

## MAECENAS AND THE STAGE

by T.P. Wiseman

*Prompted by Chrystina Häuber's seminal work on the eastern part of the mons Oppius, this article offers a radical reappraisal of the evidence for the 'gardens of Maecenas'. Some very long-standing beliefs about the location and nature of the horti Maecenatiani are shown to be unfounded; on the other hand, close reading of an unjustly neglected text provides some new and unexpected evidence for what they were used for. The main focus of the argument is on the relevance of the horti to the development of Roman performance culture. It is intended to contribute to the understanding of Roman social history, and the method used is traditionally empirical: to collect and present whatever evidence is available, to define as precisely as possible what that evidence implies, and to formulate a hypothesis consistent with those implications.*

*Sull'onda del fondamentale lavoro di Chrystina Häuber sul settore orientale del mons Oppius, questo articolo offre un completo riesame delle testimonianze relative ai 'giardini di Mecenate'. Da un lato quest'operazione ha portato alla dimostrazione di come alcune convinzioni di lungo corso sulla localizzazione e natura degli horti Maecenatiani siano infondate; dall'altro lato, una lettura serrata di un testo ingiustamente trascurato fornisce alcune nuove e inaspettate prove delle modalità di utilizzo degli horti. Il principale focus della discussione risiede nella rilevanza degli horti allo sviluppo della cultura romana della performance. Con questo lavoro si vuole contribuire alla comprensione della storia sociale romana, e il metodo usato è quello, tradizionalmente, empirico: raccogliere e presentare tutte le fonti disponibili, definire nel modo più preciso possibile ciò che le fonti implicano e formulare un'ipotesi coerente con gli indizi rintracciati.*

### 1. A GODDESS IN AN UNEXPECTED PLACE

On 9 June 1921 a headless marble statue of Venus was discovered at a building site on Via Ruggero Bonghi in Rome (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> It was immediately recognized as belonging to a particular iconographic type of the first century BC, otherwise known only from the Augustan theatre at Arles and the Theatre of Dionysus at Athens.<sup>2</sup> The goddess was evidently Venus Victrix, taking off her sword-belt,

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Paribeni, *Notizie degli scavi* (1925), 162, 'sulla sinistra della via Ruggero Bonghi a chi la percorra venendo da via Merulana, quasi all'angolo di via Guiccardini'; P. Montuoro, 'Una replica dell'Afrodite di Arles nel Museo Mussolini in Campidoglio', *Bullettino della Commissione archeologica comunale di Roma* 53 (1926), 113–32, at 113. Now Musei Capitolini, Centrale Montemartini inv. MC 2139.

<sup>2</sup> B.S. Ridgway, 'The Aphrodite of Arles', *American Journal of Archaeology* 80 (1976), 147–54; J. Pollini, 'The "Dart Aphrodite": a new replica of the "Arles Aphrodite Type", the cult image of Venus Victrix in Pompey's Theater at Rome, and Venusian ideology and politics in the Late Republic–Early Principate', *Latomus* 55 (1996), 757–85.



Fig. 1. Statue discovered in 1921: Rome, Musei Capitolini, Centrale Montemartini, inv. MC 2139/S. Archivio Fotografico dei Musei Capitolini, foto Barbara Malter.  
© Roma, Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali - Musei Capitolini.

and it seems likely that her prototype was the cult statue of the main temple in the Theatre of Pompey, as rebuilt and rededicated by Augustus.<sup>3</sup>

In the ancient topography, the find-spot was at the southeast corner of the *mons Oppius*, which was one of the two constituent parts of the Esquiline.<sup>4</sup> Since the ‘three theatres’ of Rome,<sup>5</sup> those of Pompey, Balbus and Marcellus, were all far away in the Campus Martius, why should there be such a fine

<sup>3</sup> Augustus, *Res gestae* 20.1. Since the temple in the theatre was originally dedicated to Victoria (Tiro in Aulus Gellius 10.1.7), Pliny’s reference to Venus Victrix already in 55 BC (*Natural History* 8.20) is evidently anachronistic; despite what is often said, the two goddesses were not identical.

<sup>4</sup> Varro, *De lingua Latina* 5.50: the other was *mons Cispius*, the height now occupied by the basilica of S. Maria Maggiore.

<sup>5</sup> Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 3.394 (*terna theatra*), Strabo 5.3.8 C236 (θέατρα τρία); Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 45.4 (*trina theatra*); *Fasti Ostienses* AD 112 (*Inscriptiones Italiae* XIII.1 201: *theatris tribus*).

statue of the goddess in her ‘theatrical’ guise, in such an apparently untheatrical part of town? The answer I want to suggest concerns the ‘gardens’ (*horti*) of Gaius Maecenas.

The first thing to note is that the statue was found about 200 m east-southeast of the *Domus Aurea*. The significance of that is revealed by the two main sources on Nero’s architectural extravagance. First Suetonius:<sup>6</sup>

Prodigal in building above all, he constructed a residence that stretched from the Palatine to the Esquiline. He called it at first the Passage House, and then, after it had been destroyed in the fire and rebuilt, the Golden House.

Then Tacitus:<sup>7</sup>

At that time [AD 64] Nero was at Antium. He did not return [to Rome until the fire was approaching the residence by which he had linked together the Palatine and the gardens of Maecenas.

We know that Maecenas’ *horti* were on the Esquiline,<sup>8</sup> what these two passages show is that they were on the southern part of it, the *mons Oppius* beyond the Golden House.<sup>9</sup> It seems inevitable that the find-spot of the Venus statue was part of Maecenas’ property.

Before we can use that knowledge, however, we must review the evidence for the *horti Maecenatiani* (sections 2 and 3 below), to get rid of two very persistent but erroneous beliefs about their position. Only then (sections 4 and 5) can we try to understand what the ‘gardens’ were used for, and finally (section 6) exploit some hitherto neglected evidence from the first *Elegia in Maecenatem*, a poem by an unknown author which is sometimes, but wrongly, dismissed as a ‘fake’.<sup>10</sup>

Our understanding of this area of the ancient city has been placed on a wholly new footing by Chrystina Häuber’s remarkable — and exhaustive — new monograph on the eastern part of the *mons Oppius*.<sup>11</sup> The work is in two sections, topographical and art-historical, but there is constant cross-reference between them, because so much of the argument depends on exactly where particular works of art or other archaeological data were found in the chaotic early years of the development of *Roma capitale*. The author manages to keep three themes, usually treated separately, in constant dialogue with each other:

<sup>6</sup> Suetonius, *Nero* 31.1: *non in alia re tamen dammosior quam in aedificando, domum a Palatio Esquilias usque fecit, quam primo transitoriam mox incendio absumptam restitutamque auream nominavit*. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

<sup>7</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* 15.39.1: *eo in tempore Nero Antii agens non ante in urbem regressus est quam domui eius, qua Palatium et Maecenatis hortos continuauerat, ignis propinquaret*.

<sup>8</sup> Donatus, *Vita Vergilii* 6: Virgil’s house in Rome was ‘on the Esquiline, next to the *horti Maecenatiani*’.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. ps.-Acro on Horace, *Satires* 1.8.7 (below, n. 32): ‘where the Baths of Trajan now are’.

<sup>10</sup> Most recently by I. Peirano, *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake* (Cambridge, 2012), esp. 220–8.

<sup>11</sup> Ch. Häuber, *The Eastern Part of the Mons Oppius in Rome (BCAR Supplement 22)* (Rome, 2014); her discussion of the Venus statue is at pp. 501–8.

first, the textual and epigraphic evidence for the topography of the ancient city; second, the archival evidence, haphazard and often unreliable, for the discovery of ancient remains in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and third, the iconographic evidence of the works of art that were recovered at that time. Any one of those would be a demanding study: Häuber's heroic treatment of all three of them in interaction puts historians of the ancient city deeply in her debt.

## 2. WHERE WERE THE 'GARDENS OF MAECENAS'?

To understand the topography of the area, it is important to take account of its recent history. When the papal government in 1870 gave way to the kingdom of united Italy, Rome had to reinvent itself as a modern capital city. There was a huge building boom, particularly on the sparsely populated high ground on the east side, the *rione Monti*, first and largest of the twelve medieval regions of the city.<sup>12</sup> As Ferdinand Gregorovius wrote sadly in his journal on 12 January 1873:<sup>13</sup>

Building is going on at a furious pace; the Monti quarter is turned entirely upside down ... Almost every hour witnesses the fall of some portion of ancient Rome.

It was not just a question of buildings going up where no buildings had been before. The whole landscape was being reconstructed, as Rodolfo Lanciani lamented many years later:<sup>14</sup>

The time has come to stop the practice which has prevailed to the present day, of levelling hills and filling valleys, as if the beauty of a modern capital depended on its being flat. Very few realise what we have lost in this respect in the last thirty years, and what chances have been thrown away of making Rome one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

The degree of destruction in the 1870s is made astonishingly visible in the photographs of John Henry Parker (Fig. 2), which show some of the ancient remains before they disappeared.<sup>15</sup>

Another English archaeologist, J. Henry Middleton, noted at the time how much had been lost. Here is his comment on the 'Servian Wall':<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> U. Gnoli, *Topografia e toponomastica di Roma medioevale e moderna* (Rome, 1939), 261: 'Il nome deriva dalla montuosità di quel quartiere, che comprendeva il colle Esquilino, il Viminale, parte del Quirinale e del Celio.'

