# The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome

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CHAPTER 1

# The Affluent Italian and His Country Residence

In 1462, at the end of his life, Cosimo de' Medici, patron of Florence, invited his young humanistic protégé Marsilio Ficino to the Medici villa at Careggi: "Yesterday I came to the villa of Careggi, not to cultivate my fields but my soul. Come to us, Marsilio, as soon as possible. Bring with you our Plato's book *De Summo Bono*. This, I suppose, you have already translated from the Greek language into Latin as you promised. I desire nothing so much as to know the best road to happiness. Farewell, and do not come without the Orphean Lyre."[1]

The anxiety of the canny businessman and politician to achieve success in the world of the contemplative life as he had in the realm of action suggests not only the dichotomy of Florence in the mid fifteenth century but the ambiguous purpose at that time of its architectural product, the villa. His comment that he had turned to Careggi not to cultivate its fields but his soul identifies the origin of the Italian villa in terms of the farm and country manor. At Careggi Cosimo could enjoy both the active life of agriculture of which, according to Vespasiano da Bisticci, he was very knowledgeable, and the contemplative life of letters. Vespasiano relates that once when the plague visited Florence, Cosimo retired to Careggi where, after devoting two hours in the morning to pruning his vines, he then read the writings of St. Gregory, the thirty-seven books of which Cosimo was said to have read in six months.[2] Not only was the villa a refuge from the horrors of the plague, it was the last refuge in life for some of the Medici, who retired to it to meet the solace of death. Cosimo died there in 1464, as his younger brother, Lorenzo, had done some twenty-four years before and as his grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent, was to do in 1492 after his final dramatic meeting with Savonarola.[3]

## THE SECULARIZATION OF CULTURE

In the mid fourteenth century Petrarch had revived the ancient idea that the contemplative life, the life of artistic and philosophical creativity, the life of *otium*, could only blossom in the quiet of the countryside. His experience of the noisy, turbulent life of Papal Avignon left only repugnance for the evils of city existence. In the valley of Vaucluse he found a modest "villetta" of three or four rooms with two gardens, one dedicated to Apollo, and the other to Bacchus (*Lettere familiari*, XIII, 8). Near the house was a grotto with the source of the Sorgues, so that Petrarch could write of his "transalpine Helicon" (or Mount Parnassus in some ancient versions) on whose summit the Castalian fountain of the Muses sprang up in the hoofprints of Pegasus as he soared from the mountain top. Petrarch's withdrawal from the world of activity disturbed his friends, who had foreseen for him a brilliant career at the papal court. As an apologia for his action he began at Vaucluse his treatise on the *Solitary Life*, which he kept by him some twenty years for refinement and emendation.

[1] J. Ross, *Lives of the Early Medici as Told in Their Correspondence*, Boston 1911, p. 73. Cosimo's remark about not cultivating his fields but his soul sounds almost like a paraphrase of Pliny's letter to Julius Naso (IV 6): "Ibi enim plurimum scribo nec agrum, quem non habeo, sed ipsum me studiis excolo."

[2] Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Vite d'uomini illustri del secolo XV*, ed. P. d'Ancona and E. Aeschlimann, Milan 1951, p. 419.

[3] W. Roscoe, *The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, Called the Magnificent*, 8th ed., London 1846, pp. 424 and 425, and J. Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

As he writes in the treatise: "Whether we are intent upon God or upon ourselves and our serious studies, or whether we are seeking for a mind in harmony with our own, it behooves us to withdraw as far as may be from the haunts of men and crowded cities" (I, i, 1). He commences his examples with Adam: "Alone he lived in peace and joy, with his companion in labor and much sorrow. Alone he had been immortal, as soon as he is joined with woman he becomes mortal" (II, ii, 2). Petrarch then continues with the classical poets, philosophers, and orators, claiming that all of them, like Horace, Vergil, and Seneca, preferred a quiet retreat and that only the lascivious Ovid found pleasure in the city.

Although Petrarch's younger follower Boccaccio continued to advocate the country retreat as the milieu most favorable for the creation of poetry, his Florentine contemporaries had little interest in the country except as a place to produce livestock. For them the city as a center for trade or business was the only proper environment for men.[4] Even the humanists rejected Petrarch's ideal of solitary virtue and considered political and communal service their main endeavor. Humanists, such as Salutati, Poggio, Bruni, and Palmieri, served the state chancellery, and their gift of writing was concentrated in the fields of history and biography—fields that would enhance the reputation of the city-state.

So Bruni in his life of Dante, written as he says to complement and correct Boccaccio's biography of Dante, emphasizes that "man, according to all philosophers, is a social animal" and reproves Boccaccio for claiming, after the example of Petrarch, that "wives are hindrances to study."[5] Bruni praises Dante for his involvement in social and civic affairs and launches a bitter attack on the solitary life. "I wish to denounce the false opinion of many ignorant persons who think that no one is a student save he who buries himself in solitude and ease. I have never seen one of these muffled recluses who knew three letters."

