, and any development or changes in art styles must in some way relate to this development, rather than simply the spread of changing aesthetic tastes.\(^5\) Beyond a reflection of simple wealth, which opulent decoration certainly makes readily apparent, fresco and other decorative art could both reflect and thereby help mold the social activity of its space. Wallace-Hadrill writes:

A rich man does not decorate all areas of his house indiscriminately from the triclinium or kitchen or slaves' quarters; On the contrary the function of decoration is to discriminate and to render the house fit for the pattern of social activity within it. The language of private decoration draws on public life; it reflects the reception function of the house and the expectation of contact with visitors from outside. The decoration (or its absence) should tell us in the first place about the social use of space.\(^6\)

Certainly, as Wallace-Hadrill points out, the large atrium houses that would have been the location of such important social activity do exhibit painted decoration (and in particular mythological scenes and mosaics) at a higher rate than those houses without atria (and thus the requisite rooms for salutatio, etc.).\(^7\) However, in the first place, as the maxim goes, correlation does not equal causation. It is an interesting fact, for sure, that atrium houses (that is, those that would have had a “reception function”) are more likely

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6 Ibid., 149.
7 Ibid., 158.
to feature prominent decoration, but it does not necessarily follow that the style or subject of such decoration was specifically related to the social rituals that took place in their presence. To be sure, a homeowner who would be receiving guests frequently would no doubt have wished to present his guests with an impressive reception space, but the manner of the decoration could still have been guided by other primary desires, such as the desire for virtual experience.

In one regard Wallace-Hadrill and I are in total agreement, changing aesthetic taste is too limited and simple and explanation for the development of Roman art. However, to put decorative practice firmly in the stranglehold of reflections of social practice is, in a way, to deny a portion of agency from the people who lived in these decorated homes. Giving primacy to the experience of visitors and their social interactions brushes aside the experience of those who actually lived in such decorated houses amongst these paintings and sculptures, and is a viewpoint that, in light of Mayer's critique, is no longer tenable as the sole explanation for the choice and development of painting styles.

Movement: Real and Implied

If there is a true origin for the desire to inspire movement in a viewer of decorative art, it might be the ancient Roman love of natural views and vistas. The locations of villa complexes were often chosen in large part to capitalize on spectacular views of the sea or other natural features. Statius, in his Silvae, makes this preoccupation readily apparent. At one point he takes the reader through a tour of a particular villa,
perched atop a sea-side cliff, enabling him to imagine a walk from the seashore to the summit through rooms that capture views of the dramatic landscape in increasingly spectacular and ingenious fashion.\(^8\)

Any space with such views can be at least partly considered a transportative one, capable of inspiring the creation of mental text-worlds. A forceful vista naturally draws a viewer's attention elsewhere and invites him to project himself into that place in his imagination. Interior rooms decorated to either recreate the effect of a natural view or to attempt to engender similar feelings may be an outgrowth of this Roman preoccupation with views and vistas.

The axis of the traditional Roman *domus* town house feeds into this same preoccupation and desire for movement through projection. As Wallace-Hadrill notes, the framed view along the central axis of the house oftentimes does not stop at the *tablinum* at the far end of the house's atrium, the place in which the power and prestige of the house and its owner might be thought to coalesce, but rather continues through it to peristyle gardens beyond, whether real or painted (or sometimes both). “Beyond the visible owner is (apparently) not the enclosed world of private space, nor indeed his neighbors crowding round, but the countryside and nature, even if suitably tamed.”\(^9\) In this way the house itself is not understood as the final destination for a viewer, but rather as an important part of the journey to that final destination that must be passed through and negotiated. A movement is therefore implied and compelled both physically through

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the house, and mentally to the text-worlds of those places conjured by the natural views at the ends of these framed axes. Such a notion is not entirely new, however; as Karl Galinsky notes, “The perspective in these rooms onto vistas beyond a crosswall (Scherwande) has been meaningfully related to that of Lucretius’ Epicureanism, which aims to transcend our everyday existence by a wise contemplation of the world beyond the dimension of its walls.”

The decoration and layout of these houses, too, worked to further compel a physical movement into and through their space. Wall and floor decoration, for instance, in one aspect that has been noted by such scholars as Clarke and Wallace-Hadrill, could be used to create a hierarchy of spaces, differentiating the more important areas of a house from the less important ones in order both to aid in a viewer’s understanding of the nature of these spaces and to help create the proper impression which could guide various types of visitors and residents to those parts of the house where their station determined they belonged. Generally speaking, more elaborate and lavish decoration was used in important reception areas like a tablinum than would be used in servants’ quarters, for instance. The so-called House of the Stags, for example, marks this differentiation with its spectacular opus sectile floors.

The exterior of a town house was also a powerful marker that encouraged certain types of people to enter its confines. A house with a small, narrow fauces corridor opening onto the street spoke of exclusivity—a passage that only the privileged (the friends and clients of the house's owner, e.g.) could pass through. Such a passage was

subtly encouraged, “by displaying a seductive vista, a glimpse of order, beauty, luxury, and privilege which the lucky may achieve.” A public building, or a business where crowds would gather, such as a taberna, would not have a constricting fauces, but rather a large, wide open entryway to encourage passersby to enter and partake of the goods and services offered, “vulgarly display[ing] its contents.”¹² This enticement exists, too, beyond common buildings such as these. Such a tunneling effect can also be seen, for instance, at the cave dining room of the emperor Tiberius at Sperlonga. The cave system in which the dining area was incorporate forks in the back as one progresses inside. This forking presents a viewer a choice of two paths, each drawing him in with the same sense of motion present in the aforementioned framing of domestic architecture.

Individual works of art also sometimes possessed a intuitive evocation of motion or a deliberate orienting quality meant to guide a viewer's movement in a particular way. The panels on the inside of the Arch of Titus at Rome, depicting the triumphal procession of Titus after he successfully suppressed the Jewish revolt of 79 CE, are both oriented such that their carved parades proceed in the direction of the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill, “the goal of the triumphator.”¹³ In a similar way, the fresco paintings in the atrium of the Villa San Marco at Stabiae seek to orient and guide a viewer. In this atrium, painted centaurs along the bottom of the wall point, in their facing, to all the various exits (doorways, staircases, etc.) leading from the room to the rest of the house (figure 98). One entering the atrium could choose to follow any of the sprightly centaurs to other locations within the house, and other locations outside the present text-world.

¹² Wallace-Hadrill, Houses, 118.
Having such mythological creatures as guides also helps the imagination wander, and in so doing helps it switch mental worlds.

Written texts can also exhibit similar guiding in the experience of space. A particularly visible example is Pliny's description of his Tuscan villa. In his text, Pliny takes the reader through his villa, describing its various rooms and parts. However, Pliny does this in such a manner as to purposefully disorient the reader. He does not simply describe each element of the villa in clear spatial order, but describes various and differing views of the spaces simultaneously. Views of the exterior and interior are both brought forth for the viewer; perspectives from above and from below are made to exist

in the viewer's mind concurrently. As Von Stackelberg explains, “Under Pliny's direction the reader is moved away from fixed points of orientation and towards an amorphous perception of space. Disembodied and lacking concrete points of reference, the reader has no choice but to adopt this panoptic view and accept Pliny's authorial voice.”15 This “amorphous space” is similar in its nature to that mental space containing the web of text-worlds used to interpret a discourse. There, too, as these text-worlds are held simultaneously in the mind, one world can effortlessly come into focus as another recedes in a world-switch.