<sup>13</sup> F. Gregorovius, *Roman Journals 1852–1874*, English edition (London, 1907), 437.

<sup>14</sup> R. Lanciani, 'The future of Rome', *The Athenaeum* 4234 (December 1908), 797 = *Notes from Rome*, ed. A.L. Cubberley (London, 1988), 411.

<sup>15</sup> J.H. Parker, *Historical Photographs: A Catalogue of 3300 Photographs of Antiquities in Rome and Italy* (London, 1879), nos. 3185–8.

<sup>16</sup> J.H. Middleton, *Ancient Rome in 1885* (Edinburgh, 1885), 61.



Fig. 2. Parker collection no. 3185. Parker's caption reads only: 'Excavations 1874, part of the great *agger* and wall of Servius Tullius with houses of the first century built up against it and into it.'

Great portions of it have been discovered and then destroyed during the extensive works of levelling and digging foundations for the new quarter which has been laid out on the Quirinal, Viminal, and Esquiline Hills.

Similarly on Roman domestic architecture:<sup>17</sup>

The recent laying out of new quarters on the Esquiline, Viminal, and Quirinal Hills ... has brought to light a large number of houses ... Unhappily, in most cases the discovery of these most interesting remains has been immediately followed by their destruction, so that the transference of the capital of Italy has had, from an archaeological point of view, the most disastrous effects.

Works of art, on the other hand, were eagerly rescued, and since the area had included various luxurious suburban estates, including imperial properties, a great many were found, of the highest quality.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Middleton, *Ancient Rome* (above, n. 16), 404.

<sup>18</sup> See for instance M. Cima and E. La Rocca (eds), *Le tranquille dimori degli dei: la residenza imperiale degli horti Lamiani* (Vicenza, 1986).



Fig. 3. Part of the city plan from John Murray's 1869 guidebook. The asterisk indicates where the Venus statue was found in 1921.

To get an idea of what this part of Rome was like before the great urban development began, it is enough to consult the city plan (Fig. 3) published with the pre-1870 editions of Murray's *Handbook*.<sup>19</sup> What matters for our purposes is the deep valley to the east of the Sette Sale (Trajan's baths are marked as 'Baths of Titus'), into which the sixteenth-century Via Merulana descended in its direct course from S. Maria Maggiore to S. Giovanni in Laterano.<sup>20</sup> 'The valley of the Via Merulana', barely detectable in the modern city, was a familiar feature of the undeveloped Roman landscape,<sup>21</sup> and offers an attractive context for the site of Maecenas' estate.

<sup>19</sup> *A Handbook of Rome and its Environs*, ninth edition (London, John Murray, 1869).

<sup>20</sup> It was laid out by Gregory XIII in 1575: Gnoli, *Topografia e onomastica* (above, n. 12), 166.

<sup>21</sup> See for instance R. Lanciani in W. Ramsay, *A Manual of Roman Antiquities*, fifteenth edition (London 1894), 8, on the Quirinal, Viminal and Esquiline: 'These projecting spurs may be compared to the fingers of an open hand, the wrist of which is defined by the valley of Sallust on one side, and

Apart from the passages from Tacitus and Suetonius cited in section 1 above, the only evidence for the position of the *horti Maecenatiani* is what can be inferred from a letter of Cornelius Fronto as consul in AD 143. Writing to Marcus Aurelius, Fronto referred to Horace as ‘a poet who’s no stranger to me, thanks to Maecenas and my *horti Maecenatiani*’.<sup>22</sup> The site of Fronto’s house became known in 1877 with the discovery of nine lead water-pipes bearing his name and that of an otherwise unattested brother Quadratus.<sup>23</sup> They were found on the Via Merulana, at the very apex of the valley, during the excavation of an apsidal hall of first-century BC construction which was immediately mistitled ‘the auditorium of Maecenas’.<sup>24</sup> Its true function is well described by Nicholas Purcell:<sup>25</sup>

An elegant hall . . . lies across the Republican city walls of Rome: not out of simple perversity; approaching from within the city, the astonished guest found himself unexpectedly confronted with the view uninterrupted by the fortification, across a downward sweep of the suburban countryside opening out for miles across the Campagna to the distant ranges of the Apennines.

Given what Fronto says, there is no reason to doubt that this too was part of Maecenas’ estate. But should we assume, as Lanciani did at the time of the discovery, that it ‘stood in the very centre of the park’?<sup>26</sup>

The main reason he thought so was the belief, shared by many both then and now, that the *horti Maecenatiani* were the scene of the story told by Priapus in Horace, *Satires* 1.8.<sup>27</sup> The poem begins as follows:<sup>28</sup>

---

the valley of the Via Merulana on the other.’ For the ‘valley of Sallust’ (modern Via Sallustiana) north of the Quirinal, see K.J. Hartswick, *The Gardens of Sallust: A Changing Landscape* (Austin, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> Fronto, *Ad M. Caesarem* 1.8.5 (= 2.2.5 van den Hout): *mibique propter Maecenatem ac Maecenatianos hortos meos non alienus*.

<sup>23</sup> CIL XV 7438: *Cornelio(rum) Fronto(nis) et Quadrati*. The site is described as ‘presso la sala meceneziana in via Merulana’.

<sup>24</sup> *LTUR* III.74–5 (M. de Vos); A. Claridge, *Rome: An Oxford Archaeological Guide* (Oxford, 2010), 330–3.

<sup>25</sup> N. Purcell, ‘The Roman garden as a domestic building’, in I.M. Barton (ed.), *Roman Domestic Buildings* (Exeter, 1996), 121–51, at 128–30.

<sup>26</sup> R. Lanciani, *The Athenaeum* 2567 (6 January 1877), 25 = *Notes from Rome*, ed. A.L. Cubberley (London, 1988), 28. ‘Park’ is of course a misnomer: see N. Purcell, ‘Dialectical gardening’, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 14 (2001), 546–56, at 549–51.

<sup>27</sup> R. Lanciani, *Ancient Rome in the Light of Recent Discoveries* (Boston, 1888), 67. Modern consensus: e.g. P. Grimal, *Les jardins romains* (Paris, 1969), 143; P.M. Brown (ed.), *Horace Satires I* (Warminster, 1993), 170; J. Bodel, *Graveyards and Groves: A Study of the Lex Lucerina* (Cambridge (MA), 1994), 38; F. Coarelli, *Rome and Environs: An Archaeological Guide* (Berkeley, 2007), 197; E. Gowers (ed.), *Horace Satires Book I* (Cambridge, 2012), 263, 269.

<sup>28</sup> Horace, *Satires* 1.8.1–16: *olim truncus eram ficulnus, inutile lignum, | cum faber, incertus scamnum faceretne Priapum, | maluit esse deum. deus inde ego, furum auiumque | maxima formido; nam fures dextra coercescet | obscenoque ruber porrectus ab inguine palus, | ast importunas uolucres in uertice harundo | terret fixa uetatque nouis considerare in hortis. | huc prius angustis eiecta cadauera cellis | conseruus uili portanda locabat in arca; | hoc miserae plebi stabat commune sepulcrum, | Pantolabo*

Once I was a fig-trunk, useless timber, when the carpenter, uncertain whether to make a bench or a Priapus, preferred I should be a god. So I'm a god, totally terrifying to thieves and birds: my right hand keeps the thieves away, and the red stake projecting obscenely from my crotch; as for the persistent birds, a reed attached to my head frightens them off from settling in the new gardens. This is where previously a slave would pay to have his colleagues' corpses, thrown out of their narrow cells, carried in a cheap box. This stood as a common grave for the wretched *plebs*, for Pantolabus the comic and the spendthrift Nomentanus. Here a pillar granted 1,000 feet left to right, 300 front to back, 'This monument not to descend to the heirs.' Now people can live on a healthy Esquiline, and stroll in the sun on the Rampart, from where before they looked gloomily out on a field made ugly by white bones.

It may well be that 'the new gardens' (line 7) were the same as 'the new fields' (*noui agri*) on the 'watery Esquiline', where Propertius invited a couple of good-time girls to his place in Cynthia's absence;<sup>29</sup> there were houses and taverns there as well as gardens, just as Horace implies at line 14 (*habitare*). As John Bodel first saw, this redevelopment of an unpleasant area may have been made possible by the senate's prohibition, in 38 BC, of the burning of corpses within 2 miles of the city.<sup>30</sup> But what did it have to do with Maecenas?

Porphyrio in his commentary on Horace's poem (c. AD 200) says only that Priapus 'is placed in the gardens that were outside the Porta Esquilina [Fig. 4], before the site was occupied also by buildings', and on line 7 adds that 'although the Esquiline region was at first the site of graves and tombs, Maecenas was the first to experience the salubrity of the air there and establish *horti*'.<sup>31</sup> The much later and less reliable commentator known as 'pseudo-Acro' uses Maecenas as only one possible explanation of the 'new gardens', and states firmly that Maecenas' gardens were 'where the Baths of Trajan are now'.<sup>32</sup>

Neither scholiast comments on *aggere* at line 15, though Porphyrio, at least, must have been well aware that Servius Tullius' 'Rampart' began at the Porta Collina and ended at the Porta Esquilina, as Horace's contemporary Strabo explicitly states.<sup>33</sup> The 'new gardens' where Priapus stood must have been north of the Esquiline gate (and the main road that ran through it), more than 500 m

---

*scurrae Nomentanoque nepoti. | mille pedes in fronte, trecentos cippus in agrum | hic dabat, heredes monumentum ne sequeretur. | nunc licet Esquilis habitare salubribus atque | aggere in aprico spatiari, quo modo tristes | albis informem spectabant ossibus agrum.*

<sup>29</sup> Propertius 4.8.1–2; taken by F. Cairns, *Sextus Propertius: The Augustan Elegist* (Cambridge, 2006), 258, as proof of the 'physical proximity of Propertius to Maecenas'. Cf. G. Hutchinson (ed.), *Propertius Elegies Book IV* (Cambridge, 2006), 191, who notes that *agri* is an odd term for a 'park' but does not query the association with Maecenas.