Similarly the humanists considered the palaces and villas of Florence a reflection of the glory and magnificence of the city, praising the villa, therefore, within the context of the fabric of society and not as a social retreat. Leonardo Bruni writes in 1401 that he joined Coluccio Salutati and others one day to visit the villa of Roberto Rossi. After viewing the garden, they retired to the loggia where Salutati, inspired by the surroundings, expatiated on the grace and beauty of the buildings of Florence,[6] and Bruni himself emphasized the same theme in his *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis* of 1400.[7] In contrast to their public declarations, a later charming letter of Bruni, probably of May 1408, to Roberto Rossi from Lucca offers an informal picture of a visit with friends to the villa of the Archbishop of Pisa near Lucca. Here, as he says, "like boys" they frolicked nude in the river to the amusement of the Archbishop, who, because of his religious dignity, remained a spectator; then they dined before mounting horses for jaunts through the cornfields and meadows or watched the nude farmers wrestle in the sand, recalling to Bruni gladiatorial contests.[8]

Throughout the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries literary and philosophical groups continued to meet in the gardens or cloisters of Florence. Among the most notable locations were the garden, called the Paradiso, of the Alberti, the Monastery of S. Spirito with Luigi Marsigli, and later the Monastery at Sta. Maria degli Angeli with Fra Ambrogio Traversari. Poggio Bracciolini owned a small villa at Terranuova in the Val d'Arno, which in a letter of 1427[9] he calls his Academia Valdornina, just as Cicero had called his Tusculan villa the Academia after Plato's renowned teaching center. Here in Poggio's garden were assembled a small collection of antique marbles derided teasingly by his friends as an attempt to claim the nobility that images of his ancestors could not contribute.[10]

[4] L. Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460*, Princeton 1963, pp. 35-36.

[5] *The Earliest Lives of Dante*, trans. by J. R. Smith, New York 1963, p. 84.

[6] L. Bruni, "Ad Petrum Paulum Histrum Dialogus," in E. Garin, ed., *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento*, Milan and Naples, n.d., p. 78.

[7] H. Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, Chicago and London 1968, pp. 238-43.

[8] L. Bruni, *Leonardi Bruni Arretini epistolarum libri VIII*, I, Florence 1741, Bk. II, Ep. XX, pp. 57-59; for the date see H. Baron, *Leonardo Bruni Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften*, Wiesbaden 1928, p. 200.

[9] Poggius Bracciolini, *Opera omnia*, Turin 1964, II, p. 214.

[10] *Ibid.*, I, p. 65, from his dialogue *De Nobilitate*.

The ancient Roman tradition of the "villa dialogue," exemplified so effectively in the philosophical writings of Cicero,[11] was revived by the fifteenth-century humanists, with most of their philosophical dialogues set in a villa or its garden. Presumably most of the dialogue and many of the ideas were the invention of the author, but he sometimes spoke through well-known individuals, often friends, meeting at the country residence of one of the participants, and this conveyed an added sense of reality to the content of the dialogue. Among some of the notable examples, in addition to Bruni's *Dialogus ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, were Poggio Bracciolini's dialogue *De Avaritia*, supposedly occurring in 1428 at a *vigna* near the Lateran in Rome, as well as his dialogue *De Nobilitate* and his *Historia Convivalis*, both set at his own villa of Terranuova. Matteo Palmieri's dialogue *Della Vita Civile* takes place in 1430 in a villa in the Mugello, Alamanno Rinuccini's *De Libertate* of 1479 at his villa at Torricella,[12] and Francesco Guicciardini's dialogue on the government of Florence at Del Nero's villa near Impruneta in 1494.

Contemporary accounts prove that such literary-philosophical meetings were not purely fictitious *topoi* based on the example of Cicero. Vespasiano da Bisticci recounts that regularly twice a year Franco Sacchetti invited for several days ten or twelve Florentines, who were scholars of Latin and Greek, to his villa for a discussion of literary and political affairs.[13] That these visits were not merely social affairs is emphasized by Vespasiano when he adds: "In his house no games of any kind were played, as is done in most villas."

Fifteenth-century Florence, however, vacillated between considering the villa as a farm for the production of food or income and as a country retreat from the noise and cares of urban society. This ambivalence is expressed in the various writings on the villa by the humanist-architect Leon Battista Alberti. In his short, presumably early, work entitled the *Villa*, the only purpose of such a building is "to nourish your family not to give pleasure to others,"[14] for Alberti is primarily refashioning an agricultural treatise in the mode of the ancient ones of Cato and Varro. Yet in his more original dialogue on the family, written about the same time, Alberti finds that the villa not only "offers the greatest, the most honest, and most certain profit," but it is a refuge to "flee those uproars, those tumults, that tempest of the world, of the piazza, of the palace. You can hide yourself in the villa in order not to see the rascalities, the villainies, and quantity of wicked men which constantly pass before your eyes in the city."[15] His bitter conviction of the evils of urban life echoes Petrarch's complaints of a century previous. By the time of Alberti's great architectural treatise in the middle of the century he differentiates between the farm for profit and the villa for repose. This differentiation, however, has social and economic overtones, for it is the country house of the wealthy that is primarily for pleasure while that of the middle class serves for both pleasure and profit.[16]

A few years later Benedetto Cotrugli, writing in 1458 during a plague in Naples, advises merchants that they should possess at least two villas. One is to be purely utilitarian and to furnish food for the family, although in times of the plague it is also useful as a refuge. The other is for the delight and refreshment of the family with the warning that one should not frequent it too often since such a life detracts from business affairs.[17] However, as old age approaches, when the merchant is fifty or sixty years old, he should retire to his villa with his chaplain to read the Holy Scripture and to prepare for death with no thought of his business or the city.[18]

As the fifteenth century matured, the villa became increasingly a retreat for the enjoyment of a peaceful, private life removed from either the political duties or mercantile affairs of the city. The ancient Romans had differentiated the life of *otium* from that of *negotium*, but for them the

[11] R. Hirzel, *Der Dialog*, Leipzig 1895, I, pp. 428-30.

[12] V. R. Giustiniani, *Alamanno Rinuccini, 1426-1499*, Cologne and Graz 1965, pp. 243-47.

[13] Vespasiano da Bisticci, *op.cit.* (see above, n. 2), pp. 431-32.

