

THE OUTSIDER WITHIN: SELF-SECLUSION BY THE ROMAN ELITE FROM TIBERIUS TO HADRIAN

By

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This dissertation by Darrel C. Janzen is accepted in its present form
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FRONT MATTER

TITLE PAGE	i
COPYRIGHT PAGE	ii
SIGNATURE PAGE	iii
CURRICULUM VITAE	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
ABBREVIATIONS	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction	1
1. Seclusion as a Symbolic Behaviour	7
2. Solitude, Distance, and Physical Behaviour	9
3. Social Estrangement as an Interpretation	12
4. Estrangement, Leisure, and the Private Domain	18
5. Connecting Space to Identity	19
6. Psychic Withdrawal and Metaphorical Space	22
7. From Social Space to Physical Space	24
8. Conclusion	27

CHAPTER 2: PSYCHIC WITHDRAWAL INTO THE SELF IN IMPERIAL ROMAN STOICISM

Introduction	29
1. Changing Physical Locations and Psychic Withdrawal	30
2. Spiritual Withdrawal from Externals	39
3. The Secluded Self-Location	45
4. The Self as a Fortress	52
5. Inside the Secluded Self	65
6. Moral Implications of Psychic Withdrawal	75
6.1. Moral Implications: The Self as a Fortress	81
7. Psychic Withdrawal in the Early Imperial Period	86
7.1. Limitations to Physical Withdrawal	86
7.2. Accepting Vulnerability	98
7.3. Meeting Cultural Objectives	106
8. Conclusion	117

CHAPTER 3: THE EPICUREAN SECLUSION OF POLLIUS FELIX AT SURRENTUM (STATIUS, *SILVAE* 2.2)

Introduction	120
1. From Sea to Harbour: Epicurean imagery	124
1.1 Stormy Seas and Turbulent Desire	124
1.2 Tranquil Harbour and Spiritual Calm	129
1.3 Sirens and Surrentum	137
2. From Sea to Harbour: Long Voyages	141

2.1. Statius' Journeys	142
2.2 Statius' Visit to Pollius' Villa as an Epic Detour	145
2.2.1. Pollius' Villa as Vergil's Carthage	155
2.2.2. Pollius' Villa as Vergil's Castrum Minervae	159
3. Pollius' Distant, Lofty View	168
3.1. The Solitary Estate	168
3.2. Pollius' Vertical Distance	170
3.2.1. The Lofty Villa and its Distant Views	176
3.2.2. Pollius' Lofty Citadel of the Mind	183
4. Conclusion	196
CHAPTER 4: SECLUDED ELOQUENCE: THE (DIS)PLACE(MENT) OF SKILLED SPEECH IN IMPERIAL SOCIETY	
Introduction	203
1. The Poet's Dystopian Solitude: Marcus Aper's First Speech	206
2. The Poet's Utopian Seclusion: Curiatius Maternus' First Speech	222
3. The Imperial Orator's Solitude: Curiatius Maternus' Second Speech	247
4. Pliny on the <i>Dialogus</i> and the Writer's Self-Seclusion	268
4.1. Pliny, Letter 1.6	269
4.2. Pliny, Letter 9.10	281
5. Conclusion	290
CHAPTER 5: THE SOLITARY EMPEROR. THE SECLUSION OF TIBERIUS AND DOMITIAN	
Introduction	298
1. The Ideal of the Accessible Emperor	300
2. Imperial Interiority	304
3. Domitian at Rome and Environs	317
4. Tiberius' Withdrawals: Rhodes, Rome, and Capri	336
5. Conclusion	377
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	
6.1. Summary of Findings	382
6.2. Broader Implications	384
6.3. Possibilities for Further Research	390
APPENDICES	393
BIBLIOGRAPHY	400

ABBREVIATIONS

In the text and notes, the names of Greek and Latin authors and their works are abbreviated according to the conventions of Liddell and Scott's *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed. (Oxford, 1940) and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 2012), respectively. The titles of journals in the bibliography are abbreviated following the format of the *L'Année Philologique*. Reference works are listed alphabetically in the bibliography according to their abbreviations.

'Classical Latin' refers to the period covered by the OLD and the PHI database (= Packard Humanities Institute, online at <http://latin.packhum.org/about>), until ca. 200 CE. All comments about the relative frequency of words and collocations of words are based on searches performed on the PHI database operated by Diogenes (<https://community.dur.ac.uk/p.j.heslin/Software/Diogenes/>).

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1	The Puteolanus Sinus/Crater, the modern Bay of Naples	122
Fig. 2	Detail of the Surrentine coast	131
Fig. 3	Castrum Minervae, modern Castro, Apulia	160
Fig. 4	Castrum Minervae, modern Castro, Apulia	160
Fig. 5	The Bay of Naples with sightlines from the villa of Pollius Felix documented in Silv. 2.2	175
Fig. 6	View of the Bay of Naples from the villa of Pollius Felix (Punta della Calcarella)	181

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Modern scholars of Roman history, literature, and material culture now recognize the relationship between sequestered physical and metaphorical spaces and the social identity of the people who occupied those places. Under the empire, Romans sometimes felt that discrete spaces expressed individual identity in at least as poignant a manner as communal places like Rome's fora could. Within the bounds of the City, the opulence, size and setting of an elite man's *domus* reflected his importance with a particular clarity unlikely to be achieved by a statue in Rome's civic centre, already crowded with monuments celebrating the merits of a myriad of other honorands, not least the emperors, who increasingly dominated material self-expression in Rome's public spaces.¹ In consequence, ambitious men increasingly sought to express their importance through extravagant urban homes while simultaneously trying to avoid the suspicion or greed of an emperor.²

Likewise, outside of Rome, the seclusion of a suburban estate or a rural villa offered opportunities for self-expression less liable to be overshadowed by the emperor's ubiquitous monumental displays in the city, in addition to the welter of elites commemorating themselves in the city's common spaces and through their opulent homes. By the early empire, a wealthy man's villa could be understood as his 'personal monument', celebrating his importance and perpetuating his memory on his own terms, rather than as one man in a crowd of wealthy and

¹ Edwards (1993) 138-39, Eck (2010). Extensive bibliography at Roller (2010a) 120n7. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 3.55.2. Translations are by the author. Dates are Common Era unless otherwise noted.