<sup>30</sup> Cassius Dio 48.43.3; Bodel, *Graveyards and Groves* (above, n. 27), 33, 58.

<sup>31</sup> Porphyrio on *Satires* 1.8.1 and 7: *Priapum positum in hortis, qui erant extra portam Esquilinam antequam aedificiis quoque locus occuparetur, inducit ... cum Esquilina regio prius sepulcris et bustis uacaret, primus Maecenas salubritatem aeris ibi esse passus [sic] hortos constituit.*

<sup>32</sup> Ps.-Acro on *Satires* 1.8.7: *an propter dedicationem Maecenatis nouis h.e. nuper institutis ac recens satis? an quia antea sepulcra erant in hoc loco in quo modo sunt horti Maecenatis, ubi sunt modo thermae Traianae.* Not quite right, since Trajan's Baths were on the site of the *Domus Aurea*, but close enough.

<sup>33</sup> Strabo 5.3.7 C234; cf. also Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 9.68.3–4.





from the Baths of Trajan. It looks as if the ancient commentators' references to Maecenas were just bad guesswork; but they have been extraordinarily influential.

The Rampart (*agger*) was a place of public resort,<sup>34</sup> so if it was part of Maecenas' estate we should have to believe, as the latest commentator on Horace's poem does, that the *horti* were 'given to the Roman people for their recreation', in a gesture 'typical of a philanthropic plutocrat'; if Horace doesn't name him, that is simply 'a more discreet compliment; the gardens have, as it were, an anonymous donor'.<sup>35</sup> But that cannot be right. In this very book, Horace described himself and Maecenas as 'far, far removed from the crowd';<sup>36</sup> he wrote two whole poems (*Satires* 1.5 and 1.9) on how selectively Maecenas allowed access to his circle of friends, and therefore, we must assume, to his property; he boasted of reciting his poems 'only for friends' and not in public, and we know from later comments that his privileged access to the great made him unpopular.<sup>37</sup> The *horti Maecenatiani* were not for public access.<sup>38</sup>

The effect of the Horatian commentators' notion may also be seen in a standard topographical handbook, where the *horti Maecenatiani* are defined as 'on the Esquiline, covering much of the cemetery of the poor that lay beyond the ancient Agger south of the Porta Esquilina'.<sup>39</sup> To put the *agger* south of the gate not only contradicts contemporary evidence;<sup>40</sup> it also mistakes the whole purpose of the ancient earthwork itself. It was made as a barrier, and the only gate in it took the form of a tunnel under the mound.<sup>41</sup> The main routes to the Sabine country skirted the barrier to the north and south, and when the circuit wall was created, the Via Nomentana and Via Tiburtina passed respectively through the Porta Collina and the Porta Esquilina. Those gates marked the

<sup>34</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 12.10.74; Suetonius, *Gaius* 27.2; Juvenal 5.153–5, 6.588; T.P. Wiseman in M. Cima and E. La Rocca (eds), *Horti Romani* (BCAR Supplement 6) (Rome, 1995), 20–2.

<sup>35</sup> Gowers, *Horace Satires* (above, n. 27), 269, with a false reference to Porphyrio.

<sup>36</sup> *Satires* 1.6.18 (addressed to Maecenas): *nos ... a vulgo longe longeque remotos*.

<sup>37</sup> *Satires* 1.4.73–4; cf. *Epistles* 1.19.41–5, *Odes* 4.3.16.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Suetonius, *Diuus Augustus* 72.2, *Tiberius* 15.1; Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 44–5 (privacy for emperors).

<sup>39</sup> L. Richardson, Jr, *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* (Baltimore, 1992), 200, citing 'Horace, *Sat.* 1.8.7, with the scholia of Acron and Porphyrio'. *Agger* and cemetery south of the gate also in Grimal, *Les jardins romains* (above, n. 27), 144–5; Bodet, *Graveyards and Groves* (above, n. 27), 52 and 109; *LTUR* III.73 (Ch. Häuber); T.P. Wiseman in Cima and La Rocca, *Horti Romani* (above, n. 34) 13; A.G. Thein in L. Haselberger (ed.), *Mapping Augustan Rome* (*JRA Supplement* 50) (Portsmouth [RI], 2002), 145; L. Edmunds, 'Horace's Priapus: a life on the Esquiline (*Sat.* 1.8)', *Classical Quarterly* 59 (2009), 125–31, at 126.

<sup>40</sup> See n. 33 above.

<sup>41</sup> Strabo 5.3.7 C234 (ὑπὸ μέσῳ τῷ χώματι) on the Porta Viminalis. 'The road which issued from it appears to have been of minor importance' (S.B. Platner and T. Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome* [Oxford, 1929], 419), and the Viminal itself was something of a backwater; see F. Coarelli, *Collis: il Quirinale e il Viminale nell'antichità* (Rome, 2014), 327–71 on this 'Cinderella of the seven hills'.

limits of the *agger*; beyond them, the wall exploited the slopes of the two valleys to north and south.<sup>42</sup>

The notion that Maecenas redeveloped the old paupers' cemetery has enjoyed 140 years of undeserved credence. If we can only rid ourselves of it, we may be able to understand what Maecenas' 'gardens' were for.

### 3. WAS THERE A TOWER?

The reliable evidence for the site of Maecenas' estate puts it beyond the *Domus Aurea* on the eastern-facing slope of the *mons Oppius*,<sup>43</sup> and the so-called 'auditorium' of Maecenas was at the head of the 'Via Merulana valley';<sup>44</sup> the natural inference is that the estate was in the valley, exploiting the slope. As a working hypothesis, we might imagine a house at or near the top of the slope, facing east, with gardens below it. The contemporary sources are entirely consistent with that.

The earliest of them is Horace's ninth epode, of which the dramatic date is immediately after the battle of Actium (2 September 31 BC):<sup>45</sup>

When, fortunate Maecenas, rejoicing in Caesar's victory, shall I drink with you below your lofty house (so it has pleased Jupiter) the Caecuban that has been stored for holiday banquets, while the lyre makes mixed music with the pipes, the former Doric, the latter barbarian?<sup>46</sup>

A few years later, Horace sent Maecenas a verse invitation to a modest dinner at his house:<sup>47</sup>

Escape from delay! You needn't always be contemplating watery Tibur and the sloping fields of Aefulae and the heights of patricidal Telegonus.<sup>48</sup> Leave tedious luxury and the building close to the lofty clouds! Give up your amazement at the smoke and resources and din of prosperous Rome!

<sup>42</sup> See n. 21 above.

<sup>43</sup> See nn. 6–7 above.

<sup>44</sup> See nn. 21–4 above.

<sup>45</sup> Horace, *Epodes* 1.9.1–6: *quando repostum Caecubum ad festas dapes | uictore laetus Caesare | tecum sub alta (sic Ioui gratum) domo, | beate Maecenas, bibam, | sonante mixtum tibiis carmen lyra, | hac Dorium, illis barbarum?*

<sup>46</sup> The 'barbarian' music of the *tibiae* was perhaps Dionysiac (cf. Catullus 64.264), unlike the warlike Doric mode.

<sup>47</sup> Horace, *Odes* 3.29.5–12: *eripe te morae, | ne semper udum Tibur et Aefulae | decliue contempleris aruum et | Telegoni iuga parricidae. | fastidiosam desere copiam et | molem propinquam nubibus arduis, | omitte mirari beatae | fumum et opes strepitumque Romae.*

<sup>48</sup> Telegonus, son of Odysseus and Circe, was the legendary founder of Tusculum (Festus 116 Lindsay, cf. Ovid, *Fasti* 3.92; Livy 1.49.9; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 4.45.1). For his accidental killing of his father see M.L. West, *The Epic Cycle* (Oxford, 2013), 300–3.

It was a ‘lofty house’ when looked at against the clouds, from below; in the summer, the place for wine and music was below it; it commanded distant views to the east (Tivoli) and the southeast (Alban hills); and it was conspicuously separate from the noise and bustle of the city.

The idea of a property that turned its back on the busy city is confirmed by two passages of Suetonius, who reports that whenever Augustus was unwell, he used to go to Maecenas’ house to sleep, and that when Tiberius returned from Rhodes in AD 2 and wanted to stay quietly out of the public eye, Maecenas’ ‘gardens’ were where he went to live.<sup>49</sup> But there is a complication here that needs to be addressed.

Porphyrio’s commentary on Horace, written probably about AD 200,<sup>50</sup> includes the following note on Maecenas’ view of Tibur, Aefulae and Tusculum: ‘Maecenas is said to have built a tower in his gardens, from where he used to look out on all this.’<sup>51</sup> The phraseology (*dicitur*) shows that Porphyrio had no reliable evidence, but he may well have known the famous story in Suetonius about Nero and the fire of AD 64.<sup>52</sup>

Looking out on this fire from Maecenas’ tower, and enjoying (as he put it) ‘the beauty of flame’, he sang the whole of ‘The Capture of Ilium’ in that stage costume of his.