[14] L. B. Alberti, *Opere volgari*, ed. C. Grayson, I, Bari 1960, p. 359; see also C. Grayson, "Studi su Leon Battista Alberti," *Rinascimento*, IV, 1953, pp. 45-53.

[15] L. B. Alberti, *I primi tre libri della famiglia*, Florence 1946, pp. 309 and 313-14.

[16] L. B. Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria*, IX; 4; V, 15 and 18.

[17] B. Cotrugli, *Della mercatura et del mercante perfetto libri quattro*, Venice 1573, fol. 86r.

[18] *Ibid.*, fols. 104r-105r.

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only respectable *negotium* was the involvement in politics, which naturally centered in the Forum and their urban residences.[19] The ancient villa was their residence as a private citizen free from clients and political negotiations and, therefore, devoted to a life of *otium*; but *otium* was not necessarily a life of pleasurable relaxation. Cicero, quoting Cato, relates that Scipio Africanus, the first Roman public official to seek *otium* in retirement at his villa, claimed that he had never been busier (*De Officiis*, III, 1). Cicero associated *otium* with study (*De Oratore*, I, 22) or with philosophy (*Tusculanae Quaestiones*, I, 6), and Seneca later asserted that he was doing more good in his solitary studies than when he appeared in court as a lawyer or supported a political candidate (*Epistulae*, I, vii). For the fifteenth-century Florentine, who honored trade and mercantile activities along with political service, leisure or *otium* reflected a freedom from all the activities of the city and could only be pursued when he was endowed with an invested income that required only minimum attention.

Vespasiano da Bisticci relates that Agnolo Pandolfini, after eminent public service, resolved in 1434 "to retire entirely from the republic" and spent part of his time in reading and conversation with learned men, and "part of the time, particularly as summer came, he went to his villa" which was lavishly provided for country living and entertainment.[20] By the latter half of the century Alamanno Rinuccini, who had participated in the gatherings in Sacchetti's villa, could advocate in his dialogue, *De Libertate*, written in 1479 just after the shock of the Pazzi conspiracy in Florence, that a wise man abstain from public affairs and withdraw to the peace of his villa.[21]

It was the Medici, and particularly Cosimo de' Medici, who made the villa an important architectural feature of the fifteenth century, as Pontano, the Neapolitan humanist, recognized later in the century in his book on Magnificence. For Pontano, like the earlier Florentine humanists, architecture was a visible sign of the magnificence of a city and its government. He singled out the foundation of churches, villas, and libraries by Cosimo de' Medici as the first evidence of the revival of private effort devoted to the public good, but was especially impressed by Cosimo's villas.[22] Some of these country residences, such as Trebbio and Cafaggiolo in the Mugello, whence the Medici emigrated to Florence, were originally mediaeval country manors or castles which were renovated by Cosimo's architect Michelozzo Michelozzi. It was particularly Cosimo's suburban villa at Careggi that brought fame to the concept of the villa. The land and an old manor with court, loggia, and tower had been acquired by the Medici in 1417.[23] Probably in the 1450's Michelozzo transformed the fortress-like manor into a charming villa, adding loggias on the west side of the villa, which define a small private garden separate from the large garden on the south side (Fig. 1). If any architectural feature characterizes the villa, it is a loggia. Generally at the ground-floor level, it serves as a link between the enclosed habitation and the adjacent gardens. At least by 1459 the villa was in order to be visited by Pope Pius II and the young Galeazzo Maria Sforza, who in a letter to his father conveys the delight he experienced not only in the design of the gardens but in the planning of the villa itself.[24]

Also at Careggi Cosimo's humanist protégé Marsilio Ficino had a *villetta* given him by Cosimo as a sanctuary where he might pursue his program of translating and interpreting Plato. Like Poggio Bracciolini at Terranuova, he named his country house the Academia, and emulated the Platonic Academy in lining the walls of his study with pithy epigrams extolling the ideals of a philosopher—*Fuge excessum, fuge negotia, laetus in praesens*. This *villetta* was Ficino's favorite residence for he claimed that anyone who was melancholy by temperament, as he considered himself to be, could only find surcease in nature. So in quiet contemplation he tramped the hills and woods of Fiesole

[19] E. Bernert, "Otium," *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft*, IV, 1949-50, pp. 89-99; and J. H. D'Arms, *Romans on the Bay of Naples*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1970, pp. 12-17.

[20] Vespasiano da Bisticci, *op.cit.* (see above, n. 2), pp. 470-71.

[21] L. Martines, *op.cit.* (see above, n. 4), pp. 299-300.

[22] G. G. Pontano, *Ioannis Ioviani Pontani Opera Omnia*, Basle 1538, I, pp. 241-42.

[23] G. C. Lensi, *Le ville di Firenze di qua d'Arno*, Florence 1954, p. 54.

[24] E. Müntz, *Les précurseurs de la Renaissance*, Paris and London 1882, p. 144, n. 2 and C. S. Gutkind, *Cosimo de' Medici*, Oxford 1938, p. 219.

and Careggi. On one occasion as he walked in the hills of Fiesole with Pico della Mirandola, Ficino began to describe the delights of an ideal villa as a setting for their way of life only to discover the realization of this dream in the villa Leonardo Bruni had built there.[25]

At Careggi in the Medici Villa and in Ficino's *villetta* the Platonic Academy met under the leadership of Ficino. According to legend, Ficino kept a sanctuary light always burning before a bust of Plato that decorated his study. As the source of this story is in a life of Savonarola, it may be suspect as an attempt of the followers of Savonarola to cast suspicions on Ficino's orthodoxy, but there can be no doubt that in 1474 Ficino and his colleagues revived the Symposium of Plato on the supposed birthday of the philosopher.