² For the perils of attracting imperial attention to one's urban property, see Tac. *Ann.* 11.1.1, 12.59.1, Plin. *Pan.* 50, Beard (1998) 24-27, Roller (2010a) 163-66, Clément, Ferriès, and Rivière (2016) 165-81, 203-97.

important men, the emperor above all.³ While an urban or rural residence would undoubtedly project the owner's exalted self-portrait to a smaller audience than would a monument in Rome's public spaces, these commemorative practices were also reflexively directed back to the men who owned these properties, articulating their self-understanding as important and self-sufficient individuals, not merely as privileged members of a society in which they often wielded a very limited amount of real power.

While the connection between self-expression and conceptually peripheral spaces of the sort sketched out above has been well documented, this dissertation focuses on a smaller subset of this type of behaviour, whose significance has not yet been fully recognized. It examines how the act of spatial seclusion can express non-conforming types of individuality by articulating estrangement from a group or community that is abandoned. More specifically, it analyzes how an individual's voluntary self-seclusion within an isolated, solitary space, in opposition to a communal space that is avoided, can express this person's enduring estrangement from a group or from an external entity that he or she is otherwise associated with. This project focuses on accounts of this behaviour from the early first century CE to the early second century, a period of time when quietism and withdrawal, literal and figurative, were widespread phenomena.⁴

While this project examines spatial seclusion that illustrates a sustained form of social estrangement, it includes instances of seclusion that are temporary in duration, alongside cases of

³ Bodel (1997), Agache (2008). Further references at Gibson and Morello (2012) 202n5.

⁴ Retirement and quietism in the imperial period are fruitful, yet understudied topics of research. This dissertation seeks to contribute to our understanding of this aspect of Roman culture. For diverse approaches to these issues see, Boissier (1905) 100-2; Allen (1948); Grilli (1953); Festugière (1954) 53-67; Dodds (1965) 1-36; André (1966), esp. 531-41; MacMullen (1966) 46, 48-55, 305-6; Griffin (1976) 315-66, Hopkins (1983) 166-71; Woodman (1983) 239-

permanent withdrawal, for self-imposed isolation of varying lengths of time, temporary or permanent, can be felt to indicate social detachment. Thus, while many Romans perceived that the emperor Tiberius' withdrawal from Rome in 26 for the rest of his life represented a similarly permanent social rupture with Roman society, Suetonius, Juvenal and Pliny the Younger (hereafter 'Pliny') all associate the emperor Domitian's propensity for solitude with a similar alienation from senate and people, even though Domitian was never persistently absent from Rome or its common spaces.⁵

Therefore, this project examines four different situations in early imperial literature where an individual's self-imposed spatial seclusion is interpreted as expressing an identity that is consistently discordant with some external group, analyzing how an individual's seclusion both reflects his social estrangement and offers readers further interpretive information about this social stance. First, chapter two examines how certain largely Stoic authors of the imperial period employ the figure of withdrawal into the metaphorical space of the self to describe more lucidly an ascetic moral disposition that estranges the wise man from other, less morally disciplined attitudes as well as from various aspects of society that these unruly inclinations would bind him to. Early imperial writers use the metaphor of withdrawal into the self to present the moral asceticism that this image articulates as a safer and more effective response than physical self-seclusion to the frustrations and dangers of public life under the principate. Nevertheless, this rejection of commonly held values in favour of personal moral progress allows

44; Nauta (2002) 308-23, Myers (2005) 109; Roskam (2007), esp. 155-87; Bodel (2015), and Kalimtzis (2017), esp. 121-77.

⁵ On the reclusive tendencies of Tiberius and Domitian, see chapter 5.

the ascetic to achieve certain traditional elite cultural objectives that were sometimes thought to be increasingly difficult to fulfill during the imperial period.

Next, chapter three analyzes how Statius uses the seclusion of the Epicurean retiree Pollius Felix in *Silvae* 2.2 on his Surrentine estate to express Pollius' estrangement from the restless ambitions of the rest of society, which lacks his philosophical enlightenment. The calm quality of Pollius and his estate and their distance from the choppy sea out on the Bay of Naples help Statius articulate Pollius' spiritual tranquillity and his freedom from the fear and desire that continually disturb others. Likewise, the image of Pollius gazing down upon the sea from the topmost room of his villa expresses the superiority of his intellectual lifestyle and his detached pleasure that he no longer values the ill-chosen pursuits of others still out on the sea. A series of allusions in the poem to several key moments in the backstory of Rome's foundation in the *Aeneid* characterizes Pollius' distance from the sea up in his clifftop villa as a renunciation in particular of the restless desire that drives others to seek recognition on a national stage. At the same time, however, these allusions also invest Pollius' retreat to private life on his estate with a heightened sense of cultural value equivalent to how the less enlightened esteem achievements in public life.

The contested solitude of poets and orators in Tacitus's *Dialogue on Oratory* (hereafter the *Dialogus*) and Pliny's *Epistulae* 1.6 and 9.10 forms the subject of the fourth chapter. Two characters in the *Dialogus* portray practitioners of both kinds of eloquence in physical or psychic solitude as part of their tendentious arguments. In turn, Tacitus' friend Pliny reacts to these accounts of seclusion in the *Dialogus* as he writes to Tacitus about his own efforts to compose poetry and prose in solitude. Tacitus' characters and Pliny express few points of agreement over

who is secluded and whether such solitude expresses their freedom from social constraints, their failure to integrate successfully into society's networks of exchange, or something in between. Nevertheless, these discordant accounts of isolated poets and orators reflect a shared feeling that at least certain parts of Rome's intellectual class must struggle on their own against a range of social and political obstacles posed by an unsympathetic or hostile Roman society as they pursue various forms of social distinction.