That seems to imply a direct view.<sup>53</sup> But the idea that Maecenas built a conspicuous architectural feature in full view of the city seems to conflict with the whole purpose of his estate.

It is normally assumed nowadays that the *turris* mentioned by Suetonius was a free-standing structure at or near the highest point of the *mons Oppius*.<sup>54</sup> That idea goes back at least as far as the sixteenth century, when Taddeo Zuccari (1529–66), painting his frescoes of the seven hills of Rome in the Vatican and the Villa Giulia, used a tall tower to identify the Esquiline.<sup>55</sup> But I think there are reasons to doubt it.

Horace’s invitation poem begins with an address to Maecenas as the descendant of Etruscan kings.<sup>56</sup> The first word of the first line draws attention

<sup>49</sup> Suetonius, *Diuus Augustus* 72.2, *Tiberius* 15.1.

<sup>50</sup> R.G.M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes Book 1* (Oxford, 1970), xlvii–xlix.

<sup>51</sup> Porphyrio on Horace, *Odes* 3.29.6: *turrim Maecenas dicitur in hortis suis extruxisse, unde haec omnia prospectabat*.

<sup>52</sup> Suetonius, *Nero* 38.2: *hoc incendium e turre Maecenatiana prospectans laetusque flammae, ut aiebat, pulchritudine Halosin Ilii in illo suo scaenico habitu decantauit*. Cf. Orosius 7.7.6, who merely repeats Suetonius with slight variations of phrase.

<sup>53</sup> Note however that Nero did not say ‘the beauty of the flames (*flammarum*)’; the ‘beauty of flame’, the red glow in the sky, would have been visible even without a direct view to the west.

<sup>54</sup> *LTUR* III.73 (Ch. Häuber, with previous bibliography); Purcell, ‘The Roman Garden’ (above, n. 25), 132; Häuber, *The Eastern Part* (above, n. 11), 213.

<sup>55</sup> Conveniently illustrated in C. Vout, *The Hills of Rome: Signature of an Eternal City* (Cambridge, 2012), 148–9, figs 5.23 and 5.25.

<sup>56</sup> Horace, *Odes* 3.29.1: *Tyrrhena regum progenies*. For Maecenas’ Etruscan descent, see also *Odes* 1.1.1, *Satires* 1.6.1, Propertius 3.9.1, Augustus in Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.4.12.

to the Graecism ‘Tyrrhenian’ for ‘Etruscan’, which in Horace’s time invited an etymological interpretation.<sup>57</sup> When the name crops up at an early stage of his *Roman Antiquities*, published in 7 BC, Dionysius of Halicarnassus makes this comment:<sup>58</sup>

Some declare the Tyrrhenians to be natives of Italy, others incomers. Those who make them a native people say that this name was given to them from the fortifications they built; they were the first of those who dwell here to do so. Fortified and roofed dwellings are called *tyrseis* among the Tyrrhenians, just as among the Greeks.

It is quite possible that Maecenas liked to call his lofty house ‘the tower’ (Latin *turris*, Greek *tyrsis*) as an allusion to his ancient ‘Tyrrhenian’ forebears.

It is important to understand that in Latin a *turris* need not be a free-standing structure. In one of the most famous passages of Latin literature, written by a close friend of Maecenas, Aeneas witnesses the fall of Troy. He makes for Priam’s palace, where the fighting is fiercest, and sees the Trojans ‘tearing down towers and whole roofs of buildings’ to provide themselves with missiles to defend the palace.<sup>59</sup> He gets into the palace by a side door and makes for the roof:<sup>60</sup>

I slipped through this door and climbed to the highest gable of the roof, from where the doomed Trojans were vainly hurling missiles. There was a tower riding sheer towards the stars from the top of the palace roof, from which we used to look out over the whole of Troy, the Greek fleet and the camp of the Achaeans. We set about this tower and worked round it with iron bars where there was a join we could open up above the top floor of the palace. Having loosened it from its deep bed in the walls, we rocked it and suddenly sent it toppling, spreading instant destruction and crushing great columns of Greeks.

This *turris* is clearly part of the palace itself, an extra storey added on the roof to exploit the view.

Such a feature of Maecenas’ ‘lofty house’, though primarily designed to exploit the view to south and east, might have enabled also a view back over the *mons Oppius* towards the ‘golden Capitol’ on the western skyline,<sup>61</sup> without

<sup>57</sup> First pointed out by Ian Du Quesnay, as quoted in Cairns, *Sextus Propertius* (above, n. 29), 258 n. 53.

<sup>58</sup> *Roman Antiquities* 1.26.2: τοὺς δὲ Τυρρηνοὺς οἱ μὲν αὐτόχθονας Ἰταλίας ἀποφαίνουσιν, οἱ δὲ ἐπήλυδας· καὶ τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν αὐτοῖς ταύτην οἱ μὲν αὐθιγενῆς τὸ ἔθνος ποιούντες ἐπὶ τῶν ἐρυμάτων, ἃ πρῶτοι τῶν τῆδε οἰκούντων κατασκευάσαντο, τεθῆναι λέγουσι· τύρσεις γὰρ καὶ παρὰ Τυρρηνοῖς αἱ ἐντεῖχιοι καὶ στεγαναὶ οἰκῆσεις ὀνομάζονται ὥσπερ παρ’ Ἑλλήσιν. Cf. 1.3.4 for the date of publication.

<sup>59</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.437 (*ad sedes Priami*), 445–6 (*turris et tota domorum | culmina conuellunt*).

<sup>60</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.458–67, translation by David West (Penguin Classics): *euado ad summi fastigia culminis, unde | tela manu miseri iactabant inrita Teucri. | turrim in praecipiti stantem summisque sub astra | eductam tectis, unde omnia Troia uideri | et Danaum solitae naues et Achaica castra, | adgressi ferro circum, qua summa labantis | iuncturas tabulata dabant, conuellimus altis | sedibus impulimusque; ea lapsa repente ruinam | cum sonitu trahit et Danaum super agmina late | incidit.*

<sup>61</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.347–8; Pliny, *Natural History* 33.18.

compromising the retiring nature of the property as a whole. If so (and whether or not Virgil had it particularly in mind), there is no need to believe in a separate tower building — and least of all one placed conspicuously on the summit of the hill, in full view of the city. There is no need at all to complicate the clear impression given by the two Horace poems, of a secluded eastern-facing property consisting of a lofty house with gardens below where music might be enjoyed.

#### 4. THE USES OF A DESIRABLE RESIDENCE

One of the virtues of Chrystina Häuber's book is her use of the first *Elegia in Maecenatem*,<sup>62</sup> a poem by an unknown author supposedly delivered at Maecenas' funeral in 8 BC. Recent scholarship regards it as a mere rhetorical exercise,<sup>63</sup> but there seems to be no compelling reason to doubt its authenticity; at the very least it is well informed about Maecenas' life, and therefore usable as near-contemporary evidence.

The poet's main aim is to defend Maecenas' memory against those who disapproved of his luxurious lifestyle. One particularly interesting passage involves a tantalizing textual uncertainty. Maecenas, we are told, did not care for triumphs and public life.<sup>64</sup>

He preferred the shady oak and the falling waters [or the singing nymphs],<sup>65</sup> and a few secure acres of fruit-bearing land; cultivating the Muses and Phoebus in peaceful gardens, he sat and talked among the tuneful birds.

Häuber takes the oak as an allusion to the *uirae Querquetulanae*, the nymphs of the 'oaks coming into leaf' whose grove gave its name to the Porta Querquetulana.<sup>66</sup> That is certainly possible; but since the Caelian was originally called *mons Querquetulanus* after the oak-woods there,<sup>67</sup> it is equally likely that

<sup>62</sup> Häuber, *The Eastern Part* (above, n. 11), 109, 340–1, 343–4, 528–9, 626.

<sup>63</sup> For instance, Peirano, *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake* (above, n. 10), 224–5, who takes it as axiomatic that 'the poem is a rhetorical virtuoso piece displaying the author's skill in finding arguments to defend Maecenas' personality'; cf. p. 228 (equally without argument) on 'the rhetorical genre of the pseudo-historical consolatory impersonation'.

<sup>64</sup> *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 33–6: *maluit umbrosam quercum nymphasque cadentes[?] | paucaque pomosi iugera certa soli; | Pieridas Phoebumque colens in mollibus hortis | sederat argutas garrulus inter aues.*

<sup>65</sup> In line 33 *nymphasque* ('nymphs') is the reading of all manuscripts; that might just be a metaphor for water, but Wernsdorf in 1782 preferred to emend it to *lymphasque* ('waters'); the following word is *cadentes* ('falling') in manuscripts B and P, *canentes* ('singing') in Z, M and V.

<sup>66</sup> Festus 314 Lindsay: '*Querquetulanae uirae* is thought to signify the nymphs that preside over the oak-grove coming into leaf, because they think that there was a wood of that sort inside the gate that was called "Porta Querquetularia" from it.'

<sup>67</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* 4.65. The gate was north of the Caelian, on the modern Via Labicana, probably close to the church of SS. Pietro e Marcellino (Häuber, *The Eastern Part* [above, n. 11], 106–10).

the grove of the nymphs was south of the Esquiline, and that the poet's choice of an oak as Maecenas' shady tree was not a topographical indication at all.