The Platonic Academy in the second half of the century was merely one very prominent witness to a change in the Florentine cultural milieu. The earlier Florentine conception of a Roman Republican, a Ciceronian life of public service and duty, gave way to an Epicurean concern for individual personal interests, whether the gay pursuit of festivals and jousts or the solitude of contemplation.[26] In simplified social terms it was a shift from a bourgeoisie to an aristocracy. Politically the change might be partially explained by the increasing dom-

[25] M. Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, Turin 1959, 1, pt. 2, pp. 893-94.

[26] L. Martines, *op.cit.* (see above, n. 4), pp. 292-300.

1. Careggi, Villa Medici

inance of the Medici family, which left little opportunity for fruitful political activity for other prominent citizens and encouraged the withdrawal advocated by Rinuccini. The old-fashioned Florentine burgher might lay the blame in part on foreign influences owing to the marriage of the Medici with Roman nobility. As with Petrarch a century before, the contemplative life again became the ideal of the humanist.

The most important exposition of this point of view were Cristoforo Landino's *Disputationes Camaldulenses* (1475). In the *Disputationes* a group of Florentines, including Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici and Rinuccini, climb to the monastery of Camaldoli where, as Lorenzo says, they plan "to flee, in this pleasant place, far from the troubles and annoyances of the city, the blistering heat which burns everything." There they are joined by the humanist and architect, Alberti, on his way north from Rome, and in a flowery meadow at the top of the mountain they debate the relative merits of the active and contemplative lives. In the discussion Alberti upholds forcefully the virtues of the contemplative approach against the arguments of Lorenzo de'Medici.

Although Lorenzo is the representative of the active life in Landino's treatise, even his interests in comparison with those of his grandfather Cosimo reveal the later fifteenth-century Epicurean spirit. Cosimo, like his distrusted younger contemporary Giovanni Rucellai, financed great works of architecture not only for the glory of his own family but for the grandeur of Florence and the Church. Cosimo's religious endowments seem inspired almost by a desire to expiate for the sin, or accusation of the sin, of usury. Lorenzo de' Medici, on the other hand, commissioned very little architecture and was not a great patron of the visual arts. His cultural activities were in general confined to the more limited and personal scope of his own poetry and the meetings of the Platonic Academy at Careggi.

Like Cosimo, Lorenzo was especially fond of villa life where he might enjoy hunting and the delights of nature, as many of his poems and his own commentary on his sonnets reveal,[27] and his one great architectural commission was a villa at Poggio a Caiano. In the early 1470's Lorenzo had begun to purchase extensive land holdings in Tuscany and in 1477 he commenced at Poggio a Caiano a large dairy farm, the Cascina, for the production of cheese.[28] In June 1479 Lorenzo acquired additional land at Poggio a Caiano from Giovanni Rucellai and eventually commissioned Giuliano da Sangallo to design a new villa.[29] Located about ten miles west of Florence on the road to Pistoia, the villa stands on the summit of a small hill some distance from the farm (Fig. 2).

Lorenzo's country residence at Poggio a Caiano, therefore, combined the profit-making aspect of a farm with an elegant rustic retreat allegedly under the protection of the nymph Ambra to whom Lorenzo and Poliziano both dedicated poems. The villa was to be a sanctuary (*fanum*) to the contemplative life of the poet and philosopher, so Pietro Ricci, describing it as a "retreat of the Muses" (*musarum secessus*), says that it was provided with a library after the example of that of Ptolemy Philadelphus at Alexandria.[30] The death of Lorenzo in 1492 and the advent to power of Savonarola not only interrupted the completion of the villa at Poggio a Caiano but momentarily dissipated the Florence revival of the contemplative spirit.

With the secularization of culture in the fifteenth century the villa gradually replaced the monastery as the center of the contemplative life in Italy. In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries the Florentine humanists had gathered with Luigi Marsigli and Fra Ambrogio Traversari in the monasteries of S. Spirito and Sta. Maria degli Angeli. Cosimo de' Medici found the solace of solitude equally in his villa at Careggi and in the Dominican monastery of S. Marco, but eventually the villa had become the principal setting for philosophical and literary meetings.

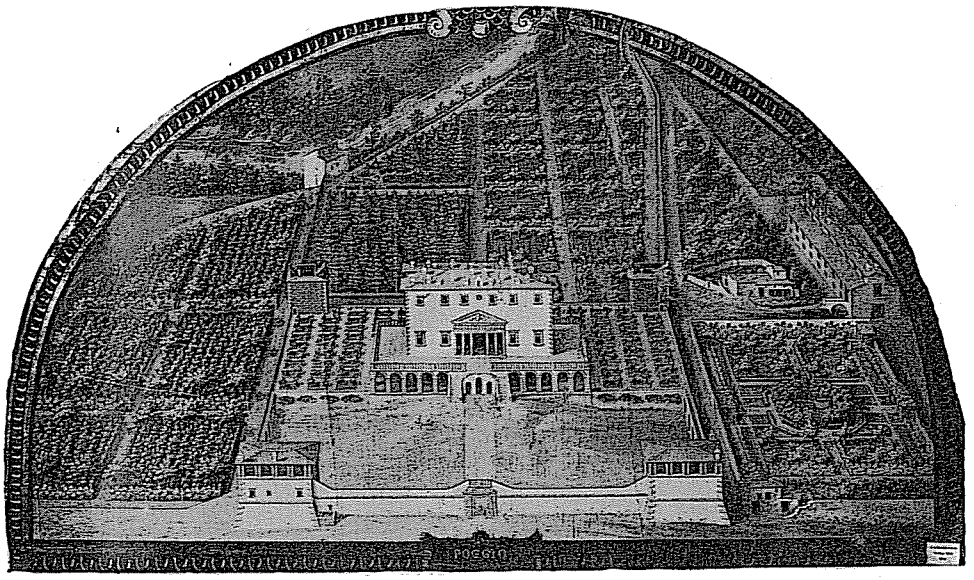
The tradition of *villeggiatura* or withdrawal to a country residence had become a central feature of Italian life in the later Middle Ages and the Renais-

[27] For example, his commentary on sonnet XXXIII; Lorenzo de' Medici, *Tutte le opere: Scritti d'amore*, Milan 1958, p. 213.