Chapter five analyzes how Statius, Pliny, Suetonius, and Tacitus, represent the preference of the emperors Tiberius and Domitian for solitude. Post-Domitianic writers portray Domitian's seclusion within the Palatium and Tiberius' withdrawal to Capri as symbols of their alienation as tyrants from civic society at Rome, particularly from the senate, and from civilization in general. By contrast, Domitian's reclusive persona in Statius' *Silvae* offers support for the historicity of posthumous accounts of his solitary tendencies, yet Statius' laudatory portrait associates Domitian's detachment from others with his position as a god-like emperor who is remote from his humble subjects. At the same time, the historical context of these literary portraits of imperial isolation reveals that the emperors maintained close contact with friends, relations, and subordinates, indicating that in a less ideologically charged sense, they were not very secluded at all. The tension between these evocative literary portraits of solitude and their historical context thus illustrates the desire of post-Domitianic authors to portray their imperial subjects as alienated from society and how this desire leads them to elide unnecessary details in order to create compelling accounts of imperial seclusion from which their readers can derive the desired interpretation.

Finally, a concluding chapter states the findings of the dissertation and discusses the implications. This project advances previous scholarship on the relationship between the symbolic value of discrete physical space in Roman culture and expressions of elite individuality while linking Roman studies to growing interest in solitude as a social behaviour across a range of fields in the humanities.⁶ Occupying physical or metaphorical space that was perceived to be solitary and isolated could connote not merely individual autonomy and importance in the context of an external group or entity, but also outright dissociation from such a group. Further, self-seclusion appears in a wide variety of spatial settings ranging from the psyche to interregional travel, and it was associated with estrangement from a diverse array of external entities ranging from the irrational part of the mind to civic society as a whole.

This study thus shows how self-imposed seclusion was used in early imperial literature to express different kinds of nonconformist elite individuality in the face of an unsympathetic society that was not felt to share the outsider's moral, political or occupational commitments. In so doing, it provides further insight into a period of turbulent change for Rome's upper classes that left elite individuals in a variety of social and political situations experiencing or being thought to experience profound alienation from Roman society as a whole. Through its focus on physical self-seclusion and social estrangement, this study thus contributes to a history of the cultural significance of social and spatial withdrawal from society prior to its greater prominence in late-antiquity with the rise of Christian monasticism.⁷

⁶ E.g., Modell (1993), Koch (1994), France (1998), Colegate (2002), Spacks (2003), Barbour (2004), Slaughter (2005), Webb (2007), Taylor (2009), Bending (2013), Worsley (forthcoming) and Kachuck (forthcoming). For a range of approaches extending into psychology and the social sciences, see Coplan and Barker (2014).

⁷ On the history of late antique monasticism, see references at Caner (2009) 600. Athanasius' *Life of Antony* (written ca. 357-62) was a key influence on the association of monasticism with physical withdrawal (cf. *Ant.* 3.2, 14.7, 50.2).

1. Seclusion and Estrangement as Symbolic Behaviour

This project examines how the belief of an author or a figure in a text that they or someone else is socially alienated sometimes conditions how this alienated person is portrayed in physical or metaphorical space. Thus, its focus is not on observable behaviour itself, but on documenting an instance of how interpretations affect how observable behaviour is represented.⁸ According to Geertz's semiotic theory of culture, social life is made up of observable behaviour, events, processes and so on. Following a phenomenological approach, what Geertz calls 'thin description', scholars may document the incidence of a particular type of behaviour in this manner and reach many illuminating conclusions.⁹

For Roman readers, written accounts of someone's voluntary movement from a space occupied or associated with a group of people to another space not thus occupied or associated is a form of observable behaviour that is apprehended through an author's verbal description. This is so even if the movement takes place in metaphorical space when figurative movement such as withdrawal into the self does not purport to represent action that is physically observable. Written accounts of such withdrawal movements through literal or figurative space occur innumerable times in our surviving sources from the early imperial period. Such movements and the travelling person's subsequent positioning may be associated with any number of interpretations, both in relation to their spatial orientation as well as with respect to their social motivations more broadly. In the former case, for instance, interpretations may discern between forced or voluntary movement away from a group of people. With respect to social motives, to

⁸ This approach draws on some of the basic features of the 'semiotic theory of culture', on which see Geertz (1973) esp. 1-30. Roller (2010b) 238-46, applies this approach to studying Roman culture.

⁹ Geertz (1973) 6-7.

develop the latter example from the previous sentence, withdrawal motion away from a group of people that is deemed voluntary may be linked to a wide range of contexts such as ill-health, a need for rest or intellectual concentration, or alienation from others. Yet, from a phenomenological point of view, all of these actions are the same.

'Thick description', on the other hand, is the attempt to interpret what social behaviour means to those who undertake the action, and to other members of that society who encounter this behaviour. In other words, thick description attempts to place the action in a meaningful context, to explain its significance to those involved, and thereby to provide insight into how a particular society works.¹⁰ This sort of thick description of a particular type of social behaviour thus interprets the meaning of the event, not the event itself. Consequently, thick description forms a fallible interpretation that provides a meaningful context for a type of observable behaviour, not an abstract system of thought that has been severed from concrete instances of the behaviour.¹¹

This project takes the form of this sort of thick description. It does not directly examine the myriad accounts of someone's voluntary movement from a space occupied or associated with a large group of people to another space that does not bear these associations, a common and often unremarkable behaviour. Rather, it is concerned with a small subset of this behaviour to which some Romans of the early empire attached two interrelated forms of interpretation that following sections of this chapter will explore at greater length. That is, it focuses on when Romans of the imperial period viewed an individual's movement away from a group or external entity and his subsequent stance as an effort to seclude himself spatially from what he left behind and when, in

¹⁰ Geertz (1973) 4, 14-15, 26, Roller (2010b) 238-39.

¹¹ Geertz (1973) 5, 16-18, 20-25, 29.

their view, this self-isolation signified the secluded person's social estrangement from this group or external entity. In such circumstances, this project examines the social contexts within which Romans interpreted this symbolic behaviour as occurring and analyzes how the representations of the space that these voluntary outcasts occupy both reflect and reveal the interpretations of their social estrangement.