The 'falling waters', if that is the right reading, clearly imply a fountain fed by an aqueduct. Confirmation of that is provided by a phrase in Seneca's description of Maecenas, where the comparison is with a man being crucified:<sup>68</sup>

Do you think Maecenas is more fortunate when in his anxiety of love, lamenting his moody wife's daily rejections, he seeks sleep through the sound of choral singing resounding faintly from the distance? He can make himself drowsy with unmixed wine, he can distract his anxious mind with *splashing waters* and a thousand pleasures, but he'll be as awake on a feather bed as the other is on the cross.

Running water and fountains are easy to imagine, and consistent with the fact that Maecenas was the first to create a warm-water swimming-pool in Rome.<sup>69</sup> 'Choral singing', however, is more of a challenge. Who or what were the *symphoniae* whose distant songs were meant to lull Maecenas to sleep?

In a different context, Chrystina Häuber draws attention to two inscriptions that refer to singers in Latinized Greek terms. One came from a tomb of the mid-first century BC on the ancient Via Labicana, modern Via di Porta Maggiore:<sup>70</sup>

[Property] of the society of Greek singers and those who are in this company,<sup>71</sup> [constructed] from the communal funds. Lucius Maecenas son of Decimus, of the Maecian tribe, master of ceremonies, patron of the company, approved it. Marcus Vaccius Theophilus, freedman of Marcus, and Quintus Vibius Simus, freedman of Quintus, officers of the company of Decumiani,<sup>72</sup> saw to the purchase and construction of the burial place.

A *designator*, more usually spelt *dissignator*, was in charge of assigning seats at the games and organizing the procession at grand funerals;<sup>73</sup> it was a serious responsibility, and in later times a valuable position in the gift of the

<sup>68</sup> Seneca, *De providentia* 3.10: *feliciorem ergo tu Maecenatem putas, cui amoribus anxio et morosae uxoris cotidiana repudia deflenti somnus per symphoniarum cantum ex longinquo lene resonantium quaeritur? mero se licet sopiat et aquarum fragoribus auocet et mille uoluptatibus mentem anxiam fallat, tam uigilabit in pluma quam ille in cruce.*

<sup>69</sup> Cassius Dio 55.7.6, where 'in the city' (ἐν τῇ πόλει) no doubt means only 'within the walls'.

<sup>70</sup> CIL I<sup>2</sup> 25–9 = ILLRP 771 = CIL *Auctarium* (1965) 298, omitting the last four lines, which record the reconstruction of the tomb: *societatis cantor. Graecorum et qui in hac sunhodo sunt de pecunia commune. L. Maecenas D.f. Mae. designator patronus sunhodi probauit. M. Vaccius M.l. Theophilus Q. Vibius Q.l. Simus magistreis sunhodi Decumianorum locum sepulchri emendo aedificando curauerunt.*

<sup>71</sup> Liddell and Scott define σύννοδος as (1) an assembly or meeting, (2) a gathering, for instance for a festival, (3) a company or guild.

<sup>72</sup> Was the company named after Decimus Maecenas, father of the patron named here?

<sup>73</sup> Theatre: Plautus, *Poenulus* 19–20; CIL VI 32332.12; Ulpian, *Digest* 3.2.4.1. Funeral: Horace, *Epistles* 1.7.6; Seneca, *De beneficiis* 6.38.4. Both: Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 10.2; ps.-Acro on Horace, *Epistles* 1.7.6. For the theatricality of funerals, see for instance Appian, *Civil Wars* 2.143.598 and 146.607–148.612 (44 BC); Suetonius, *Diuus Vespasianus* 19.2 (AD 79).

emperor.<sup>74</sup> Evidently Lucius Maecenas could provide the musicians as well, and one naturally wonders whether he did so for his famous relative.

The other inscription that may be relevant is the tombstone of Gnaeus Vergilius Epaphroditus, described as a *magister odariarius*, from the temple of Minerva Medica.<sup>75</sup> The Constantinian regionary catalogues put the temple in *regio V (Esquiliae)*, and an early dedication to the goddess suggests that it was in the ‘valley of the Via Merulana’ itself (Fig. 3).<sup>76</sup> Since the adjective *odariarius* is derived from *odarium*, Latinized Greek for a song or ode,<sup>77</sup> it seems that Epaphroditus too was a supervisor of Greek musicians. The proximity of Maecenas’ estate, and his *symphoniarum cantus*, may not be a mere coincidence.

These indications make it tempting to adopt the other reading in the anonymous elegist’s poem, ‘singing nymphs’ (*nymphasque canentes*) rather than ‘falling waters’ (*lymphasque cadentes*).<sup>78</sup> Since nymphs were believed to sing as well as dance,<sup>79</sup> we could imagine them as a choir of human performers, as supplied by Maecenas’ relative Lucius, or later by Vergilius Epaphroditus.

Performers take us back to the story about Nero and the great fire.<sup>80</sup> Nero himself was a performer above all,<sup>81</sup> and Suetonius particularly notes that he was wearing stage costume (*scaenicus habitus*) as he sang ‘The Capture of Ilium’ on that occasion. But a performance implies an audience. Whether the ‘tower’ was a free-standing structure, as is normally assumed, or an extra storey on the house, as suggested in section 3 above, it can hardly have incorporated an auditorium.

Other authorities give versions of the story in which the *turris* does not feature at all, and the ‘gardens of Maecenas’ are not mentioned. First, Tacitus:<sup>82</sup>

A rumour had become current that at the very time when the city was burning, [Nero] had gone on to his private stage and sung ‘The Fall of Troy’, likening present evils to the disasters of the past.

<sup>74</sup> Ulpian, *Digest* 3.2.4.1. The *dissignator* evidently had a staff of lictors (Plautus, *Poenulus* 18; Horace, *Epistles* 1.7.6).

<sup>75</sup> CIL VI 10133 = ILS 5229 (Vatican Museum).

<sup>76</sup> CIL VI 30980 = I<sup>2</sup> 160 = ILLRP 235, found between Via Machiavelli and Via Buonarrotti: [Me]nerua dono de[det]. Full discussion in Häuber, *The Eastern Part* (above, n. 11), 110–34.

<sup>77</sup> Liddell and Scott define ὀδῶριον as the diminutive of ὀδῆ. Its one occurrence in Latin refers to a dance libretto (Petronius, *Satyricon* 53.11).

<sup>78</sup> See nn. 64–5 above.

<sup>79</sup> See for instance Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 1.1222–5; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 14.332–40; CIL VIII 27764.12–14 = E. Courtney (ed.), *Musa Lapidaria: A Selection of Latin Verse Inscriptions* (Atlanta, 1995), 144–5 no. 151.

<sup>80</sup> See n. 52 above.

<sup>81</sup> The extensive evidence for the *scaenicus imperator* (Pliny, *Panegyricus* 46.4) is collected and discussed by E. Champlin, *Nero* (Harvard, 2003), 53–83.

<sup>82</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* 15.39.4: *peruaserat rumor ipso tempore flagrantis urbis inisse eum domesticam scaenam et cecinisse Troianum excidium, praesentia mala uetustis cladibus adsimulantem.*



That sounds much more likely than a performance in a tower, and we happen to know that Nero had a private theatre in his own gardens across the Tiber.<sup>83</sup> Then there is Cassius Dio:<sup>84</sup>

Nero went up to the top of the Palatine [or the palace], from where many of the burning areas were most widely visible, and putting on his citharode's costume he sang 'The Capture of Ilium' — as he called it, but the capture of Rome as it was seen.

By Dio's time, the term *Palation* was coming to mean simply 'palace';<sup>85</sup> but even so, in AD 64 that could only refer to the imperial properties on the Palatine or the 'Passage House' (*domus transitoria*) that linked the Palatine and the Esquiline. Since they were all destroyed in the fire,<sup>86</sup> it is impossible to know where Dio imagined Nero's performance taking place. He may have misunderstood a reference in his source to some other imperial property.

Various combinations of the three texts are possible. We might infer that Suetonius was mistaken about the 'gardens of Maecenas', and that Tacitus and Dio were both referring to the Transtiberine gardens. Or we might infer that Dio was mistaken about the synoptic view, and that Tacitus and Suetonius were both referring to the *horti Maecenatiani*. Of these, I think the second is preferable, because a mistake by Dio is easier to account for than a mistake by Suetonius: the latter was well informed and closer to the events, and it is not obvious why he should think of the 'gardens of Maecenas' at all, if the supposed performance happened somewhere else.

If Tacitus and Suetonius were indeed both referring to the same place, then the *horti Maecenatiani* also featured a private theatre. The slope of the 'valley of the Via Merulana' certainly provided an ideal site, and it would explain the presence on Maecenas' property of a marble statue of Venus Victrix, the goddess of the Roman theatre.

<sup>83</sup> Pliny, *Natural History* 37.19: *theatrum peculiare trans Tiberim in hortis*. For private theatres in gardens and villas see F. Sear, *Roman Theatres: An Architectural Study* (Oxford, 2006), 46–7. There were stages, but not full theatres, in the peristyle gardens of the House of the Faun (VI.xii) and the House of the Golden Cupids (VI.xvi.7) at Pompeii: see W. F. Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii, Herculaneum and the Villas Destroyed by Vesuvius* (New Rochelle, 1993), 145–6, 159–60 (a reference I owe to one of the anonymous readers).