Furthermore, this crafting of the discourse to force a reader to accept the authority of the narrator is not limited to written texts, but exists in other discourse media. For instance, take the Forum of Augustus in Rome. While the precise details of the arrangement and decoration of this space are still debated, descriptions in the sources and the scant archaeological excavation that has been done paint a picture of a space dripping with the ideology and propaganda of the first emperor's new regime. Not only was this forum a gathering place for the citizenry of Rome, but it functioned to present a specific viewpoint regarding Augustus and his rule, i.e. to teach the new orthodoxy. Here, too, there is a narrator of sorts. One can imagine the presence of Augustus himself hovering over the forum, whispering his message into the ears of all Romans who entered it. The narration in this case possesses a particular force of authority due to the fact that the narrator, Augustus, is a mental projection of a real-world human being; there is thus created, as Gavins terms it, a more “intimate and trusting relationship” between the

Figure 100. Text-world Chart of Augustan Metaphor
narrator and his audience. As such, the text-worlds created through this narration are participant-accessible ones from which other worlds, relating to the mythological subjects of some of the forum decoration, e.g., can grow (figure 99).  

Moreover, the use of movement as a key factor in the appreciation and interpretation of art is documented on the private and domestic level as well. An intriguing description of a lavishly decorated hall in Lucian’s *De Domo* provides an interesting ancient testimony. At one point in the work, Lucian’s unnamed antagonist walks through the hall and explains connections between the various mythological scenes painted on the walls, showing how such images could form the basis of a carefully considered analysis by a viewer. We can certainly imagine such talk happening, if with less learned rhetoric, at a Roman dinner party amongst the guests. 

Additionally, a more subtle element has been teased out effectively by scholar Zahra Newby. In this passage of Lucian, the antagonist attempts to show how images can be distracting and draw attention away from a *rhetor* speaking among them, such is the power of the desire to see. Lucian recreates this power of the visual in written form by forcing the reader to recreate the visual program described by the text in his head. However, as Newby points out, there is a subversion taking place. Through the process of applying textual labels to these images, they are being subsumed within a verbal process. This tension between the image as physical manifestation and the image as mental construct is a vital one in the construction of the virtual elsewhere, so reliant as it is on the construction of mental text-worlds. 

16 Gavins, 129-130.  
17 Lucian, *De Domo* chp. 21.  
Text, for sure, can possess a powerful force, even in otherwise three-dimensionally realized spaces. A somewhat comical example is again found in the letters of Pliny the Younger. At one point during a description of his villa in an epistle to Domitius Apollinaris, he mentions that in one of his gardens stands a row of topiary sculptures cut into the shapes of letters that spelled out his own name. These letters stand next to topiaries of physical objects, each in their own way providing aids to imaginative projection. Moreover, there is an additional ancient link between speech and movement through a space. As Lise Beck points out, in ancient treatises on rhetoric, such as the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, “the house is envisioned as a mnemo-technical aid to the orator in memorizing his speech.”

Returning to wall-painting, the change in styles over time, not only any individual elements within them, also may speak to a underlying sense of transportative movement, a fact that has been briefly touched on earlier. The transition from the Second Style to the Third took place around 30 BCE; Wallace-Hadrill links this transition partly with changing political circumstances surrounding the rise of Augustus. Sources of power begin to move from the public to the private, that is, from the realm of the *patronus* and his clients to that of the private contacts of the palace courtier. Such a political angle is a commonly employed in the story of the development of Roman painting (and is a tack

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19 Pliny the Younger. Epistle 5.VI to Domitius Apollinaris.
20 The use of letters in this way is not so dissimilar to the use of illusionistic paintings. Words and their attendant meaning can paint just as vivid and believable image as the most real-looking painting. Indeed, the goal of illusionism is not in fact to deceive a viewer, but, as Eleanor Leach has put it, “to solicit intelligently critical recognition” (*Painting*, 7). Text of all kinds, certainly, is capable of engendering such recognition.
to which we will return), but the development of the four styles of fresco painting may have also channeled some of this desire for a journey to a virtual elsewhere.

The First Style, with its faux-masonry blocks and architectural solidity, despite its evocation of foreign places, is a style firmly grounded to give a sense of placedness. It is a style that focuses attention on the “here,” the place the viewer currently occupies. The Second Style, however, with its painted windows and apertures, is one that draws the viewer’s attention to places and spaces perceived to be outside of the room; it shows the viewer another place, the elsewhere to which he might go. Painted doorways likewise hint at another space beyond the viewer's present confines. What was once in stone and wood now is encountered in paint and stucco. In some instances, such as in the atrium of the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii, real doorways and painted ones stand side by side, further blurring the real and the virtual.23

The impossible fantasy architecture, popularity of grotesques, and general other-worldliness of the Third Style and the hodgepodge of the Fourth, in turn, make the elsewhere present to be inhabited by the viewer. The “picture galleries” of the Third Style might then be seen as the inversion, in a way, of the Second Style vistas. If the Second Style is about gazing into the elsewhere, the Third Style pinacothecae are about gazing back from there to the world from whence the viewer came. Thus, in the changing styles there occurs a movement to bring the elsewhere space, generally envisioned, into the space of the viewer and therefore more immediately inhabitable. The Roman penchant for double and mirror images seen commonly in sculptural arrangements, as described by Vermeule, may also speak to this looking to the elsewhere

and back again.24

Ultimately, then, as one moves from the Second Style onward, it could be said that one moves from being hermetically sealed in reality (as in Livia's garden room) to being sealed mentally through Deleuze's fine thread which connects all sets. Moving to a more abstracted mental space may at first glance seem to create a situation that is more unbridled and unframed and therefore less “sealed in.” However, Deleuze describes the “Whole,” that is, the set of all sets, as being more the “Open,” since it allows sets “the possibility...of communicating with another, to infinity.”25 Thus, a set more open in this manner is, in essence, closer to a closed set after all.

*Space, Time, and the Reign of Augustus*

Motion through a space, and its encouragement by visual means, is easy enough to visualize and understand, but there is another type of motion that may also be invoked by a physical space and its decoration, that of a motion through time. This movement is more abstract than a simple movement, real or otherwise, from one place to another, but is nonetheless just as, if not more, evocative for someone experiencing it. That it is more abstract and therefore removed from daily conceptions of the world makes it easier to create an emotive response in a viewer.

Certainly, there exists a tradition in both the Greek and Roman worlds for playing with notions and presentations of time in art. Simply adding a sense of narrative also adds, in a way, an implicit movement through time as events in the time-line of the

depicted narrative are brought to mind through the artwork. The statue group of the
Tyrannicides, for example, shows not only the explicitly carved moment of the slaying of
Hipparchus, but would call to mind the causes of the slaying and its aftermath, drawing a
viewer along through the time-line of the story. The famous weary Herakles of Lysippos,
manipulates time for its own ends even more purposefully. A viewer is forced to walk
around the statue to see that Herakles holds the golden apples of the Hesperides behind
his back, revealing the cause of his weariness—he has just completed the last of his great
labors and acquired the key to his immortality. And certainly, more generally speaking,
the Greek penchant for synoptic narrative (that is, combining elements from different
scenes of a narrative into one single composition) is well documented from the Archaic
Period onwards.26