2. Solitude, Distance, and Physical Behaviour

Terms such as seclusion and distance are often used in a straightforward sense as if they are always objective and verifiable. For instance, in English, one can speak of measuring the distance between two geographical locations, and terms like solitude in a domestic context may imply a verifiable state of living alone and a quantifiable lack of interactions with others. However, such concepts are subjective and evaluative. Thus, depending on one's perspective, a geographical location may appear more or less distant from another, and an evaluation of someone's domestic seclusion depends on the assessment criteria of the person who is analyzing the situation. In other words, whether or not they are accompanied by any explicit interpretive statements, it is already an act of interpretation to identify the spatial behaviour that this project examines, that is, someone's choice to spatially seclude himself. For this reason, literary accounts of voluntary seclusion are not simply the unmediated raw material that Geertz terms observable behaviour.

In the context of this project's focus on social estrangement, seclusion is defined here as spatial separation from others, primarily spatial distance from those from whom the withdrawn person seeks to seclude himself, with some sort of barrier impeding regular interaction, such as a wall, a strait, or what is felt to be a considerable amount of intervening space. Such spatial separation

and distance can appear in representations of either physical or metaphorical space. Evidence of seclusion in a literary account depends on whether or not the author or a figure in his text asserts the existence of this spatial relationship. This can be explicit, such as when Tacitus repeatedly emphasizes Tiberius' preference for solitude, or implicit, when readers' knowledge of the context of a spatialized portrait reveals to them that certain aspects that produce a sense of isolation are highlighted while other circumstances that would disturb such an effect are elided, also a feature of Tacitus' account of Tiberius' withdrawal to Capri (ch. 5.4).

Since seclusion is subjective and evaluative, it can be identified in situations with widely varying scales of space between the recluse and the community that he leaves behind. Physical separation can take place on a regional scale, illustrated by the example of Tiberius, who leaves Rome for the Bay of Naples and crosses over to the nearby island of Capri. Yet, much smaller intervals of space between an individual and a social group could also signify an estrangement no less profound. In Tacitus' *Dialogus*, for instance, Maternus describes the imperial advocate's relegation to solitudinous back rooms (*Dial.* 39.1 *auditoria et tabularia*) as a symbol of his irrelevance to the general public (ch. 4). While Maternus does not offer precise locations for these places, it is clear from context that they are somewhere in Rome, and thus not especially far in practical terms from the public that fails to attend his orations, especially when compared to Tiberius' withdrawal to Capri. Indeed, no physical distance at all is necessary. As chapter 2 and 3 illustrate, several writers of the early imperial period with either Stoic or Epicurean inclinations imagine the adoption of a morally ascetic attitude as a withdrawal into the metaphorical space of the self. As the Stoic writers argue, a key benefit of this spiritual self-seclusion is that it permits ascetics to continue participating in community life. The Stoic moral

adept can attain the inner relief of spiritual solitude anywhere, even in amidst a crowd. Seclusion, then, is an interpretive spatial orientation that can appear in any location or scale of space.

At the same time, as a subjective property of spatial behaviour, seclusion is not the same kind of interpretation as social estrangement. Estrangement is an abstract social relationship. It can be found in any number of concrete situations of which spatialized self-seclusion is one. Likewise, as an interpretive spatial orientation, seclusion can be connected to a variety of social contexts such as ill health, old age, temporary estrangement, or this project's focus, permanent estrangement. Thus, this project analyzes the interrelationship between two different kinds of interpretation that can be attached to spatialized behaviour, namely, the relationship between seclusion as a subjective spatial orientation and estrangement as a social context for that behaviour.

Interpretations about the social significance of someone's behaviour can influence how their movements are interpreted and represented.¹² Someone's belief that they themselves or another person is socially estranged from a group can lead them to identify and represent the person in question as spatially distant from that group. That is, identifying an individual's social relationship with a group as being distant can influence how this individual's spatial placement in relation to the group is perceived, sometimes leading him to be portrayed as physically or metaphorically detached from the group. For instance, both Domitian and Trajan occupied the Domus Flavia on the Palatine, yet Pliny's claim that Domitian was a tyrant leads him to portray the palace under his reign as a terrifying and inaccessible fortress, while he praises Trajan as a

¹² On spatial distance in this context, see Schnall (2011), Förster and Liberman (2011) 114.

collegial emperor in part by representing the same structure during his rule as enthusiastically frequented by the emperor's loyal subjects (ch. 5, sections 1 and 3).

Consequently, emphasis on someone's spatial distance and seclusion from others can serve as important evidence that their physical or metaphorical setting symbolically manifests their social estrangement, particularly when physical distance and seclusion are used to describe a space in a way that departs from observable reality. This is because instances of self-imposed isolation are not always accompanied by the numerous, explicitly interpretive statements such as those made by individuals at the time as well as those by later Roman writers that associate Tiberius' retirement to Capri with his fraught relations with the senate and people of Rome (ch. 5.4). At times, such as in Statius' description of Pollius Felix and his villa in *Silvae* 2.2 (ch. 3), the author's description of an individual's estrangement from an external group is less detailed or explicit, while his account of the subject's spatial environment conveys more information about this issue in an indirect manner.

3. Social Estrangement as an Interpretation

Estrangement constitutes an interpretive social context that may be ascribed to observable behaviour interpreted as physical or metaphorical self-seclusion in order to make greater sense of this reclusive behaviour. In the context of this project, estrangement is defined as a situation when an individual accords little value to the goals or beliefs that a community that he is affiliated with places a high value upon, marking this individual as deviating in a profound and

consistent way from the norms and conventions of that community.¹³ As a consequence of this difference in values, the individual limits his interactions with the group.

Despite appearances to the contrary, estrangement is a social relationship. 'Markedness' theory helps to illustrate how the estranged person relies on an in-group to express his outsider identity. The terms 'marked' and 'unmarked' originate in the field of linguistics in the early twentieth century but have since come to be used in a broader social sense as concepts that are useful for distinguishing between normal (unmarked) and unconventional (marked) behaviour.¹⁴ In their original linguistic context, the unmarked term is treated as the default, typically taking priority over the marked word, which is treated as a deviation from the unmarked norm.