<sup>84</sup> Cassius Dio 62.18.1: ὁ Νέρων ἐξ τε τὸ ἄκρον τοῦ Παλατίου, ὅθεν μάλιστα σύνοπτα τὰ πολλὰ τῶν καιομένων ἦν, ἀνήλθε, καὶ τὴν σκευὴν τὴν κιθαρωδικὴν λαβὼν ἦσεν ἄλωσιν, ὡς μὲν αὐτὸς ἔλεγεν Ἰλίου, ὡς δὲ ἑωρᾶτο Ῥώμης.

<sup>85</sup> Cassius Dio 53.16.6: 'even if the emperor is staying somewhere else, his place of residence is called *palation*'.

<sup>86</sup> Tacitus, *Annals* 15.39.1; Cassius Dio 62.18.2 (Palatine); Suetonius, *Nero* 31.1 (*domus transitoria*).

## 5. AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMERS

Why did Maecenas need a theatre? He was the patron of Virgil, Horace and Propertius, who are not normally thought of as poets of drama. But that may be a modern misconception: the theatre was where Roman poets normally found their primary audience; literature and performance had much more in common than traditional classical scholarship likes to think.<sup>87</sup> To continue our exploration of what the *ludi Maecenatiani* may have been used for, we need to look at the evidence for Roman theatre experience in general.

The clearest indication comes in Lucretius' discussion of sense-perception, where he describes the effect on the audience of watching the stage-games for days on end:<sup>88</sup>

For many days the same things pass before their eyes, with the effect that even when they are awake they seem to see dancers with their soft limbs moving, to hear in their ears the liquid song of the lyre and its speaking strings, and to see the same audience and the various shining splendours of the stage.

What you saw and heard on the Roman stage was above all music and dance. We can guess what sort of performance might be on the programme from a precious surviving fragment of Varro's satires, written probably in the seventies BC. Though the context is lost, the joke seems to be about the relative expense of keeping dogs and keeping slaves:<sup>89</sup>

Believe me, more masters have been eaten up by their slaves than by their dogs. If Actaeon had got in first and eaten his dogs before they ate him, he wouldn't be rubbish for dancers in the theatre.

Actaeon was a hunter who came upon Diana and her nymphs bathing; the goddess turned him into a stag, and his hounds tore him to pieces. It was a subject for tragedy,<sup>90</sup> but evidently also a favourite for the dancers of the Roman stage, who loved the technical challenge of stories of metamorphosis.<sup>91</sup>

Those dancers were professionals, performing at the public games. But there is also good evidence for amateur performers at private occasions, like Maecenas'

<sup>87</sup> T.P. Wiseman, *The Roman Audience* (Oxford, 2015); for Virgil and the theatre see for instance Tacitus, *Dialogus* 13.2.

<sup>88</sup> Lucretius 3.978–83: *per multos itaque illa dies eadem obuersantur | ante oculos, etiam uigilantes ut uideantur | cernere saltantis et mollia membra mouentis | et citharae liquidum carmen chordasque loquentis | auribus accipere, et consessum cernere eundem | scaenaique simul uarios splendere decores.*

<sup>89</sup> Varro, *Menippean Satires* 513 Astbury (Nonius Marcellus 563 Lindsay): *crede mihi, plures dominos serui comederunt quam canes. quod si Actaeon occupasset et ipse prius suos canes comedisset, non nugae saltatoribus in theatro fieret.*

<sup>90</sup> There was a special Actaeon mask, with antlers attached (Pollux 4.141).

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Lucian, *De saltatione* 19 (metamorphosis), 41 (Actaeon).

contemporary Munatius Plancus, consul in 42 BC: ‘at a dinner-party he danced Glaucus on his knees, painted blue, naked, his head crowned with reeds, dragging a fish-tail’.<sup>92</sup> Such mythological charades were something wealthy Romans liked to indulge in.<sup>93</sup> Glaucus was a fisherman metamorphosed into a sea-god; we meet him in Virgil dancing with Tritons and Nereids, and Ovid’s story of his love for Scylla — before her own metamorphosis into a monster — probably drew on the lost *Glaucus* of Plancus’ fellow-senator Quintus Cornificius.<sup>94</sup>

Maecenas’ wife Terentia was a dancer too, if the scholiast on Horace was right to identify her as the pseudonymous lady in *Odes* 2.12.<sup>95</sup>

The Muse has wanted me to celebrate the sweet singing of lady Licymnia, her eyes flashing bright and her heart wholly faithful in mutual love. To her it was no disgrace to step in the dancing or compete in the fun, nor to offer her arms in play to the bright girls on thronged Diana’s holy day.

Remember the lyres and pipes below the lofty house, and the choral singing that should have lulled Maecenas to sleep.<sup>96</sup> Remember too the ‘singing nymphs’ (if they really are in the anonymous elegist’s text):<sup>97</sup> they could have played Diana’s nymphs in the Actaeon story, or the Nereids in that of Glaucus. Evidently the lady of the house didn’t think it beneath her dignity to join them, ‘competing in the fun’.

It is clear that musicians and performers were an important part of Maecenas’ life.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, the virtuoso dancer Bathyllus of Alexandria, who with the Cilician Pylades introduced to Rome the hugely successful dance genre known as *pantomimus*, was the slave, freedman and lover of Maecenas himself.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Velleius Paterculus 2.83.2: ... *cum caeruleatus et nudus caputque redimitus arundine et caudam trahens genibus innixus Glaucum saltasset in conuiuio.*

<sup>93</sup> The evidence is mostly from disapproving sources: Cicero, *In Catilinam* 2.23, *In Pisonem* 22; Suetonius, *Diuis Augustus* 70.1.

<sup>94</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid* 5.822–6; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13.900–14.74; for Cornificius see A. S. Hollis, *Fragments of Roman Poetry c.60 BC–AD 20* (Oxford, 2007), 150–3.

<sup>95</sup> Horace, *Odes* 2.12.13–20 (with ps.-Acro ad loc.): *me dulces dominae Musa Licymniae | cantus, me uoluit dicere lucidum | fulgentes oculos et bene mutuis | fidum pectus amoribus; | quam nec ferre pedem dedecuit choris | nec certare ioco nec dare brachia | ludentem nitidis uirginibus sacro | Dianae celebris die.*

<sup>96</sup> See nn. 45 and 68 above.

<sup>97</sup> See nn. 64–5 above.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Horace, *Satires* 1.9.23–5, where the pest who wants to be introduced to Maecenas boasts of his ability not only to write poetry but also to sing and dance.

<sup>99</sup> Cassius Dio 54.17.5 (slave and freedman); Tacitus, *Annals* 1.54.2 (lover); cf. Crinagoras 39 G–P (*Anth. Pal.* 9.542); Phaedrus 5.7.5; Seneca, *Controversiae* 3.pref.16, 10.pref.8. On *pantomimus* see E. Hall and R. Wyles (eds), *New Directions in Roman Pantomime* (Oxford, 2008); W. Slater, ‘Sorting out pantomime (and mime) from top to bottom’, *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 23 (2010), 533–41; T.P. Wiseman, ‘Suetonius and the origin of pantomime’, in T. Power and R. K. Gibson (eds), *Suetonius the Biographer: Studies in Roman Lives* (Oxford 2014), 256–72.

An interesting passage in Athenaeus seems to derive indirectly from Pylades' own account:<sup>100</sup>

Aristonicus says that this Bathyllus, and Pylades, author of a treatise on dancing, put together the Italian dance out of the comic, called *kordax*, the tragic, called *emmeleia*, and the satyric, called *sikinnis*.

The elder Seneca, who had no doubt seen both of them perform, implies that Pylades specialized in tragic roles, Bathyllus in comic, and since Persius refers to a famous 'Satyr of Bathyllus', we can add that style to Bathyllus' range as well.<sup>101</sup> The Dionysiac context is emphasized by Lucian in his essay on the *pantomimus* dance.<sup>102</sup>

There are three particularly typical dances, the *kordax*, the *sikinnis* and the *emmeleia*. The satyrs, servants of Dionysus, invented these and named each of them after themselves, and it was by using this art, they say, that Dionysus overcame the Tyrrhenians, the Indians and the Lydians, and danced over such a warlike multitude with his bands of revellers (*thiasoi*).

If Lucian too drew on Pylades' treatise, as seems likely,<sup>103</sup> this legendary explanation may well date back to Maecenas' own time.

Dionysus' conquest of India was a 'late myth', created to provide a legendary precedent for Alexander the Great.<sup>104</sup> Roman authors exploited it as the origin of the triumphal procession, supposedly invented by the god on that occasion.<sup>105</sup> It was particularly topical in the thirties and twenties BC, when Maecenas' poets hailed the young Caesar for defeating Cleopatra's Egypt and looked forward to his conquest of Parthia: their panegyrics took it for granted that India would be subjected too.<sup>106</sup>

As for the supposed Dionysiac conquest of the Tyrrhenians, and of the Lydians from whom the Tyrrhenian Etruscans were descended, that was directly relevant to the ancestry of Maecenas himself.<sup>107</sup> It would not be surprising if the

<sup>100</sup> Athenaeus 1.20d: τοῦτον τὸν Βάθυλλον φησὶν Ἀριστόνικος καὶ Πυλάδην, οὗ ἐστὶ καὶ σύγγραμμα περὶ ὀρχήσεως, τὴν Ἰταλικὴν ὀρχησιν συστήσασθαι ἐκ τῆς κωμικῆς, ἣ ἐκαλεῖτο κόρδαξ, καὶ τῆς τραγικῆς, ἣ ἐκαλεῖτο ἐμμέλεια, καὶ τῆς σατυρικῆς, ἣ ἐλέγετο σίκιννις.