The statuary groups of Pergamene Gauls, known through several famous later
copies, in depicting some fighting, some dying, some already dead, may also create a
type of flow through time. These Gauls in their varying degrees of connection to the
mortal coil, may reflect different stages of the battle itself, from the first fierce contact
through defeat and the aftermath of the confrontation. Thus, a viewer moving from one
to another could experience this progress of the battle through time. Of course, he could
have not necessarily visited the statues in forward chronological order; he could have
started from the end and moved backward, or even jumped around within the time-line.
Either way, a shifting sense of time added to the impact of the figural group.27

This physical movement would have possessed even greater abilities to create a

27 See John R. Marszal, “Ubiquitous Barbarians: Representations of the Gauls at Pergamon and
Elsewhere” in De Grummond, Nancy and Brunilde Ridgway, eds. *From Pergamon to Sperlonga:
mental movement through time in architectural or other enveloping spaces, beyond that which could be instigated by statuary or other works of art alone. The site of Sperlonga, the fanciful cave dining room of the emperor Tiberius, may be a particularly intriguing example (figure 100). Within the space of the cave were erected a number of statuary groups depicting scenes from the *Odyssey*, surrounding a group of the monster Scylla attacking Odysseus's ship in the central pool. Such a theatrical setting of statuary groups likely developed from earlier, predominantly Greek, three-dimensional tableaux, such as Lysander's group at Delphi commemorating Athens' defeat at the hands of Sparta during the Peloponnesian War. 28 The scenes chosen for inclusion at Sperlonga, such as the blinding of the Cyclops Polyphemus, were well suited to a cave environment, evoking as

did their own mythic settings. By moving from one statuary group to the next, or simply by shifting his gaze, a viewer could move from one mythic episode to another and therefore move through the narrative of the *Odyssey*. Movement through the space of the cave of Sperlonga was thus also a movement through time, both narrative time and, in a broader sense, mythic time.  

Such a grouping of figures to create a movement through narrative time occurs in other media as well, specifically landscape painting. The so-called Odyssey Landscapes, a series of 1st-century BCE fresco paintings currently in the Vatican Museum, like the statuary groups at Sperlonga depicts various episodes from the *Odyssey* (figure 101). Here, however, the painting uses a continuous narrative to advance the story. The same characters appear and reappear along the unified rocky landscape background as the events of the poem unfold. Certainly, a continuous narrative, in its almost scroll-like unfurling, naturally creates a sense of flow and motion. Timothy O'Sullivan has even claimed that the Odyssey Landscapes were intended to evoke the experience of the *ambulatio*, the leisure-time walk spent in philosophical contemplation.  

Eleanor Leach has argued that the bird's eye perspective found in Roman continuous narrative, such as

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29 Sculptural decoration in less unconventional settings could likewise still have caused such a feeling of passage from time to time and place to place. At Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, for example, there stood sculptures of various notables, including philosophers, poets, and generals, along with copies of famous works of Greek sculpture. As Vermeule comments, “[S]elected areas of the villa would serve as illustrated lessons in intellectual history, while others areas might stress the aesthetic grouping of copies...the effect of such statuary, massed over wide and scattered areas, must have been impressive at the least” (*Sculpture*, 70).


Wallace-Hadrill has also claimed that the Odyssey Landscapes, in their recreating a view through a colonnade, reflect the tradition of “decorated colonnades going back to the Stoa Poikile of Athens, which had numerous descendants in the public porticoes of Rome.” These Roman porticoes still ultimately looked back to Greek *gymnasia* (locations of vigorous movements to be sure) for decorative inspiration (*Houses*, 28). Thus, even in this remote linkage these spaces and their decoration are saturated with the tradition and desire of movement.

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in the Odyssey Landscapes, “facilitates the manner in which painted narrative engages the spectator.”

The Odyssey Landscapes are, however, broken up by painted red pillars that divide the various depicted episodes from one another. While this organizing and framing device might seem to break the continuous flow, its effect is more akin to looking through a colonnade at a vista beyond, and so does little to hamper movement from scene to scene. In fact, this may help to give the paintings more believability by putting them in a viewing context (through an architectural window), rather than having them floating and isolated, when their existence as painting becomes more inescapable. The choice, too, of

showing the *Odyssey*'s characters in a landscape setting also aids in the impact of the paintings, making it easier to create a more vivid text-world.

The qualities of a continuous narrative in depicting multiple progressive moments in time could also be, in a more limited fashion, applied to works with only one or two main figures (and, in a way, a work like the *Odyssey* Landscapes could also be understood, in being continuous and unified, as a single unit). The effect of the weary

![Figure 103. Marble Group of a Nymph Escaping a Satyr, British Museum (1805,0703.2). Image copyright Trustees of the British Museum (www.britishmuseum.org), used with permission](image-url)
Herakles of Lysippos has already been mentioned. In another example, a first-century statue of a Satyr assaulting a nymph expresses a type of “before and after” effect in the multivalent quality of the facial expression of the offending Satyr (figure 102). The large, toothy grin of the Satyr can appear to be both a delighted smile at the prospect of his conquest and a pained grimace as the nymph forcefully pushes him away.

Similarly, the Capitoline (or Furietti) Centaurs, when taken together, may exhibit a similar aspect. These late second-century works (later copies of Hellenistic models) depict two centaurs, one aged and the other youthful, with erotes on their backs (figure 104).
These statues have been traditionally interpreted to contrast the effects of impassioned love on the young and old. While the youthful centaur displays an elated smile and light, prancing pose, the aged centaur has his hands tied behind his back and a pained aspect to his face. What brings joy to the young brings suffering to the old. An additional layer of interpretation that I would add to this reading would be to see the two centaurs as being one and the same being, but simply at different stages of life. The message remains the same, but possesses greater force through the effect of traveling through time; the message both becomes more instantly relatable and triggers the imagination of the viewer to project himself into similar stages and agonies.

Experimentation with conceptions of time and space also characterized specifically Roman works. Such experimentation is particularly pronounced in the late Trajanic and early Hadrianic period. The so-called Anaglypha Traiani/Hadriani, for example, may depict the emperor Trajan twice within the same composition at different times; one, while he was still living (seen addressing a crowd), and another after his death (as part of a posthumous statuary group). Likewise, the so-called Great Trajanic Frieze also depicts two disparate events within the same composition, this time an adventus of Trajan and a battle scene of Romans fighting Dacians from Trajan's Dacian campaign. Finally, the so-called Extispicium Relief also includes two disparate scenes within the same setting (in front of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus in the Roman Forum), made even more distinct through their compositional framing. Each group, on the left one of diviners reading entrails and on the right one of various togati (perhaps including the emperor Trajan), is self contained. The group of diviners is oriented right to left, with

a figure of Victory emphatically flying off to the left. The group of *togati* is bounded on each side by a member facing to the center of the group. Thus, even though they share a common setting and space, the relief gives the impression of the two scenes happening at different moments in time.\(^\text{33}\)

A desire to play with and manipulate time is also found in more personal and domestic art forms such as the Roman practice of *imagines*, the wax images of the ancestors of a notable family. Displayed prominently in the home, these images would make the past seem present and immediate. This was especially the case when, at certain occasions, these *imagines* would, in fact, be worn in order to make the depicted ancestors present (virtually) in the present-day world. Polybios writes:

\[\ldots\text{and when a prominent member of the family dies, they carry them in the funeral procession, putting them on those who seem most like [the deceased] in size and build... The men so dressed also wore the togas and carried the insignias of the magistracies which had been held by the person whom they were impersonation. One could not easily find a sight finer than this for a young man who was in love with fame and goodness. For is there anyone who would not be edified by seeing these portraits of men who were renowned for their excellence and by having them all present as if they were living and breathing?}\(^\text{34}\)\

Such a vivification of persons long dead could, to an extent, transform the current text-world of a viewer, that is, the discourse world of his present existence, into a new text-world set in the past, during the times of the flourishing of the revived family members.