The social usage of these concepts facilitates making a similar distinction. When used in its social sense, calling something unmarked refers to an 'in-group' whose identity is projected as the norm, typically unchallenged.¹⁵ One common example of an unmarked form of identity in Roman literature is the politically active elite male citizen, whose normality often goes unquestioned. On the other hand, social markedness describes a distinguishing characteristic that differentiates the subject from an otherwise similar (unmarked) group. Marking produces a secondary form of identity that relies on the unmarked in-group for its definition. This is because marked and unmarked identities create meaning differentially. In other words, these two qualities

¹³ Cf. Seeman (1959) 788-89. This focus on persistent estrangement as an interpretation excludes self-imposed seclusion that is thought to represent estrangement that is merely temporary, such as the brief respite from public responsibilities that Pliny associates with the seclusion of his Laurentine villa (*Ep.* 2.17, esp. 20-24).

¹⁴ See Andrews (1990) and Battistella (1990).

¹⁵ Cf. Chandler and Munday (2016) s.v. 'exnomination'.

are reciprocally dependent on each other for establishing their individual meanings. As noted above, unmarked identity is the norm and as such, on its own, it is often not defined very clearly.

Marked behaviour helps to articulate the nature of the unmarked group by showing the latter's definitional limits. In Juvenal's third satire, for instance, the long tirade that his character Umbricius delivers against Rome as he prepares to withdraw to Cumae sheds light on the society that he leaves behind.¹⁶ Umbricius' tendentious self-presentation as an honest Roman man of modest means who has no place in Rome (*Sat.* 3.21-57) casts society there as overwhelmingly dishonest and corrupt, brought about in no small part by an influx of Greek immigration that has polluted the City (*Sat.* 3.60-61).

In turn, marking can only perform its function by distinguishing the subject from some in-group. Without a relevant context, there can be no distinction. Thus in Umbricius' case, Juvenal can only portray him as an outsider by depicting his estrangement from Roman society. The focus of this project is on occasions when an individual willingly distinguishes himself as estranged, a strong form of marking. This distinction sets the subject apart as unconventional, anomalous, sometimes even deviant. On this basis, instances of exile are excluded from this study, since they reflect involuntary social and physical detachment from a group.¹⁷

¹⁶ See e.g. Anderson (1982) 219-31, and Braund (1989) 26-39.

¹⁷ The line between voluntary and involuntary self-seclusion was sometimes blurry under the early empire. Seneca terms the Republican icon Scipio Africanus' withdrawal an *exilium voluntarium* (*Ep.* 86.3) and emperors sometimes exercised coercion beneath a veil of informal advice (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 4.44.3, 14.22.1-3, Epictet. *Diss.* 1.2.19-22). This project addresses instances of self-seclusion influenced by external pressures short of formal legal sanctions such as exile.

For this voluntary estrangement to be meaningful, the self-detaching individual must first be perceived to have an affiliation with the in-group in order to be able to renounce it. In the case of estrangement from public life, for example, one must typically be involved in public life before one rejects it. When the emperor Tiberius withdraws to Capri, for instance, he is the leader of the Roman civic community, the group he estranges himself from, no small part of why his withdrawal has drawn so much perplexed attention ever since it took place. By contrast, people who are excluded from the in-group cannot credibly claim to remove themselves from it. In the case of public life, for instance, with rare exceptions, groups such as women, foreigners, and slaves were systematically excluded from direct participation, removing self-estrangement as a plausible interpretation for why they did not participate in this part of Roman society.

Nevertheless, sometimes men of lower status adopt an estranged stance towards a group with whom they are only tenuously affiliated, at least in part with the goal of claiming a status equal to or greater than that enjoyed by the group members. Such a social strategy is effective at boosting their status - absent conspicuous signs that contradict it - because claiming estrangement implies prior membership in the group or sufficient status for membership, and it simultaneously diminishes the status of the group by its rejection.¹⁸ For instance, in Juvenal's third satire, his character Umbricius' diatribe about his upcoming departure from Rome unwittingly reveals that he is washed up, unable to successfully achieve a respectable status and

¹⁸ This social strategy imitates the emperors and their coterie, who sometimes declined public honors that they felt were inappropriate or beneath them. Despite frequently being couched in the language of modesty, such refusal of honors nonetheless augmented the status of the refuser, what Suetonius calls the *gloria recusandi* (*Iul.* 79.1). Petronius' freedman Trimalchio provides a non-spatial instance of ambitious imitation of this behaviour when he imagines (71.12) his epitaph (falsely) declaring in phrasing typical of an equestrian that he was a freedman of Maecenas who declined offers of membership in the *decuriae* at Rome. On the elite recusatory pose, see Wallace-Hadrill (1982) 36-37 and Sumi (2011) 89-93. On Trimalchio's inept imitation, see D'Arms (1981) 108-16, Bodel (1989) 226, and Schmeling (2011) 300-2.

income in Rome.¹⁹ Once readers realize this, it becomes clear that Umbricius has represented his withdrawal from the City as a 'real Roman's' principled rejection of a corrupted Roman society in order to obscure the fact that he has given up struggling to maintain his marginal place in that same society.

By limiting this project's focus to instances of self-seclusion that were understood to reflect persistent social estrangement, a variety of other interpretations are excluded that were used to make sense of this spatial behaviour. For instance, while counselling Lucilius on how to conceal a philosophical withdrawal (*Ep.* 68.10), Seneca lists infirmity and poor health as good reasons for withdrawing from public life and the spaces associated with it that others will not interpret as disregard for the values of the community.²⁰ While poor health might come at any time of life, old age with its attendant fragility and diminished abilities was a common cause for secluding oneself that did not imply deep-seated differences between the retiring person and those he was leaving behind.²¹ Indeed, Tacitus reports that Seneca himself tried to conceal the more practical, political reasons for his withdrawal during Nero's reign in part by alleging old age and concomitant ill health.²²

¹⁹ E.g. Geue (2015) 786-87. Cf. Seneca's discussion (*Ep.* 68.3-6) of withdrawals aimed at acquiring society's attention.

²⁰ Seneca also suggests idleness (*desidia*) as an excuse for withdrawal from public life, though elsewhere pleasure and leisure are often associated with rejecting participation in community life. Seneca mentions idleness at *Ep.* 68.10 since others will interpret it as a less offensive rejection of public life than adherence to philosophy.