[28] P. Foster, "Lorenzo de' Medici's Cascina at Poggio a Caiano," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz*, XIV, 1969-70, pp. 47-56.

[29] A. Perosa, ed., *Giovanni Rucellai ed il suo zibaldone: I. Il zibaldone quaresimale* (Studies of the Warburg Institute, 24), London 1960, p. 27.

[30] P. Ricci, *Petri Criniti Commentariorum De Honesta Disciplina*, Florence 1504, bk. XVI, chap. ix.



2. Poggio a Caiano, Villa Medici, Utens Painting, Museo di Firenze

sance when urban centers arose to political prominence and there developed a leisured class of money. It was the same phenomenon that took place in ancient Rome after the second century B.C. Several factors promoted the importance of *villeggiatura*, of which the most important was probably geography. For the central Italians the climate was inescapably related to health and well being. As Cataneo remarked in his mid sixteenth-century treatise on architecture:

> It is customary in many provinces, but more than any other in Tuscany, as at Rome, Siena, Florence, Lucca, and many other places, for the merchants as well as various Lords and gentlemen to seek for relaxation at their estates or villas a particular location of more salubrity, beauty, and charm than all others so as to take the air during spring or autumn and sometimes in summer.[31]

Later a foreigner, Montaigne, would note this concern, for he wrote when he was in Rome:

> They have an observance here much more careful than elsewhere, for they make a distinction between streets, the quarters of the town, even the apartments of their houses, in respect to health, and set so much store by this that they change their habitation with the seasons; and even of those who rent them, some keep two or three rented palaces at very great expense so as to move with the seasons in accordance with their doctors' orders.[32]

So in 1584 the doctors of Pope Gregory XIII had carefully rated the available papal retreats according to their suitability for hot weather, stating that the rooms in the Palace of the SS. Apostoli were not good, better the Palazzo Venezia, and in turn better than that the Farnese Palace, but that the perfect location was the Villa Mondragone at Frascati until the papal villa on the Quirinal became habitable.[33]

The villa occasionally played even an incidental role in the ceremonies attendant on the end of the life of some of the nobility. At the death of a nobleman the rooms of his city palace and those of his relatives had to be draped with mourning. The surviving relatives during the interval of funereal preparations would, therefore, retire from the city to a country residence, freeing the city palace for these activities and permitting the relatives a moment of private grief, while they received the condolences of friends and colleagues. So in February 1577, "there came notice of the death of the father of Cardinal Alessandrino who has retired to Mon-

[31] P. Cataneo, *I quattro primi libri di architettura*, Venice 1554, fol. 46v.

[32] M. de Montaigne, *The Complete Works of Montaigne*, trans. D. M. Frame, Stanford, n. d., p. 965.

[33] BAV, Ms Urb. Lat. 1052, fol. 160r, April 25, 1584.

temagnanapoli until his palace is provided with 'brown' and his servants with mourning, having been visited in the name of Our Lord, as have done many cardinals, prelates, and lords of the court."[34] Two months later the Cardinal of Austria delayed his return to Rome so that the rooms of his palace might be draped in mourning for the death of his uncle, the Emperor Maximilian. The Cardinal, who did not have a villa near Rome, withdrew first to Cardinal Gambara's at Bagnaia and later to the Farnese Palace at Caprarola.[35] When the Grand Duchess of Tuscany died in April 1578, Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici "retired the same evening, and the following morning was closed the palace of His Illustriousness, who has been for three days at his garden" of the Villa Medici.[36]

Another factor in *villeggiatura* in Italy was the importance of the extended family as the source of political and social power and its retention of ties to its point of origin. Each family as it developed within the city kept or bought up estates or farms in the country region from which it originated, as well as elsewhere. For example, the Medici at Florence always kept property in the Mugello region. Although short term returns from the land could never approach those of commerce, land was a safer investment; and, while most of the Italians were never aware of the dictum of their spiritual ancestor Pliny that "on a farm the best fertilizer is the master's eye" (*N. H.*, XVIII, viii, 43), experience taught them that it was desirable to oversee closely at least the harvest and vintage at their estates. Roman society, however, unlike that of other Italian centers, was composed of a much greater foreign population because of the Church. The election of each pope, few of whom were Roman in origin, created a new, powerful family in Rome without local ties, and each new pope attracted citizens from his native region. So the constant cry arose that Rome was overrun by Spaniards during the reigns of the Borgias, Florentines with the Medici popes, and Bolognese with Gregory XIII. The Venetian ambassadors in the mid sixteenth century remarked on the dominance of the foreign nobility and the poverty of most of the Romans. Mocenigo reported in 1560 that "except for a few barons outside [the city], there are few noble or rich people, and among those old noble Roman families there are, one might say, no descendants." Three years later Soranzo reiterated: "Rome is inhabited for the most part by foreigners, since the Roman barons and the gentlemen of the city are few and not very rich."[37]