Wall painting, too, in more than one way, can elicit a feeling of movement through time. One of the simplest ways would have been the simple preservation and maintenance of earlier wall painting styles amid changes in predominant styles. As

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33 Kleiner, 220-224.
Wallace-Hadrill points out, “[T]he juxtaposition of old and new itself must have generated contrasts; and there are several cases in which we can see that the old was quite deliberately retained alongside the new.”\textsuperscript{35} Simply living in such a house would have caused frequent mental travel to the earlier time periods preserved on the walls. Later styles, too, sometimes deliberately evoked these earlier times. The House of the Muses at Ostia, for example, illustrates the revival of Second Style illusionism during the reign of Hadrian, and also, in places, deliberately evokes sculpture and painting from the Greek past.\textsuperscript{36}

Similar time travel may also have characterized the physical movement through a Roman town house. Certainly, spaces within a house were often coded through their decoration to facilitate or hinder movement through them, but some decoration may have created a more subtle impression. The inner peristyle garden was the ultimate destination for someone entering into the private innards of the house, progressing from the public world outside the house's doorway to the private one of its inner recesses. Such a journey from one sphere to the other may have also reflected a mental journey backward through time, from the bustle of the present day outside, to the deep mythic past. The garden may symbolically represent the idyllic world of the Hesiodic Golden Age, a period of time when man lived without labor, when all basic needs were easily met by nature. This theme would have resonated in a time of the new Golden Age of Augustus. Wallace-Hadrill has already pointed out that as one enters ever more intimate and private spaces in a house, there is oftentimes (during the dominance of the Second Style especially) more

\textsuperscript{35} Wallace-Hadrill, \textit{Houses}, 50-1.
\textsuperscript{36} Clark, \textit{Houses}, 288.
illusionistic decoration employed. Simon Ellis has postulated that landscape imagery in domestic decoration was intended to express a house's “ideal setting.”

Of course, the new “golden age” of Augustus was a complex beast whose rhetoric often contradicted this Hesiodic ideal, emphasizing instead continuous work and effort instead of a life of effortless leisure. However, this Augustan mode and a virtual time travel within a house may still be reconciled. The Augustan poet Vergil was a key figure in creating a shift in the conversation regarding the nature of the golden age. In his Eclogues, for example, he contrasts the earlier “Age of Saturn,” a time of sloth, with the “Age of Jupiter,” who “sharpen men's minds with cares.” In this modification of the qualities of a “golden age,” labor, rather than freedom from labor, is the prevailing cultural virtue, that is, the ever striding towards a goal.

To be sure, this Vergilian ethos permeated the Augustan age. It emphasized labor and struggle as better than actually reaching the goal and the idleness that such a realization causes. The Aeneid, to point to one well-known expression, might be said to be all about the journey rather than the endpoint; it doesn't end, for instance, with the founding of Rome or some similar triumphal punctum. As Karl Galinsky has explained, the choice to write an Aeneid at all, that is, a chronicle of Aeneus, rather than a poem chronicling the rise of Augustus specifically, and the choice not to tell the story of Aeneas in flashback, offered an ideological “vantage point” that further promoted this very element. If the story were told from the point of view of the present looking back, it would give an impression of the reign of Augustus as being the the ultimate teleological

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37 Wallace-Hadrill, Houses, 38 ff.
39 Vergil, Georgics 1.121-8. in Galinsky, 193.
40 See especially Galinsky, 121-128.
endpoint, the pinnacle and the goal of Roman civilization achieved. By starting at the very beginning, Vergil instead emphasized the journey and the effort of the process that reaching the goal entails. As Galinsky summarizes, “[It is more meaningful to work toward a goal than to enjoy the fruits of reaching it. Renewal is more important than fruition which leads to stagnation.”$^{41}$

Similarly, the journey through a house to the innermost garden is never permanently complete. It must at some point be reversed, when it becomes necessary to once again leave the house and head out into public life in the city. As early man proclaimed “enough of the oak!” (or so Theophrastus relays the traditional saying), and gave up his life of leisure, so will the inhabiting of the garden paradise end and the trek back through time to the present day begin.$^{42}$ This movement creates a cycle of loss and renewal in which the “golden age” is continuously but only fleetingly touched, requiring constant motion to regain it. This particular movement is not a simple motion through a narrative as with the Odyssey Landscapes, for instance, that is a straightforward movement from one point in time to the next, but rather a movement along the spectrum of time itself, as a viewer can take an almost panoptic viewpoint of the time-line presented before him in the axis of the house, a vantage point from which the perpetual motion of the journey is discernible.

Similar attitudes must be visible in wall paintings as well, both in the elsewhere-creating quality of certain styles and scenes, as well as the use of painting to create garden scenes in houses too small to contain proper peristyle gardens, or to virtually

$^{41}$ Galinsky, 125.
$^{42}$ Theophrastus. *On Abstinence from Eating Animals* 4.2.6.
enlarge existing true garden areas. The Augustan ethos can surely be seen in painting as well as sculpture and architecture. The fresco of the garden room at the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta has already discussed in chapter 5; its eternal depiction of flowering plants heavy with fruit and lively animal life represents the “verdant blessings of peace perpetually in bloom.” Barbara Kellum goes so far as to say, “Clearly, landscapes...were not incidental, but integral to that system of meaning that constituted the mythology of Augustan Rome.” More subtle links between wall painting styles and the cornerstone literary works at the foundation of the Augustan ethos may also be found. One particular product of the golden age described in Vergil's fourth Eclogue, for instance, is wool that changes color automatically while still attached to the sheep. This fantastical boon to textile makers could relate to fresco styles that intended to mimic finely woven textiles, e.g. the so-called “tapestry manner” sub-style of the Fourth Style.

Furthermore, this same feeling may also play into the popularity of scenae frons-like stage sets in Second Style fresco. The world of the stage is necessarily evocative of an elsewhere, of a place outside of the normal and everyday. However, a stage play is by its very nature exclusive. A spectator can watch, but, barring the occasional heckling or shouting, not take part directly in the goings-on before him. The plane of the stage cannot be pierced; one is present with the actors but cannot become one. Thus, the world presented on the stage is a destination that can never truly be reached. It is again reflective of the never ending journey.

44 Line 42-4. “nor wool still learn to fake a various reach of hues, but ram himself change fleece in meadows—saffron yellow now at last and at last now purple's urging blush.”
Of course, painting styles lasted beyond the reign of Augustus himself. Can the ethos and culture of Augustus still be seen in wall-painting during the reign of future emperors? Surely, the use of the Fourth Style in the lavish and excessive Domus Aurea of Nero would seem to carry little of the theme of the struggle and effort of the Augustan Golden Age. However, the basic idea of what the painting represents may not have changed, even if the ethos did. After all, as we have seen, what a “golden age” was supposed to be was quite flexible. In fact, Nero, too, claimed to have ushered in a new golden age for Rome. This ambiguity might have been partly behind the longevity of the Fourth Style, which was, I believe, intended to evoke the virtual utopia.