<sup>101</sup> Seneca, *Controversiae* 3.pref.10; Persius 5.122 (with scholiast ad loc.).

<sup>102</sup> Lucian, *De saltatione* 22: τριῶν γοῦν οὐσῶν τῶν γενικωτάτων ὀρχήσεων, κόρδακος καὶ σικιννίδος καὶ ἐμμελείας, οἱ Διονύσου θεράποντες οἱ σάτυροι ταύτας ἐφευρόντες ἀφ' αὐτῶν ἐκάστην ὀνόμασαν, καὶ ταύτῃ τῇ τέχνῃ χρώμενος ὁ Διόνυσος, φασίν, Τυρρηνοὺς καὶ Ἰνδοὺς καὶ Λυδοὺς ἐχειρώσατο καὶ φύλον οὐτω μάχιμον τοῖς αὐτοῦ θιάσοις καταρχήσατο.

<sup>103</sup> Lucian, *De saltatione* 34 (origin 'in the time of Augustus'), 36 (subject-matter 'everything from the beginning of the world to the time of Cleopatra of Egypt').

<sup>104</sup> First attested about 300 BC (Megasthenes, *FGrH* 715 F11–12; Cleitarchus, *FGrH* 137 F17); Strabo 11.5.5 C505 ('late myth'), 15.1.9 C688 (created by 'flatterers of Alexander').

<sup>105</sup> Diodorus Siculus 3.65.8; Pliny, *Natural History* 7.191; Arrian, *Anabasis* 6.28.2; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.19.4.

<sup>106</sup> Virgil, *Georgics* 2.172, *Aeneid* 6.794, 7.605, 8.705; Horace, *Odes* 1.12.25, 4.14.42, *Carmen saeculare* 56; Propertius 2.9.29, 3.4.1, 4.3.10.

<sup>107</sup> See nn. 56–8 above. Lydian Tyrrhenians: Herodotus 1.94.2–7; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.27.1–28.1.

pioneering stars of Roman *pantomimus* explained the origin of their art with a little harmless flattery of Bathyllus' patron the 'Tyrrhenian' Maecenas, and his friend the triumphant Caesar Augustus.

## 6. THE ELEGIST'S EVIDENCE

At this point we must return to the first *Elegia in Maecenatem*, supposedly — and perhaps genuinely — composed for delivery at Maecenas' funeral in 8 BC.<sup>108</sup> The poet praises Maecenas' loyal service to the young Caesar, at Philippi, in Sicily, and above all at Actium.<sup>109</sup>

When the Egyptian ships covered the broad waters, he was brave around and in front of his leader, following the backs of the fleeing Eastern soldiery as it fled terrified to the head of the Nile. Peace came: these easy times relaxed those warlike ways. Everything is proper for the victors when Mars takes a rest. The Actian god himself struck the lyre with his ivory plectrum after the trumpets of victory fell silent. Before, he was a warrior, so that a woman should not have Rome as a dowry for her foul adultery; he sent his arrows after them as they fled (so great a bow he had bent) as far as the furthest horses of the rising sun.

The context is quite precise. 'The trumpets of victory' sounded for the triumph on 13–15 August 29 BC; a few days later, on the anniversary of the battle of Actium (2 September), there was a public holiday.<sup>110</sup>

Next, with a conspicuous succession of first-person verbs, the poet insists on his own recollection of, and participation in, those celebrations 21 years before:<sup>111</sup>

After we defeated the dark-skinned Indians,<sup>112</sup> Bacchus, you drank strong sweet wine from your helmet, and safe from danger you let your tunics flow unfastened — I think that was when you had two brightly coloured ones. I remember, yes, I certainly remember that arms more white than Hyperborean snow led the procession, and that you carried a thyrsus adorned with gold and gems that hardly left room for the trailing ivy. Certainly

<sup>108</sup> The date is given by Cassius Dio 55.7.

<sup>109</sup> *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.41–4 (Philippi and Sicily), 45–56: *cum freta Niliacae texerunt lata carinae, | fortis erat circa, fortis et ante ducem, | militis Eoi fugientia terga secutus, | territus ad Nili dum fugit ille caput. | pax erat: haec illos laxarunt otia cultus: | omnia uictores Marte sedente decent. | Actius ipse lyram plectro percussit eburno, | postquam uictrices conticuere tubae. | hic modo miles erat, ne posset femina Romam | dotalem stupri turpis habere sui. | hic tela in profugos (tantum curuauerat arcum) | misit ad extremos exorientis equos.*

<sup>110</sup> Cassius Dio 51.1.1, 19; Lydus, *De mensibus* 4.124; *Inscriptiones Italiae* XIII.2 32–3, 150–1, 192–3 (*Fasti Arualium, Vallenses, Amiternini*).

<sup>111</sup> *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.57–68: *Bacche, coloratos postquam deuicimus Indos, | potasti galea dulce iuuante merum, | et tibi securo tunicae flexere solutae — | te puto purpureas tunc habuisse duas. | sum memor et certe memini sic ducere thyrsos | brachia †purpurea† candidiora niue; | et tibi thyrsus erat gemmis ornatus et auro: | serpentes hederæ uix habuere locum. | argentata tuos etiam talaria talos | uinxerunt certe nec puto, Bacche, negas. | mollius es solito mecum tum multa locutus, | et tibi consulto uerba fuere noua.* In line 62 I translate F. Vollmer's emendation *Hyperborea*.

<sup>112</sup> For Cleopatra's forces as *Indi* cf. Virgil, *Georgics* 2.172, *Aeneid* 8.705.

too the sandals that bound your ankles were made of silver. I don't think you deny that, Bacchus! That was when you spoke many things to me, even more softly than usual, and it was your deliberate choice that the words were new.

Were those 'new words' the libretto of a new dance style? At any rate, we can hardly suppose that the poet was chatting with the god himself. This Bacchus was evidently Maecenas, identified by the ungirt tunic,<sup>113</sup> and the occasion a Dionysiac scenario in which Maecenas played the leading role.

That was certainly appropriate to the time of the triumph, and we might even imagine the young Caesar himself present as Apollo, 'striking the lyre with his ivory plectrum'.<sup>114</sup> But there were more mythological charades on the programme. The next one was Hercules and Omphale:<sup>115</sup>

Tireless Alcides, having carried out much labour, they say that was how you laid your cares aside, that was how you sported at length with your tender girl, forgetting Nemea and you too, Erymanthus. What could be beyond this? You turned spindles with your thumb, and smoothed with a bite the threads that were too rough. The Lydian girl beat you because of the frequent knots, because of the threads your hard hand broke; the naughty Lydian girl often told you to put on flowing tunics among her maids as they made wool. Your knotty club lay on the floor together with your lion skin, which Cupid on tiptoe kept on beating.

Who would have believed *that*, when Hercules was strangling snakes in his cradle, taming the horses of Diomedes, or overcoming the Hydra and three-bodied Geryon?<sup>116</sup>

The cross-dressing Hercules, enslaved to Omphale the queen of Lydia,<sup>117</sup> was a perfect analogue for the notoriously effeminate Maecenas and his notoriously capricious wife Terentia.<sup>118</sup> But his story was also a compliment to Maecenas' Etruscan ancestry. According to the traditional myth Omphale had a son by

<sup>113</sup> *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.21 (Maecenas *discinctus*, as in Seneca, *Epistulae* 114.4 and 6), cf. 59 (Bacchus' *tunicae solutae*).

<sup>114</sup> See line 51 (above), and Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 70.1 for the young Caesar impersonating Apollo on an earlier occasion.

<sup>115</sup> *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.69–80: *impiger Alcide, multo defuncte labore, | sic memorant curas te posuisse tuas, | sic te cum tenera multum lusisse puella | oblitum Nemeae iamque, Erymanthe, tui. | ultra numquid erat? torsisti pollice fusos, | lenisti morsu leuia fila parum; | percussit crebros te propter Lydia nodos, | te propter dura stamina rupta manu; | Lydia te tunicas iussit lasciua fluentis | inter lanificas ducere saepe suas. | claua torosa tua pariter cum pelle iacebat, | quam pede suspenso percutiebat Amor.*

<sup>116</sup> *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.81–6.

<sup>117</sup> For Omphale as 'the Lydian girl' see Sophocles, *Trachiniae* 432; Propertius 3.11.17–18; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.356; Statius, *Thebaid* 10.646; Tertullian, *De pallio* 43. For the story in general see Propertius 4.9.47–50; Ovid, *Heroides* 9.53–118, *Fasti* 2.303–58.

<sup>118</sup> Maecenas: Seneca, *Epistulae* 114.4–8, cf. 19.9, 101.13. Terentia: Seneca, *De prouidentia* 3.10, *Epistulae* 114.6. See n. 95 above: Horace mentions Licymnia's 'teasing cruelty' at *Odes* 2.12.26 (*facili saeuitia*).