²¹ Stein-Hölkeskamp (2003) 328-330. See e.g. Riggsby (1998) 85-97, Gibson and Morello (2012) 220.

²² Tac. *Ann.* 14.54.2-3, 14.56.3, 15.45.3. The emperor Nero accepts Seneca's claim of old age as a rationale for retirement but denies that Seneca is so feeble as to justify his request. (*Ann.* 14.56.1). Seneca also includes philosophy and intellectual activity as an inoffensive pretext for retirement (*Ann.* 14.53.4, 14.56.3), yet as chapters 2-4 illustrate, such activity could be viewed as profoundly opposed to the values of the community, leading to the intellectual's withdrawal from society at large.

Since this project's focus is on enduring estrangement as a social (non-)relationship, it addresses self-seclusion in a variety of different social contexts when these contexts mark the secluded individual as estranged. Yet instances of self-seclusion within the same social context do not necessarily lead to interpretations of estrangement by the participant or by observers.²³ For instance, as chapter 5 discusses at length, several authors associate Tiberius and Domitian's propensity for solitude with their alienation from society, yet emperors could distance themselves from others without this behaviour being interpreted as an expression of alienation from others. Suetonius, for instance, reports that when Augustus wanted solitude and freedom from interruptions, he sought out a lofty, self-contained place that he called his "Syracuse and his nook" (*Aug. 72.2 Syracusas et τεγύριον*) or the suburban estate of one of his freedmen. While Augustus' idiosyncratic description of his secluded study may evoke associations of the famous retreats of the Syracusan tyrants and the workshop of Archimedes, nothing in Suetonius' account suggests that Augustus sought such solitude out of disaffection for some group such as the senate or Roman society as a whole. Suetonius merely records Augustus' fondness for this location when he wanted to engage in activity alone, in all likelihood some form of private business, in distinction from public affairs.²⁴ The differing meanings that authors derive from the physical isolation of Augustus, Tiberius, and Domitian in these examples illustrate that the same sort of physical withdrawal from others is subject to a variety of interpretations, of which social

²³ In the examples of Seneca discussed above, we have seen that the same social context for a withdrawal is sometimes understood as a type of estrangement, while sometimes it is not interpreted this way. At *Ep.* 68.10, Seneca advises Lucilius to conceal a withdrawal motivated by philosophy by alleging other causes, while at *Ann.* 14.56.3, Tacitus has Seneca allege philosophy among other things as a pretext to withdraw from public life, while Tacitus asserts that Seneca's true motives were concerns about his eroding political influence. Thus, in Seneca's letter, philosophy is a form of estrangement, while in Tacitus' account it is not.

²⁴ Op. cit. Gowers (2010) 86-87, who suggests that Augustus' names for his study may have, "played the Romans' longing for escapism and transcendence off against their practical imperialist ambitions and Augustus' desire for isolation off against his dynastic strategies." Nevertheless, Gowers concludes that it may have been "a carefully calculated venue for *non-seriousness*" that highlighted Augustus' lack of aspirations for either tyranny or intellectual endeavour such as the Syracusan tyrants and Archimedes undertook, respectively.

estrangement is only one. The focus of this dissertation is restricted to self-imposed isolation only when it bears such an interpretation.

4. *Estrangement, Leisure, and the Private Domain*

Based on the examples discussed above, the social setting adopted by the estranged individual appears restricted at times to the private domain, and it can sometimes closely resemble a lifestyle characterized by leisure (*otium*). For instance, Tacitus reports that upon his withdrawal to Capri, Tiberius sloughed off public cares and gave himself over to a wicked form of leisure (*Ann. 4.67.3 publicae curae...malum otium*). While this project's conception of estrangement often closely engages with both of these cultural spheres, they nevertheless have a limited overlap with the concept of social estrangement as it relates to self-imposed seclusion.

Both leisure (*otium*) and Roman conceptions of the private domain of life are broad, subjective cultural categories that incorporate social contexts in which self-isolation and estrangement are not at issue, and they also fail to address other situations in which these behaviours occur.²⁵ The cultural domains of *otium* and private life were used to refer to a wide range of social situations. Both terms could be associated with solitary behaviour as well as an individual's disregard for the values and behaviour associated with their opposites, *negotium* and the public realm, as illustrated by the case of Tiberius noted above, but they also comprised many activities that were considered to be neither solitary nor expressive of someone's alienation from others.

²⁵ For a discussion of the multiple conceptualizations of the private domain under the empire, see Winterling (2009) 58-76. The standard treatment of *otium* is still André (1966), though he restricts his focus to intellectual and moral issues and his account only extends down to the reign of Augustus. The forthcoming monograph of Wiegandt promises to analyze the various meanings of the term and to address their significance within the early empire.

Further, *otium* and the private domain do not encompass certain instances of self-isolation and social estrangement, which can take place in the context of *negotium* and public life. As chapter 4 illustrates, for instance, Curiatius Maternus in Tacitus' *Dialogus* describes the advocate's alienation from society in Flavian Rome by portraying him delivering his truncated little speeches before a veritable solitude in cramped little rooms (*Dial.* 39.1, 4 *auditoria et tabularia...velut in solitudine*). In this situation, it is the modern advocate's adherence to forensic oratory, a key part of public life and one of the elite man's principal *negotia* that reflects his estrangement from the tastes of the public, who no longer value it. The concepts of *otium* and private life are also difficult to apply to psychic withdrawal, for as chapter 2 illustrates, psychic withdrawal can provide a social setting that offers privacy and a form of leisure while simultaneously permitting a sustained engagement with the public and professional sides of life. Estrangement is thus a versatile social (non-)relationship that often associates the outsider with these two cultural spheres, but which also appears within or extends beyond their ambit in ways that limit their utility as heuristic tools for this project.