The Augustan ethos was discernible (as would be expected) in public monumental architecture as well as in wall painting. Perhaps one of the best preserved examples is the Ara Pacis Augustae, the Altar to the Augustan Peace, erected on the Campus Martius. This monument has often been identified as a concentrated presentation of Augustan propaganda and self-legitimization. It also presents the same focus on movement, journey, and effort identifiable as the cornerstone of the Augustan ethos. Firstly, the Ara Pacis in form most closely resembles a “Janus” (such as the famous Temple of Janus in the Roman Forum), “an architectural feature that marks a symbolic passage from one state of existence to another.”46 The janiform shape of the Ara Pacis and the themes of peace and prosperity that permeates its decoration might be linked to the great importance Augustus placed on the three symbolic closings of the Temple of Janus (signifying the empire was not at war) that he presided over during his reign.

Furthermore, since Janus, the god who looked both forwards and backwards at the same time, was commonly associated with the beginning and ending of time periods, the Ara Pacis could link itself with the monument that stood next to it, the Horologium Augustae, a monumental sundial. Marking the passage of the sun and the seasons, the Horologium was a machine for marking cyclical time, and is therefore, in a way, the embodiment of the cyclical journey of the “golden age” ethos implied in the layout and decoration of the domus house. That Augustus was particularly interested in notions of cyclical time is evident in the fact that the shadow of the Horologium's gnomon pointed directly at the Ara Pacis (and may have even pierced through the open doorway of the altar) on his birthday, denoting his birth as almost preordained—he was born to bring peace to Rome.

In private matters as well as public, Augustus showed a penchant for including necessary movement. For example, the emperor had a private workshop (his technophuon) which he called his “Syracuse.”47 This private retreat on the second story of his residence was much more elaborately and fantastically decorated than the semi-public rooms below (and indeed, what archaeological evidence remains also points to the fact that wall decoration was quite common in upper stories in Campanian houses at places like Pompeii48). Again, we see a moving inward to the more private being equivalent to moving away to an elsewhere. Needing to move to an upper level would have further emphasized the motion needed to enter the space and would have increased the physical effort required to do so; this would have been a minimal increase in exertion,

48 Wallace-Hadrill, Houses. 151-152.
to be sure, but would have been certainly more exertion than would have been achieved by simply entering a neighboring room on the same floor, and enough to at least make the one traveling to the space aware of it. 49

An objection might be raised, of course, regarding the influence of Augustus on the development of wall painting styles. While his particular ethos may have had a certain visible effect in Rome and other places under his more direct supervision, how beholden to the promulgation of this ethos were more outlying areas, such as especially Campania, from where much of the surviving fresco originates? Without a doubt, the relative paucity of surviving evidence as a whole has magnified the implied significance of that recovered from the Palatine palace of Augustus, and “accentuated the tendency to view the taste of the imperial family as trend-setting.” 50 Such a view has, for instance, led John Clarke to posit that the simpler final phase of Second Style fresco could have developed in response to Augustus' code of conservative moral behavior that he prescribed for public officials. 51

However, as Galinsky points out, “Even if this view is accepted, we are faced, not unexpectedly, with a creative variety of development and inspirations.” 52 To deal with the complexities of any interaction between (especially private) art and socio-political influences, he advocates a middle ground perspective between the two extremes of interpretation, that is, between the notion that no external factors of any variety affect

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49 Similarly, the mithraea of the ancient mystery cult of Mithras would also have acted in this way. They were underground and designed to resemble caves. The physical act of traveling downward in this case would have made the passage into the sacred interior of the structure (organized in initiatory stages) more apparent and the crossing of the threshold more severe.

50 Galinsky, 187.
51 Clarke, Houses, 48-9.
52 Galinsky, 187.
artistic evolution and the notion that the rapid development of painting styles during the Augustan principate manifested the same “morally oriented classicism” that characterized public monuments and their decoration.

Occupying this middle ground, Galinsky states, "[T]he Augustan changes [in wall-painting styles] are related in a general way to the new mood of peace, order and stability. But the paintings also reflect many individual impulses and solicit similar responses."\(^{53}\) Certainly, on the one hand, it is rather silly to imagine that all Augustan art was precisely crafted to expound the Augustan message. Augustus had Egyptian motifs in his room at the same time that Agrippa tried to limit the cult of Isis in Rome, 21-28 BCE. As Galinsky points out, "This indicates at the very least, that Augustus could keep aesthetics separate from ideology and that not everything he touched was laden with moral meaning."\(^{54}\) And indeed, I argue that the impulse for virtual transportation that is tapped into in this Augustan mode is a more general one that characterizes much of the Roman decorative output, so Galinsky's middle ground is a perfectly comfortable place.

Additionally, both the nature of Augustus' rule and the particular quality of certain types of paintings also worked especially well in aiding the creation of viewer-generated text-worlds. Augustus, learning from the mistakes of his adoptive father Julius Caesar, ruled using more indirect and subtle means. As Galinsky has thoroughly elucidated, Augustus preferred to rule through the careful implementation of auctoritas, rather than in the explicit and outright employment of king-like power. This more subtle “authority” required all participants to “play along” with the open secret of the nature of the

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53 Galinsky, 179.  
54 Ibid., 190.
principate. Such a “reciprocal and dialogic” quality is also present in painting. Paintings of landscapes or scenes from myth are “inherently evocative.” A viewer must always use his preexisting knowledge and experiences to fill in the images and negotiate its meaning to at least some extent. Meaning, like proverbial beauty, is “in the eye of the beholder.” By requiring the input and response of another participant, both the auctoritas of Augustus and wall painting images created an engaging experience that more easily allowed the imaginative projection needed for the transportative virtual experience. Text-worlds are more swiftly populated when their creator must actively engage in the discourse.

The Vergilian/Augustan use of metaphor, too, taps into the use of text-worlds to process discourse. Gavins describes the understanding of a metaphor as a “process of blending” in which the two worlds of discourse that feed into it, that is, the world from which the metaphor is drawn and the one which it is being used to describe, are merged together. For example, to return to the Ara Pacis, take the image of Aeneas sacrificing at an altar from that structure. In this case, the former text-world would be that which holds Aeneas and his sacrifice; the latter that which contains Augustus and his actions and relationship to the gods. Through the use of metaphor, both of these worlds combine and blend together such that the piety of Aeneas becomes descriptive of that of Augustus. Any metaphorical work will have such a blending; the Eclogues, too, for instance, utilize heavy use of metaphor.

This is particularly powerful for use in creating a transportative experience

55 Galinsky, 192.
56 Gavins, 148.
because the new text-world created via this process is an entirely new and independent one outside both of its formative input worlds. As Gavins explains, as a result of this blending merger, “a new space is formed independently of the spaces which have led to its generation. This new blended space has its own emergent structure and contains elements which do not exist in either of the input spaces. It has the potential to become a complex mental representation autonomously from its originating inputs.”

Because of this autonomy and distinctness from its originating worlds, the text-world created by metaphor is by its very nature better able to pull a viewer into a virtual elsewhere.

Dreams

A brief mention must here be made regarding another very powerful type of virtual transportation, that of the experience of dreams. Certainly, dreams carry their own sense of movement and travel in both modern and ancient thinking. Lucretius, for example, explicitly connected dreams to a crossing of a threshold; for him “all dreams pass through the gate of ivory and all must be understood psychogenetically.”

A full exploration of the nature of dreams is beyond the scope of the current discussion; a serviceable basic definition was given by Henri Bergson, who defined dreams as follows:

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57 Gavins, 148.