## *VIGNE*

*Villeggiatura*, however, was basically an aspect of an agricultural society. It celebrated the joys of the harvest and the vintage when all who were concerned, owner and laborers, gathered to reap the results of their endeavors. Because of Rome's double society, one of the papacy, the other of the city, it had a double system of *villeggiatura*, but the intermingling of the two societies extended into *villeggiatura*. Nearly every Roman, even those of the most modest means, owned at least one *vigna*, either in the unpopulated hill areas within the circumference of the Aurelian walls or, more likely, just without the walls along the roads radiating from the city. A tax roll of 1558 for the paving of the Via Flaminia from the Porta del Popolo to the Ponte Milvio listed the names of 90 owners of *vigne* in that region, and by 1570 a similar roll for that region mentioned 118 owners of *vigne* and *canneti* (cane-brakes); similarly an edict of 1562 of the Maestri delle Strade enumerated 134 *vigne* in the area of the Prati between the Belvedere and the Castel Sant'Angelo.[38]

At least twice a year, usually in the late spring and particularly at the time of vintage in September or October, the Romans would pour out of their crowded tenements and spacious palaces to visit their country properties. The city was so deserted that a statute in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries suspended justice each year from June 15 to August 22 during the harvest and from September 8 to October 15 during the vintage.[39] The political conditions of the period governed the freedom of these visits of course, but the harvest and vintage were inevitable and must be observed. For the anarchic era just before Martin V reestablished the papacy securely in Rome the diary of Antonio

[34] BAV, Ms Urb. Lat. 1045, fol. 260r, Feb. 9, 1577.
[35] BAV, fol. 305r, April 26, 1577.
[36] BAV, Ms Urb. Lat. 1046, fol. 125r, April 16, 1578.
[37] Albèri, IV, pp. 35 and 83.
[38] Tomassetti, III, pp. 228-31; and Lanciani, IV, pp. 11 and 34.
[39] C. Re, *Statuti della città di Roma*, Rome 1880, p. 44.

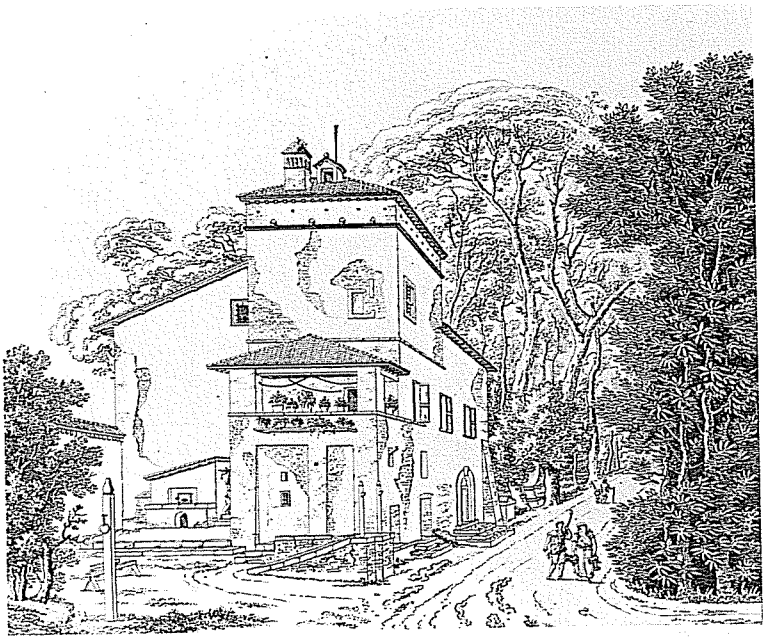

3. Rome, Area of the Prati, Dupérac Map of 1577

di Pietro dello Schiavo reflects incidentally the vicissitudes of *villeggiatura*. More a chronicle of the comings and goings of important personages and of religious feasts than a personal diary, the account only casually relates Antonio's care of his *vigna*, which was probably just outside the Porta Portese.[40] Once he notes that he was at the *vigna* in June 1408 when a sudden storm severely damaged the vines, but the other notices are all concerned with the vintages of 1409, 1410, and 1413.[41] In October 1409 the sudden appearance of some armed men caused Antonio with all his vintagers to flee, returning only a week later to complete the vintage. Next year Antonio invited his friend Giovanni Factenanti and his wife to a feast at his *vigna* on September 3, but early in the evening

[40] P. Savignoni, "Il diario di Antonio di Pietro dello Schiavo," ASRSP, XIII, 1890, pp. 301 and 346-47.

[41] F. Isoldi, ed., "Il diario romano di Antonio di Pietro dello Schiavo," in L. A. Muratori, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, XXIV, pt. v, Città di Castello, n. d., pp. 32, 46-47, 61-62, and 82.

4. Rome, Casino of Raphael



Giovanni became suddenly ill and returned to his home where he died, presumably of the plague.

Many of these *vigne* were merely vineyards with no habitations; others had modest farms, and some were farm complexes with residences for the owners and secondary buildings for the family of the *vignaiuolo* and the farm equipment. Dupérac's map of 1577 (Fig. 3) shows the area outside the walls of Rome, particularly in the Prati, littered with farm buildings of a variety of sizes and shapes. Most of them are directly on the road, some with the ends of the building toward the road. A few of them, especially those set in the midst of the *vigne*, were large enough to have towers attached to one end of the farm. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century views of the Roman Campagna, such as the drawings of Claude Lorrain, preserve closer glimpses of these rustic buildings. The farms are generally two-story rectangular boxes with gabled roofs. Occasional lower ells with penthouse roofs may offer more informality to their design. Clochar's engravings of the early nineteenth century present more details. He depicts, for instance, the so-called Casino of Raphael of the sixteenth century (Fig. 4). It stood until the mid nineteenth century, just outside the Porta Pinciana near the later Villa Borghese, as a two-story building with tower toward one end, but beyond the tower was a one-story wing capped by a belvedere or covered porch.[42] A rear wing with penthouse roof increased the informality of the design, which belongs to that class of Italian rustic architecture that became popular in England in the early nineteenth century.[43] The Casino originally contained frescoes recently attributed to Siciolante da Sermoneta in the 1550's, three of which are preserved in the Villa Borghese and one in the Hermitage.[44] These frescoes, of course, furnish only a *terminus ante quem* for the building, but they indicate that at that time its owner was important enough to employ one of the more popular mid sixteenth-century artists. The date and original owner of the "Casino of Raphael" is unknown, but the building stood in the area labeled on Bufalini's map of 1551 (upper left corner of Fig. 143, p. 234) as the *vigna* of Francesco di Crescenzi.