5. *Connecting Space to Identity*

Latin's spatialized metaphors for thought permitted Romans to use physical distance to structure their conception of someone whose core values differed from a group's core values. According to the metaphorical concept *ideas are locations*, Latin uses movement and position within physical space (source domain) in order to structure different types of mental activity (target domain).²⁶ Movement towards an 'idea location' structures acquiring new knowledge, shifting attention to a

²⁶ On this metaphor in Latin, see Short (2008). While metaphorical concepts are encountered most closely in language, they originate at the cognitive level. This is because certain more abstract things are *conceived* of in terms of other, more comprehensible things. As a consequence, metaphorical concepts are often not isolated comparisons found in a small group of words and expressions. Instead, they frequently form coherent systems with large, unfixed vocabularies. Short (forthcoming) applies conceptual metaphor theory to an anthropological study of Roman culture.

new concept or adopting an idea as one's opinion (e.g. *accedere in sententiam*). Staying in one place represents continued attention paid to an idea, or sustained adherence to it (e.g. *constantia*). Movement away from an idea location, the most important action for the purposes of this project, structures shifting attention away from a thought, or transferring allegiance away from an idea (e.g. *de sententia decedere, consilio desistere*). In addition, the degree of movement towards or away from an idea location structures the degree or duration of someone's adherence to or dissent from a concept. Therefore, movement farther away and greater self-distancing from an idea location structure a correspondingly more emphatic rejection of the idea.

The metaphor *ideas are locations* illustrates how the 'social place' of an estranged person is at a distance from the social group that he is detached from. The social outsider perceives himself or is perceived by others to place little value on goals or beliefs that a group that he is associated with places a high value upon. In other words, the estranged person thinks differently from the group, in a consistent manner. In his description of the *ideas are locations* conceptual metaphor, Short shows how Latin speakers understood different types of thought in spatial terms, including deeply held opinions and values, such as long-term memory or expressing one's views in the senate. Thus, the *ideas are locations* metaphor accommodates estrangement, as a sustained attitude that is deeply felt. According to this model, spatial self-distancing structures a feeling of estrangement from others.

Latin terms for people who are socially alienated (in a more expansive sense than this project examines) can reflect this spatial structuring, figuring them as belonging 'elsewhere'. Two well-known instances of this tendency in Latin literature will help make this clear. As a 'new man'

from Arpinum, Cicero encountered elitist condescension more than a few times in his career. In Sallust's account of the Catilinarian conspiracy in 63 BCE, the patrician Catiline contemptuously referred to Cicero as an *inquilinus* (BC 31.7 "lodger").²⁷ Normally, the term *inquilinus* describes someone who is lodging on property that he does not own.²⁸ Thus, the *inquilinus* is someone who does not have strong ties to his current location, for he is from elsewhere. Similarly, the next year, Cicero noted in court that his opponent had called him a *peregrinus rex* (Sull. 22-23 "foreign king") because he was from a *municipium*.²⁹ In both cases, the insult was superficially based on Cicero's municipal origins in Arpinum, a little over 100 kilometres from Rome. However, this city had long been well-integrated into the Roman state. The insults directed at Cicero were primarily a result of elitist scorn that a man of such comparatively little prestige was advancing in public life. The hyperbolic references to his geographical origins help articulate to those listening or reading that Cicero is not part of the social in-group.³⁰

In his prologue, by contrast, Persius adopts the outsider label voluntarily. Declaring his lack of association with the traditional places of poetic inspiration, Persius says that he brings his poem as a "half-villager" (*Pr. 6 semipaganus*) to the rites of the bards. This expression is based on the fact that villagers (*pagani*) were admitted to the sacred rites (*Paganalia*) of their rural communities.³¹ Persius states his semi-affiliation with conventional poetry past and present

²⁷ Catiline urges the senate not to believe that he, a patrician who has performed many good services for the Roman people, had any need to overthrow the state, while Marcus Tullius was saving it, "a citizen lodger (*inquilinus civis*) in the city of Rome"

²⁸ Isid. *Orig.* 9.4.37 "lodgers" (*inquilini*) are so called as if it were 'inhabitants of others' property' (*incolentes aliena*). The difference between a lodger and a resident alien (*advenam*) is that lodgers are emigrants who do not remain in perpetuity while resident aliens are termed foreign inhabitants (*incolae adventicii*) but who remain permanently."

²⁹ The insult of 'king' was based on the perception that Cicero had behaved imperiously while consul in 63 BCE.

³⁰ Ramsey (1984) 153, Berry (1996) 182.

³¹ Gildersleeve (1903) 73, Lee and Barr (1987) 65.

through the term *semipaganus*, which suggests that he is not wholly attached to poetry's 'country club', for he also belongs elsewhere. Thus, Latin speakers could use spatial concepts such as distance and withdrawal in order to understand social estrangement.

6. *Psychic Withdrawal and Metaphorical Space*

At times, imperial Roman writers exploit this association and structure feelings of estrangement as a figurative, psychic withdrawal in metaphorical space in order to articulate this social stance with greater nuance and clarity, regardless of whether or not the estranged person also secludes himself in physical space. In this schema, corresponding to the *ideas are locations* metaphor noted above, the individual or some aspect of his personality can be conceived of as a mobile entity whose movements reflect its allegiances. Its withdrawal from people, things, or reified attitudes expresses its rejection of them in favour of a different set of values.³² For instance, in his first speech in Tacitus' *Dialogus*, Curiatius Maternus describes the poet's mental retreat (*Dial.* 12.1 *secedit animus* "the mind withdraws") from the disruptions of public life in the City to the groves and clearings of poetry in order to articulate the poet's renunciation of any ambition of seeking fame directly from the approbation of Roman society. Instead, the poet's psychic retreat to this metapoetic *locus amoenus* expresses his prioritization of the literary tradition, whose inspiring powers will endow him with status and reputation, first within the realms of literature, and ultimately within contemporary society as well (see ch. 4.3).