Epicureanism generally may also have certain links to a transportative desire in the transcendental aspect of its practice. Additionally, the Epicurean school was referred to as “the garden” after the house and garden of its founder, a place that, as we have seen, possesses particularly potent qualities of transformation and “othering.” It is also worth noting that Epicurean philosophical schools emerge in both Greece and Rome after periods of great upheaval, in Greece after Alexander the Great and in Rome after the fall of the Republic. The emergence and popularity of Epicureanism, and the desire to inhabit a transcendental elsewhere, might lie in part in its ability to reassure in unsure circumstances.
A dream is this. I perceive objects and there is nothing there. I see men; I seem to speak to them and I hear what they answer; there is no one there and I have not spoken. It is all as if real things and real persons were there, then on waking all has disappeared both persons and things.\(^{59}\)

This definition of a dream falls perfectly in line with the main definitions of the virtual explored earlier in chapter one, equivalence of appearance and equivalence of function. However, when Bergson states that all has disappeared he is not quite correct. All has disappeared except for the creator of the dream. The dreamer himself, that is the origo of perception of the dream, always remains. This necessary presence further reinforces the need for projection of the origo as the basis for transportative experience.

Insight might also be found in turning briefly once more to the work of Roland Barthes. He writes, of his frequent dreams of his mother:

The *almost*: love's dreadful regime, but also the dream's disappointing status—which is why I hate dreams. For I often dream about her (I dream only about her), but it is never quite my mother: sometimes, in the dream there is something misplaced, something excessive: for example, something playful or casual—which she never was; or again I *know* it is she, but I do not *see* her features (but do we *see*, in dreams, or do we *know*?): I dream about her, I do not dream *her*.\(^{60}\)

Two elements from this evocative passage are worth noting here. First is Barthes' comment on how one perceives in a dream, whether by seeing or knowing. While a dream, especially a particularly vivid and lucid one, may seem at first inseparable from waking reality, and thus perceived through the same senses as the real world, because in a dream-world the perceiver is also the creator, he will necessarily possess a more intimate knowledge of it than the normal senses permit, even if he is not completely aware of it in the moment. Likewise, as a web of text-worlds develop as a discourse progresses, each


world retains a presence in the viewer's mind, even if it is not the current focus of attention. In this way, all available text-worlds have a hand in shaping the overall experience.

Second is his notion of the almost, that which is nearly, but not quite, what it purports to be—that which fails at achieving total equivalence of appearance or function. Since it is not quite a completely convincing simulation, and thus remains part of an othered elsewhere, it attracts the attention of a viewer and, in fact, reinforces his self-projection. A viewer must be aware of his projection into a virtual realm, otherwise it is not differentiable from everyday reality.

William Harris has discussed the possibility that ancient works of art, such as statues and paintings of the gods, being a common part of the daily experience of ancient people, could have had a hand in the seeming preponderance of “epiphany dreams,” dreams in which a god or goddess communicates with a dreamer, recorded in the sources. In the end, Harris tepidly rejects this idea, stating that the scarce appearance of gods themselves in dreams would contradict this hypothesis.\(^6\) However, I am not so quick to drop this idea that such an effect was possible, after all, anyone fortunate enough to frequently recall his dreams will note how elements of the previous waking day have a way of finding their way into the world of dreams.

If we accept that art could affect dreams, then it is also possible that the reverse is true, that dreams could have had an effect on art and the imagery of dreams could have found its way into the decoration of bedrooms and houses. The sometimes odd and


Harris also notes the recording of epiphany dreams involving the Muses and even Homer (26). Depictions of these, too, are certainly common in ancient art.
otherworldly quality of later styles can easily be seen to be reflective of the surreal quality of dreams. Even the seemingly more grounded earlier styles may still be connected. G. M. Hanfmann, in discussing a Second Style decorated bedroom from Boscoreale, writes, “Waking from his dreams, the owner...would be greeted by the sight of vistas of regal splendor, of villas, temples, places, dominions of which he could dream, but which he could not afford to build.” In this way a properly decorated bedroom could provide a seamless transition from the world of dreams, from one elsewhere to another.

We will now turn to the final case study to be examined, the so-called Casa del Frutteto, or the House of the Fruit Orchard, at Pompeii. This house provides a particularly pointed example of the kind of movement through time and space that could be engendered by wall painting, and which, as described above, may have developed in relation to the ethos of the “golden age” of Augustus.

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Chapter 8: The House of the Fruit Orchard

Grand villas like that at Oplontis are not the only places to find striking examples of creative strategies to create transportative experiences. The act of movement through a space and its use is especially pointed at the so-called House of the Fruit Orchard, or Casa del Frutetto, at Pompeii (figure 105). This more modest house, located on the Via dell'Abbondanza, contained room for only a small partial peristyle garden (number 4 in figure 118), but was richly appointed with fresco paintings which partly make up for the bucolic splendor lacking in the physical, planted garden.
Two rooms in particular, cubiculi located along the central axis of the house, are decorated with painted garden scenes, whose lush foliage and abundant birds are similar in some respects to the garden room of Livia from Prima Porta. Each shows lush foliage with a variety of flowers, bushes, and trees heavily laden with ripe fruit, such as cherries, lemons, and strawberries. Each scene also includes an intricate latticework fence separating the fictive gardens from the space of the viewer. While some stylistic variance is noticeable between the two (one has a much flatter and less naturalistic air about it) the key difference between them is that the one was painted with a bright azure blue background (figure 106, room 1 in figure 118), the other with a black one (figure 107, room 2 in figure 118), giving the impression of day and night, respectively. Also present are various religious symbols that seem to point to the cults of Dionysus and the Egyptian deity Isis, further adding a sacred (and exotic) dimension to these spaces. Indeed, the House of the Fruit Orchard displays some of the finest examples of Egyptian-influenced motifs in Pompeii, a testament to the craze for things Egyptian (and especially Alexandrian) that shifted into high gear after the annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE opened up greater interaction between Rome and the Nile.¹

Taking these rooms singularly for a moment, each allows for an extended succession of text-worlds in a vein similar to other rooms discussed in earlier chapters. From an initial text-world of the house itself (figure 108), a viewer would quickly be shifted to a world set in the lush garden depicted on the walls (figure 109), viewing the blooming bounty from the fictive latticework pergola, which, as described in chapter 3, provides a form of threshold boundary that helps to create a sense of demarcation of the

¹ See McKenzie, part 3.
elsewhere.²

Figure 106. "Black" Cubiculum, House of the Fruit Orchard Copyright Jackie and Bob Dunn, www.pompeiiinpictures.com. (Su concessione del Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo - Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia)

Figure 107. "Blue" cubiculum, House of the Fruit Orchard
Copyright Jackie and Bob Dunn, www.pompeiinpictures.com. (Su concessione del Ministero dei Beni e delle Attività Culturali e del Turismo - Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Pompei, Ercolano e Stabia)
As noted in earlier chapters, a wall-painting such as this, especially in a more modest dwelling like the House of the Fruit Orchard, can trigger a boulomaic modal-world (figure 110) in which the decoration expresses a viewer’s desire or wish; in this case, to own an elite country villa estate. These lush garden paintings will also, naturally, cause a viewer to create a text-world set in the flora and fauna of genuine nature outside the house and city (figure 111). Cult objects of Isis add text-worlds set in the divine realm to the growing web (figure 112), and the Egyptian origin and flavor of the cult add the land of Egypt to the worlds in which the viewer will project himself (figure 113).

Furthermore, again as discussed in the previous chapter, images of paridisical
WORLD-SWITCH 1
(enactor-accessible)

World-building elements

**Time:** Present
**Location:** Lush garden pavilion
**Objects:** Garden trellace, birdcages, plants, etc.
**Enactors:** Birds

↓
fly, roost, sing, etc.