Clochar's engraving of a farm on the Via Appia near S. Sebastiano fuori le mura belongs to the long tradition of the Roman farmhouse (Fig. 96, p. 143).[45] Again essentially a two-story building, the

[42] Clochar, pl. 68.

[43] C. Parker, *Villa Rustica*, London 1848, pls. I-III, presents slightly revised elevations of the Casino of Raphael with plans modified "to the wants and manners of this country," so that it might serve in England as a "bailiff's dwelling."

[44] B. Davidson, "Some Early Works by Girolamo Siciolante da Sermoneta," *Art Bulletin*, XLVIII, 1966, p. 63.

[45] Clochar, pl. 36.

structure, was topped at the center by a crenelated tower that served as a pigeon cote. A large service portal on the left at ground level undoubtedly opened into the storage rooms of the ground floor, and an exterior stair at the right led up to the arched doorway of the residence. The tradition of this vernacular architecture with hardly any architectural style was so persistent in the region that it is often difficult to identify the date of these buildings, many of which could have been created at any time between the early sixteenth century and the mid nineteenth century.

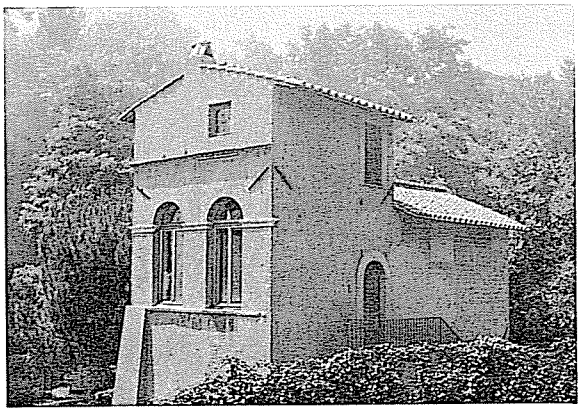
Most of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century farmhouses have been destroyed with the expansion of the city or have been so transformed in later ages that they can no longer be identified. One example preserved in fair condition, however, is the so-called Casa del Curato, originally in the park of the Villa Giulia, dating probably from the early sixteenth century (Fig. 5).[46] Set on an incline, the lower story facing downhill was the storage and service area with an arcaded loggia at the left and a single window at the right. The residential part in the upper story was entered from the rear, up the hill (Fig. 6). The elevation downhill was asymmetrical, but balanced. To compensate for the large ground-floor arches at the left side is a double-arched porch at the right of the main entrance in the upper story, with an attic story above it. In the mid nineteenth century Maccari reconstructed the painted decoration of the facade of the Casa del Curato with panels of feigned, faceted stonework and panels of rinceaux and trophies (Fig. 7).[47] The impact of classicism on this building is limited to the decorative details with a rather slight Doric column used to support the coupled arches of the main elevation of the belvedere and classic moldings to define the arch imposts of the ground-floor loggia.

Built about thirty or forty years later, another small casino in Rome offers a great contrast to the rustic style of the Casa del Curato. Its increased classicism, however, is not only to be explained by its later date, but perhaps more importantly by its use, location, and ownership. This is the casino, popularly called La Vignola, which stood until 1910 at the foot of the Aventine Hill below Sta. Balbina (Map A, no. 19), not far from the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla (Fig. 8). Old photographs reveal that the casino was built in the corner of a walled garden. A rectangular, two-story box, almost 50 feet by 25 feet, with no architectural features on the two outer walls except for classical, rectangular windows, the casino consisted basically of two large rooms, one on each floor, with a stair communicating with the upper story at the short end next to the outer wall. A large, vaulted loggia

[46] Centro Nazionale di Studi di Storia dell'Architettura, *Architettura minore in Italia. III: Lazio e suburbio di Roma*, n. p., 1940, pl. 96.

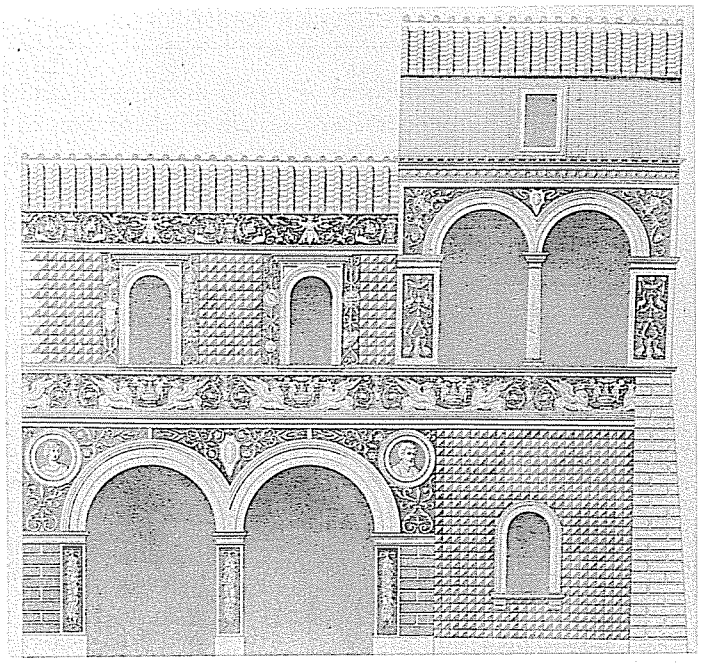
[47] G. Jannoni and E. Maccari, *Saggi di architettura e decorazione italiana*, Rome, n. d., 1, pl. 32; see also C. P. Ridolfini, *Le case romane con facciate graffite e dipinte*, Rome 1960, p. 95.