Hercules named Lamus,<sup>119</sup> but in Maecenas' time a rival version identified the boy as Tyrrhenus, the same Lydian prince who led the colonization of Etruria.<sup>120</sup>

If Maecenas as Hercules was playing his own ancestor, it is tempting to guess that Terentia played Omphale and Bathyllus played the love-god, dancing on tiptoe on the abandoned lion skin. There is good iconographic evidence from Latium and Etruria for satyrs dancing on tiptoe, and the Omphale story had long been a subject for satyr-play.<sup>121</sup> It must be significant in this context that the peristyle garden of the House of the Golden Cupids at Pompeii not only featured a stage but was also decorated with a themed sequence of relief sculptures on Dionysiac subjects (satyrs, Silenus, comic, tragic and satyric masks, etc.), and that the sequence included the story of Omphale.<sup>122</sup> Since Bathyllus specialized in comic and satyric themes,<sup>123</sup> he could certainly have choreographed this one for a *pantomimus*.

The elegist's third scenario offered an even more appropriate role for Bathyllus, and an even more outrageous one for his patron:<sup>124</sup>

After the conqueror of Olympus had put the Aloidae to flight, it's said that he slept through into the bright day, and sent his eagle to find something that could offer fitting services to a Jupiter with love on his mind, until below Ida it found you, handsome priest, and carried you off in talons softly closed.

The Aloidae were the impious Giants Otus and Ephialtes, sons of Aloeus.<sup>125</sup> The battle of the Gods and Giants was an obvious analogy for the Roman civil wars,<sup>126</sup> but what matters here is the luxurious aftermath. Jupiter's eagle abducts the beautiful Ganymedes to be his sexual partner,<sup>127</sup> and since the Roman poets make Juno's jealousy a necessary part of the story,<sup>128</sup> here too we may assume a dance scenario in the comic mode.

<sup>119</sup> Diodorus Siculus 4.31.8; Ovid, *Heroides* 9.54; possibly the same Lamus who was king of the Laestrygonians (Homer, *Odyssey* 10.81) and legendary ancestor of the Roman Aelii Lamiae (Horace, *Odes* 3.17.1).

<sup>120</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities* 1.28.1 ('others say ...'), cf. Herodotus 1.94.5–7.

<sup>121</sup> Fourth-century BC dancing satyrs: a selection in T.P. Wiseman, *Unwritten Rome* (Exeter, 2008), 89 fig. 19, 91 fig. 20, 114 fig. 39 ('Praenestine' bronze *cistae*), 112 fig. 37 (Etruscan red-figure cup). Fifth-century BC satyr-plays: Ion of Chios, *TrGF* 19 F17a–33a; Achaëus, *TrGF* 20 F32–5.

<sup>122</sup> Jashemski, *The Gardens of Pompeii* (above, n. 83), 160–3.

<sup>123</sup> See n. 101 above.

<sup>124</sup> *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.87–92: *fudit Aloidas postquam dominator Olympi, | dicitur in nitidum procubuisse diem. | atque aquilam misisse suam quae quaereret ecquid | posset amaturo †signa† referre Ioui, | ualle sub Idaea dum te, formose sacerdos, | inuenit et presso molliter ungue rapit.* At line 90 I translate Heinsius' emendation *digna*.

<sup>125</sup> Homer, *Iliad* 5.385–6; Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.582.

<sup>126</sup> Most explicitly at Lucan 1.33–8, but already implied at Virgil, *Georgics* 4.560–2 (*Caesar ... fulminat ... uiamque adfectat Olympo*).

<sup>127</sup> As at Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.155–6.

<sup>128</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.28; Ovid, *Fasti* 6.43, *Metamorphoses* 10.161; Statius, *Silvae* 3.4.14–15.

That's how it is, the poet concludes: the victors can love, luxuriate in the shade, sleep on rose petals; 'everything is proper for the victors when Mars takes a rest'.<sup>129</sup> Maecenas had earned his sybaritic lifestyle; for him, as for his demanding Licymnia, 'it was no disgrace to step in the dancing and compete in the fun'.<sup>130</sup> Since he had at his command the finest dancers and the finest poets, we need not doubt that he enjoyed their talents on his own private stage.

## CONCLUSION

It is generally thought nowadays that the *horti Maecenatiani* were very extensive (Fig. 4).<sup>131</sup> However, I have argued in sections 2 and 3 above that they had nothing to do with the *agger* and the paupers' cemetery, and that the idea of a free-standing tower at the highest point of the *mons Oppius* is equally improbable. The anonymous funerary elegist described Maecenas' estate as 'a few *iugera* of fruit-bearing land',<sup>132</sup> and a *iugerum* was 120 × 240 Roman feet, about one-third the size of a football pitch. Of course 'few' is a relative term, and we cannot use it to estimate the real extent of the *horti*.<sup>133</sup> But since it is rhetorically counter-productive to say something your audience (or readers) know to be grossly untrue, the poet's phrase implies an estate rather less huge than is normally supposed. There is no good reason to believe that it extended above or beyond the 'valley of the Via Merulana'.

It is not just about topography. The positive part of the argument (sections 4 and 5) brings together the evidence for the *horti* as a place of music, dance and stage performance; that context, I suggest, may explain the presence of Venus Victrix in her 'theatrical' guise (section 1), and the anonymous poet's otherwise puzzling sequence of mythological exempla (section 6). The natural inference is that one of the features of Maecenas' *horti* was a private theatre.

A good contemporary parallel is provided by the theatre in the villa at Pausilypon (Posillipo) on the Bay of Naples.<sup>134</sup> *Horti* in the city and villas in the country were all part of the same phenomenon, as the elder Pliny pointed out:<sup>135</sup>

<sup>129</sup> *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.93–4, cf. 50 (above).

<sup>130</sup> Horace, *Odes* 2.12.17–18 (above, n. 95).

<sup>131</sup> See for instance *LTUR* III.406–8 figs 42–3 (Ch. Häuber); Häuber, *The Eastern Part* (above, n. 11), maps 11–14.

<sup>132</sup> *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 1.34 (above, n. 64).

<sup>133</sup> Nor, of course, do we have to suppose that they consisted entirely of orchards.

<sup>134</sup> Sear, *Roman Theatres* (above, n. 83), 129–30; cf. Wiseman, *The Roman Audience* (above, n. 87), 143–5; the villa belonged to Vedius Pollio (Cassius Dio 54.23.5), who like Maecenas was a wealthy *eques*. It also featured a covered *odeion*: see G. C. Izenour, *Roofed Theatres of Classical Antiquity* (New Haven, 1992), 74–6.

<sup>135</sup> Pliny, *Natural History* 19.50–1 (trans. A. Wallace-Hadrill): *iam quidem hortorum nomine in ipsa urbe delicias agros uillasque possident. primus hoc instituit Athenis Epicurus otii magister; usque ad eum moris non fuerat in oppidis habitari rura.*



Now indeed under the name of gardens they possess within the city itself fields and villas for their delectation. The first to invent this was Epicurus, the teacher of leisure. Up to him it was not the way for countryside to be inhabited in the town.

Pliny strongly disapproved of luxurious living, and *horti* like those of Maecenas, so different from traditional Roman gardens, offered him a fine example.<sup>136</sup> But there is one sense in which Maecenas might have escaped his censure.

Among the things Pliny disliked about the self-indulgent rich was their monopoly of *beni culturali*, libraries and works of art secluded in private houses and estates. He had high praise for Asinius Pollio, who founded a public library ('the first to make works of genius public property'), and for Marcus Agrippa, who urged public ownership of all statues and paintings to prevent them being hidden away in villas (a speech 'worthy of the greatest of citizens'); Pliny also noted that as aedile in 33 BC, Agrippa decorated the city with 300 bronze and marble statues.<sup>137</sup> Maecenas' cultural assets were human, the musicians and dancers who played and sang for the amateur theatricals in his private retreat. But he did not keep them to himself: on the contrary, his freedman Bathyllus became one of the greatest stars of the Roman theatre games.<sup>138</sup>

Public entertainments were hugely important in the restored republic of Caesar Augustus,<sup>139</sup> and those who were dependent on Caesar's friend Maecenas would of course be available to perform when required. Even the poets, who were free-born citizens and could make their own decisions, might sometimes describe themselves as under orders.<sup>140</sup> Like Pollio's books and Agrippa's statues, they were a contribution to the public good. No doubt doing what Maecenas asked was a price worth paying for free access to those idyllic gardens below the lofty house on the slope of the valley.

Address for correspondence:  
Professor T.P. Wiseman  
22 Hillcrest Park, Exeter, EX4 4SH, United Kingdom  
[t.p.wiseman@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:t.p.wiseman@exeter.ac.uk)

### Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Valerie Scott, Alessandra Giovenco and Beatrice Gelosia (Library of the British School at Rome) for Figs 2 and 3. These, together with Fig. 4 are reproduced in the hard copy of this journal as Plates 1–3.

<sup>136</sup> A. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Pliny the Elder and Man's Unnatural History', *Greece and Rome* 37 (1990), 80–96, esp. 92 on *horti*, and 'Horti and Hellenization', in Cima and La Rocca, *Horti Romani* (above, n. 34), 1–12, esp. p. 5 on Pliny; A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Rome's Cultural Revolution* (Cambridge, 2008), 346–53.

<sup>137</sup> Pliny, *Natural History* 35.10 (Pollio), 35.26 (Agrippa's speech), 36.121 (Agrippa as aedile).

<sup>138</sup> See nn. 99–101 above.

<sup>139</sup> Augustus, *Res gestae* 9.1, 20.1, 21.1, 22–3; Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 43–5.

<sup>140</sup> Virgil, *Georgics* 3.41 (*tua, Maecenas, haud mollia iussa*); see P. White, *Promised Verse: Poets in the Society of Augustan Rome* (Harvard, 1993), esp. 266–8.