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BOULOMAIC MODAL-WORLD

World-building elements

**Time:** Present
**Location:** Elite luxury Roman domus
**Objects:** Elite living accoutrements
**Enactors:** Viewer, family members, houseguests

↓
converses, observes, works, etc.
engages in elite private/public life

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Figure 109. House of the Fruit Orchard World-switch 1

Figure 110. House of the Fruit Orchard Boulomaic Modal-world
### WORLD-SWITCH 2

*(enactor-accessible)*

**World-building elements**

**Time:** Present  
**Location:** Outside landscape/natural world  
**Objects:** Trees, plants, birds, etc.  
**Enactors:** Animals, etc.

*Figure 111. House of the Fruit Orchard World-switch 2*

### WORLD-SWITCH 3

*(enactor-accessible)*

**World-building elements**

**Time:** Mythic past and present  
**Location:** Divine realm  
**Objects:** Divine attributes, mythic objects  
**Enactors:** Gods, goddesses, divinities, demi-gods, etc.  

\[\downarrow\]

fight, meddle in the mortal world, etc.

*Figure 112. House of the Fruit Orchard World-switch 3*
gardens, including physically planted peristyle gardens within a house or villa, may have invited a mental transportation through time to the “golden age” of man described in Hesiod, a time when man lived in harmony with nature, free from labor or cares (figure 114). In this instance, the Third Style painting and Egyptian motifs of the House of the Fruit Orchard make this particular world-switch slightly easier. The more abstracted nature of the Third Style in which the House's paintings are rendered no doubt aided this transition, “introduc[ing] a note of unreality” which serves to mark the garden text-worlds engendered by the decoration as being out of the ordinary, special, or otherwise outside a viewer's every day experience.  

The ceilings of the garden cubiculi are painted in an analogous way to the walls. The dominant color of the walls, either black or blue, is continued into the background of the ceiling, bucking the dominant trend in ceiling decoration that preferred limited

polychromy and in which the bare white of the plaster was used as the dominant accent color. This color continuity helped to unify the space and thereby create a more enveloping totality. Furthermore, this “harmonization of color” was further enhanced by the continuation of the theme, that is, the verdant garden, also into the ceiling, where scrolling vines and chirping birds likewise find their place.⁴

Within this verdurous envelope, the practical function of the bedroom also begins to break down. Unlike earlier Roman decorative schemes, the wall painting in the House of the Fruit Orchard bedrooms does not demarcate the sleeping alcove. That a bed would have originally been placed in these rooms is indicated only by sections of unadorned pavement in the floor. With this “loosening of the relationship between functional organization and decorative schemes,” wall painting thus becomes ever less concerned with the every day reality of the room it adorned and more with the transportative experience of the elsewhere.⁵

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⁴ Ling, 66-67.
⁵ Ibid., 70.
Simon Ellis, as mentioned earlier, has argued that landscape decoration represents an “ideal setting” (corresponding to the above mentioned boulomaic modal-world). He elaborates further by commenting that an exotic scene, especially an Egyptian or Nilotic one, was a manifestation of a desire for a “villa setting that was perhaps out of the ordinary.” Recreating the Golden Age of Hesiod would satisfy both of these desires—it is both ideal and exotic, sacred and foreign.

The common lack of figures populating these landscapes scenes may also suggest that they were intended to be read as idyllic or sacred places, or the paradise of the gods. That Egypt was seen by the Romans as “a paradisal land in which the gods once dwelt” both reinforces this quality when Egyptian motifs and influences appear, as at the House of the Fruit Orchard, and makes the golden age past of Hesiod all the more probable a text-world to be invoked. Furthermore, this view of Egypt also allows one to still read a depiction of an ideal world setting in these wall paintings, even when real-life Alexandrian architecture is shown.

This imagery of the Golden Age, as discussed in the last chapter, had particular resonance in the early imperial period, in which the new emperor Augustus claimed to usher in a golden age anew. The text-world of this particularly Augustan Golden Age, then, would no doubt also be created in the mind of a viewer at the House of the Fruit Orchard (figure 115). That the spread of Egyptian stylistic influence takes off more markedly after Augustus' defeat of Antony and Cleopatra and the subsequent annexation of Egypt served

8 Ibid., 112.
to strengthen the link between that land and the new Augustan peace and “golden age.”

Certainly, the Third Style, in which the House of the Fruit Orchard is rendered, has been linked to the introduction of the new Augustan moral agenda, which attempted to revive strict family values after the civil wars had rocked the foundation of the state. Because of the Third Style's rapid adoption throughout Roman cities and the high quality of the paintings, it has been thought that it is likely that the style first appeared in the highly visible homes of the members of emperor's court.

The more “sober” character of Third Style backgrounds may reflect this new system of moral values. The choice of imagery for the focal points of rooms decorated in this style, mythological scenes and bucolic sacro-idyllic landscapes (both found at the

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9 Pappalardo, 115.
11 Ellis, 117.
Figure 116. House of the Fruit Orchard Partial Compiled
House of the Fruit Orchard), also fit this model. Mythological scenes most commonly were painted in manners derived from Classical Greek precedents, echoing the style of Augustan public monuments. Bucolic landscapes convey a sense of piety that was also a cornerstone of the new value system. As Paul Zanker notes, “At least as early as Vergil's poetry the bucolic world had been burdened with “political” symbolism.” Furthermore, Zanker continues, these landscapes “carry the viewer off into a world of peace and calm. Meadows and ancient trees, rocks and streams, here and there fishermen or shepherds with their flocks, as well as satyrs and nymphs, evoke thoughts of the carefree life in 'unspoiled nature.'” Golden ages old and new merge together under the mesmerizing pull of bucolic imagery.

While any paradisiacal garden space or decoration may create these world-switches to one or both of these golden ages, the House of the Fruit Orchard, in its layout and progression of rooms, was particularly attuned to conditioning such a journey in the mind of the viewer as he progressed from outside the house to its innermost courtyard. As a viewer moved from the entryway of the house, through the atrium, and towards the inner garden, he would pass by these two highly painted small rooms along this axis, easily viewable through their doorways from this trajectory. Seeing these paradisaical scenes would, on the one hand, prime a viewer for entering the physical garden that was his destination.

Additionally, seeing the implied passage of time, from day to night, may also have given the impression of a movement through time as well as space. In this way, the

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decoration perhaps provided visual cues for the progression (or regression) back to the
Hesiodic Golden Age represented by the planted peristyle garden, or at least made more
explicit the sense of increasing remove implied in this motion. Here again the human
inclination to view time in spacial terms, with that which is in front of one perceived of as
in the future and that behind in the past, makes this transition a very natural-feeling one
be inclined to consider both garden rooms and the peristyle garden of the house to all
exist within the same text-world, evolving through the passage of time.\footnote{Stark world-switches are not the only way in which a text-world can change. More gradual
evolutionary changes are also common. Gavins. 53-54.} In this way, though the viewer's physical location changes as he progresses through the house, in the
mental world, this movement represents the passage of time in a single location.