5. Rome, Casa del Curato, Facade



6. Rome, Casa del Curato, Rear

7. Rome, Casa del Curato



8. Rome, La Vignola, Exterior

on the ground floor opened onto the garden. Apparently the decorative features of the upper story were never completed in the original building as the only elements of the Doric entablature preserved were the architrave and guttae without the Doric frieze or cornice.[48] The upper story, therefore, had only the rough masonry walls with two windows in the center of the facade and two on the garden end to light the large room above the loggia.[49]

The *vigna* of La Vignola was owned as late as the eighteenth century by the old Roman Boccapaduli family, which on February 24, 1538, had purchased land in this area for 300 *scudi* from Giacomo De Nigris. The document of sale speaks only of a "garden with cistern and other buildings used as a tavern," suggesting that the casino was erected by the Boccapaduli after the purchase of the property. The Boccapaduli suffered financial trouble in 1547, which Guidi thinks might explain the incompleteness of the building, dating it just before 1547. It is not depicted, however, on Bufalini's map of Rome in 1551 and the earliest indication of its existence is on Paciotti's map of 1557.[50] The Boccapaduli casino obviously was not a country residence but a retreat for afternoon and evening gatherings where the family and friends could dine in the loggia and enjoy the pleasures of the enclosed garden and *vigna* before them. It was an elegant setting for that type of intimate gathering made famous in the writings of early sixteenth-century poets and humanists. Unlike the usual *vigna* habitation whose origin and function was that of the modest farmhouse of the Campagna, the Boccapaduli casino resembles more the traditional urban family loggia transplanted to the country.

In contrast to Rome, many of the villas of the sixteenth century Veneto, like Palladio's Villa Barbaro at Maser, combine pleasure villa and productive farm in one complex.[51] Such villas partook more of the spirit of Republican Rome and followed the precepts of the ancient agricultural writers, the *Res Rusticae Scriptores* such as Cato and Varro, or their mediaeval equivalent, Crescenzi's *Opus ruralium commodorum*, written in Bologna about 1305 and published frequently in Venice in the early sixteenth century. For Central Italy, and especially Rome in the sixteenth century, the villa often reflected Vergilian and Ovidian pastoral poetry with their images of the Golden Age or Arcadia. The villas were to be *loci amoenissimi*, sites of visual beauty where man could find his image of paradise removed from the restraints and frustrations of civilization. For the sixteenth-century Venetians this escape to the idyllic, pastoral world was limited to the painting of Giorgione, late Bellini, and Titian, which as an art of luxury was free from the restraints of profit or income.

Alberti in the mid fifteenth century had enunciated a hierarchy of traditional values associated with the varying types of architecture in which the villa or country residence was toward the bottom of the scale, excelled in turn by the urban palace, civic architecture, and, at the apex of the hierarchy, ecclesiastical architecture. With the secularization of the Renaissance this scale of values may have been threatened in practice but was never completely overturned. The villa, therefore, because of its freedom from the weight of tradition and its independence in site from social conformity, could permit the architect and owner more license in design and decoration as Alberti had already noted (IX, ii). Innovation and variety were more feasible in villa design than in any other important type of architecture.

[48] When La Vignola was reerected in 1911 near S. Gregorio Magno the architect Guidi restored all the missing architectural features and made other changes to regularize the design; see P. Guidi, "La ricostruzione della 'Vignola,'" *Ausonia*, VII, 1912, p. 216.

[49] Clochar's engraving of the casino is very inaccurate with reversed plan, elevation and section, four equal and arched bays on the ground floor, and four upper story windows evenly spaced above the arches; see Clochar, pl. 39.

[50] P. Guidi, *op.cit.* (see above, n. 48), p. 213, and Frutaz, II, pl. 228.

[51] G. Masson, "Palladian Villas as Rural Centers," *The Architectural Review*, CXVIII, 1955, pp. 17-20; J. S. Ackerman, *Palladio's Villas*, Locust Valley (N. Y.) 1967; and L. Puppi, "The Villa Garden of the Veneto from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century," *The Italian Garden*, ed. D. R. Coffin, Washington, D.C. 1972, pp. 81-114. For the iconography of the Venetian Villa, see B. Rupprecht, "Villa: Zur Geschichte eines Ideals," *Probleme der Kunstwissenschaft*, II, 1966, pp. 210-50; and B. Rupprecht, "L'iconologia nella Villa Veneta," *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio*, X, 1968, pp. 229-40.

The striking and unique characteristic of Rome was its two distinct societies and political organizations, although at brief moments the two might blend. The existence of the Church at Rome introduced a foreign body with its own social hierarchy and political authority into the local society and government, often creating dissension and even anarchy. Although the basic religious principles of the Church remained stable, the society which administered the Church was in constant flux, and for the most part this society was of foreign origin with different habits or ideals than the Romans. In fact, it was to be the foreign nobility among the churchmen and their foreign financiers who would introduce villa architecture to Rome, resulting in a great variety of villa forms and concepts.

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