Beyond the obvious change from day to night embodied in the two garden rooms,
a theme of transformation, change, passage, and movement permeates these two spaces in
more subtle ways. The religious implements depicted in the paintings, including
statuettes and incense burners, give the fictive pergolas a visual similarity to genuine
altars of the god Bacchus-Osiris, a syncretic deity of growth, regeneration, and
resurrection, an association strengthened by the inclusion of Dionysiac and Egyptian
imagery in painted \textit{pinakes}.\footnote{Pappalardo, 154.} Additionally, the painted birds that inhabit the rooms,
especially given the Egyptian affinities apparent in their decoration, may reference the
Egyptian \textit{ba}, the immortal soul often pictured in art with images of birds. The soul “takes
flight” to the afterlife following death.
Further reinforcing this theme, an image of the bull-deity Apis appears four times. Twice, he is shown with the disk of the sun between his horns and an Egyptian ankh, the symbol of life, hanging around his neck. Two more times he is shown in a sacrificial scene. Life and death are thus juxtaposed, and the presence of the sun, with its rise, travel across the sky, and eventual set, gives symbolic representation to this journey from the one to the other. The sun can also lend a more cosmic context to the scene, granting a sense of perpetuity appropriate for a mythic time and fabled golden age (especially one that may be cyclical, with the new emperor Augustus reviving this *saeculum aureum*).

Indeed, as we've seen, such a cyclical and cosmic focus is evident in Augustus' monumental sundial in the Campus Martius, the Horologium Augusti (the gnomon of which was comprised of an Egyptian obelisk taken from the new Egyptian province). If the Ara Pacis celebrated Augustus as the bringer of peace and prosperity, the Horologium, with the slowly moving line of its shadow acting as a visible measurer of time, added to this symbolism by giving it a sense of “cosmic eternity” and creating a parallel between the proclaimed restoration of the Roman Republic and the divine order of the heavens.

Finally, images of snakes can be seen in the black garden room. Snakes were also an Egyptian and Greek symbol of life, albeit a symbol of life underground. Coupled with the black background representing night (the bright sun of the blue room having set), death and the afterlife must have been evoked in the mind of a viewer. Thus, moving from the one room to the other, a visitor has moved from life to death, and will, as Lazarus, move back to life again when reversing his course and leaving the house once

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17 Pappalardo, 154.
more.

Even the *triclinium* of the House of the Fruit Orchard (figure 117, room 3 in figure 118), situated between the blue and black bedrooms, though off a hallway separated from the primary axis through the house's open *tablinum*), while decorated with a less ornate Third Style arrangement comprised of black walls with pendant mythological scenes (arranged in large rectangular panels in the center of the walls), nonetheless evokes a similar invitation to movement and a progression through time. As a viewer enters the room, he encounters two images of Cupids in flight, reinforcing the flight of birds evoked in the garden rooms (and which also populate, in more limited numbers, this room as well). The “vibrant sense of movement” in this figure, flying through the black void of the walls' predominant color (blending, then, into the black background of the following *cubiculum*), both echoes a viewer's own physical movement through the house, and also his mental movement as he projects himself into new text-worlds.19

This theme of flight is also noted in one of the room's mythological pictures which shows the myth of Daedalus and Icarus. Perhaps the episode of the fall and death of Icarus conjured by the image also reinforces the cyclical nature of the golden age text-world of the house. As Icarus fell from his lofty heights, so too will a viewer eventually walk back out of the house to re-enter the mundane world of the city outside.

The other mythological panels depict a scene of two warriors locked in combat and the myth of Actaeon and Artemis (a fourth is too partially preserved to make out any

19 Ling, 62.

Ling goes on to describe this Cupid as representing the new “exuberance” of the later Third Style that would lead to the Fourth.
If the scene of Icarus echoes the theme of flight and movement, this latter myth plays on themes of the passage of time. The myth is shown using a continuous narrative; its two key episodes (Artemis being seen nude by Actaeon and Actaeon being savaged by the hounds sent by Artemis to avenge her ignominy) are both shown within a single composition.\(^\text{21}\)

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\(^\text{20}\) Pappalardo, 154.

\(^\text{21}\) Ling, 116.

Ling also notes that “an outdoor setting is obligatory” for this myth, a convention that may also have aided a viewer's transportation into an idyllic “golden age” bucolic setting, realized in the garden visible from the triclinium's doorway.
Figure 118. Plan of the House of the Fruit Orchard, Pompeii
Concluding Remarks

After this examination of a selection of Roman art and architecture through the lens of virtuality and the framework of Text-world Theory, there remains to put to rest one salient question: What, in the end, has been accomplished? While the application of this lens and framework may have given us some new language and some new descriptors to use when discussing Roman art (and certainly, a richness of language does, on its own, add to the richness of discourse), has the use of this method from cognitive linguistics actually changed our understanding of the art in any way? Have we really learned anything that we did not already know? I would answer an emphatic yes to both questions. This new application and analysis has added to our understanding in three primary ways:

First, as I've tried to demonstrate, this approach refocuses our attention away from the specific work of art or architecture itself and onto the viewer himself, where it properly belongs. This shift frees us from constraints that have long shackled the study of ancient art. For instance, it allows for a move away from a constricting focus on aesthetics as a primary mover of stylistic development. Chalking up stylistic developments in Roman painting to changes in aesthetic “taste” has always been unsatisfying and really lacking in any true explanatory power. It also moves us away from looking at a room or structure's function or some crude desire for social status branding as primary movers of development. Though I certainly do not want to say that
these elements did not play any part, they should not be used as crutches and catch-all explanations.

Second, this approach allows for a more nuanced discussion regarding the interplay and the tension between the real and the imaginary in ancient Roman art and thinking. This tension is perhaps most famously embodied in the passage from Vitruvius referenced earlier in which the architect makes evidently clear his dislike for the Third Style of fresco painting. The vitriol and passion that this topic evoked for Vitruvius (a passion not really seen from him elsewhere in his books on architecture), is often miscategorized as the grumpy complaints of a discontented old codger (a simple reading that is, as we've seen, being challenged by new scholarship).

However, in these discussions of Vitruvius and his orthodoxy (or heterodoxy) and old-codger-ness, to coin an inelegant word, the real issue is usually overlooked or only furtively touched, that is, the issue of the tension and discourse between the real and imaginary. This tension is the true cause of Vitruvius' animosity, not a simple dislike of new Roman "tastes." My work is a way of dealing with this issue in a way that brings to the foreground this real issue and provides a entry point to begin to understand it more fully.

Third, the approach I have outlined is notable for its utility and broad applicability. A Text-world Theory approach not only provides a new explanatory power for discussing the development of ancient Roman art, it provides a new way to approach looking at art generally. In the short term, this could expand my project to other non-Roman ancient works of art, such as, perhaps expectedly, ancient Greek art. The Erechtheion on the Akropolis at Athens, for example, would be a fascinating space to
examine using a “virtuality” and Text-world Theory based approach. The entire complex was designed to move a viewer from space to space, from one cult to another, and as much through time as physical space. Other art traditions outside of the Graeco-Roman world could also prove fertile grounds for elaborating upon the versatility of a text-world approach—Egyptian art, for one, with its near dogmatic stasis over thousands of years and its rejection of illusionism, and Islamic art, for a second, moving ahead in time, with its common focus away from figural representations.

Even more interestingly, perhaps, in the longer term, such an approach could offer a more universal way to frame (at least one element of) the development of Western art generally and offer a more constructive method to take a “big picture” view of art history. Virtual reality is not exclusively a denizen of the world of science fiction, but can be applied more broadly to examine the ways in which humans interact with the spaces around them. Adopting theoretical approaches from such fields as cognitive linguistics and film studies may help to create a truly interdisciplinary approach to the ancient world. For that is what truly lies at the heart of a Text-world Theory analysis, creating connections—connections between text-worlds, connections between images, connections between man, art, and environment, connections between minds across time and space.
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