At the same time as the individual or some part of him is pictured as a mobile entity, other parts of an individual or the entire person can also be conceived of as a metaphorical location that this

³² For the mind and ontological metaphors in English, see Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) 25, 58, 148, 152, (1980b) 196. For ontological metaphors in Latin, see Fedriani (2014) and (2016). For the same issue in Seneca, a key author for chapter 2, see Armisen-Marchetti (1991) 121-22, Bartsch (2009) 201-4.

mobile entity retreats to. Dio Chrysostom, for instance, promotes retreat into the self (*Or.* 20.8 εἰς ἑαυτὸν) as an effective alternative to withdrawal to a variety of physical locations, figuring a Stoic asceticism that prioritizes personal moral progress over all other aspects of life as a metaphorical withdrawal into one's own self.³³ Based on our sense that our thoughts are inherently private, unless we share them with others, the self can be pictured as some form of secluded container, endowed with an interior, exterior, and an intervening boundary. Given the embodied nature of our thinking, the most basic form of this spatialized metaphor locates the self in a container-like location somewhere within the body, physically set apart from other disfavoured bodily forces, such as fear or anger, and sheltered by a surrounding layer of body-mass from the outside world (see esp. ch. 2.3).³⁴ By analogy, Romans could also imagine the self as occupying more structured types of secluded, sheltered spaces such as a fortress (see chs. 2.4 and 3.3.2.2). This spatialized conception of the self allows Anglophones to speak of 'interiority' and 'innermost thoughts' and Latin and Greek speakers to use similar terms such as *intus* and ἔνδον 'within' to speak about the self, in distinction from 'outside' (*foris*, ἔξω) reality.

20th-century philosophers, however, such as Wittgenstein have debunked the longstanding belief that individuals have a private inner language, consequently undermining corresponding beliefs in an inner world of ideas that is separate from external reality.³⁵ Therefore, metaphors of the self secluded within the body do not correspond to modern theoretical understandings of the individual's relation to language and society, yet as this project demonstrates, such a metaphor can nevertheless reveal much about a culture that conceived of the individual in such terms.

³³ Cf. *Or.* 20.1-14 with Festugière (1954) 61-62. See also chapter 2.

³⁴ On the self as a spatialized container, cf. Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) 29-30, 58, 148, 214, Bartsch (2009) 201-2.

³⁵ Cary (2011) 122, 133.

Several different parts of this project illustrate how certain Roman authors of the early empire picture the self or the soul as such a spatialized refuge, which is secluded from other bodily forces and from external reality.³⁶ In this schema, the individual or some part of his personality is thus both mobile entity and the location to which this entity retreats, a metaphorical image that expresses the individual's fidelity to an essential part of himself and his estrangement from the people, things, and attitudes that lie outside of this metaphorical refuge. Thinking about the soul or essential self as both a moving agent and as the isolated destination of this entity's inner retreat, therefore, allowed imperial Roman authors to better articulate a subject's profound disagreement with his community, an abstract and intangible yet nevertheless real part of his life experience.

7. From Social Space to Physical Space

Romans' ability to conceive of social estrangement through abstract spatial distance and the metaphors of withdrawal they sometimes used to articulate alienation influenced the way that they could make sense of physical behaviour in the real world or as described in a written account.³⁷ Based on this spatialized way of thinking about social relations, it makes intuitive sense that someone who is thought to be physically secluded could also be seen as socially isolated.³⁸ Humans are cognitively structured to recognize correspondences between different

³⁶ See chs. 2, 3.3.2.2, 4.2 and 5.2.

³⁷ Conversely, how people perceive and make sense of physical behaviour undoubtedly influences the mental models they use to make sense of social relationships such as estrangement; see Förster and Liberman (2011) 112-14.

³⁸ When spatialized thinking about social relations is transferred to physical space, the relationship between the source domain and the target domain changes from one of structuring (metaphor) to reference (metonymy). Spatial distance and separation no longer structure our conception of social estrangement but refer to it. For the transformation of conceptual metaphors in Latin into metonymy when they use real-world space as a source domain, see Short (2008) 120-26.

kinds of distance, such as social distance and physical distance as discussed here,³⁹ and so Romans were able to recognize and interpret pronounced seclusion and distance from others as a symbol of enduring social estrangement.

This was not a determinative relationship whereby conceptual associations constrained Romans to act in certain ways. Rather, the spatialized conception of social relations was one interpretive tool among many that they had at their disposal when they sought to construe physical behaviour. While nothing compelled them to recognize and represent this social-physical symmetry in their speech, thought, and writing, when they did produce such a consistency between these two domains, their written descriptions of a self-secluding person's physical behaviour form a spatial language from which their readers were able to derive interpretive information.

The spatialized mnemonic technique of 'memory locations' in Roman oratory provides evidence of how rhetorically educated Romans were trained to associate conceptual difference with separation and seclusion in imagined physical space.⁴⁰ According to this technique, suitable for aiding either the composition or the delivery of a speech, orators create a mental representation of a physical location where they locate images or symbols that represent the knowledge that they wish to retrieve. Since speeches are long and intricate, orators need many such spaces, and so they are instructed to conceive of a physical location with many discrete 'sub-locations', such as a house with many individual rooms.

³⁹ Förster and Liberman (2011) 110-11.

⁴⁰ Such locations could be completely imaginary or based on a real-world location. On the use of memory locations in Roman oratory, see Vasaly (1993) 96-104, 125-128, 130, Small (1997) 95-115 and (2007) 195-202, and Short (2008) 120-21.

The orator must construct his memory location in such a way that when he mentally visits it, he will be able to find the symbol that he left there and to recall the key information that he associated with the symbol. In order to avoid confusing the symbol with its surroundings, the unknown author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* advises

"it is better to procure locations in a forsaken area than in a crowded one since a multitude of men that mills about disrupts and weakens the impress of the images. Solitude preserves the shapes of the likenesses whole." (*Rhet. Her.* 3.31 *Commodius est in derelicta, quam in celebri regione locos conparare, propterea quod frequentia et obambulatio hominum conturbat et infirmat imaginum notas, solitudo conservat integras simulacrorum figuras.*)

The author is concerned here with the potential for visual, and hence semantic distraction due to a crowded memory location. In other words, the proximity of other objects that are not present for the sake of recollection is liable to disrupt the process in which the orator visualizes himself physically approaching the memory object and reacquiring the knowledge that he has stored there.

The author's solution for this predicament implicitly draws on an orientational metaphor that uses physical distance to structure conceptual difference, which also subtends the metaphorical concept *ideas are locations* discussed above.⁴¹ In this passage of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the author's advice is predicated on the notion that secluding the memory token in a forsaken location will make clear that the token does not have a close relationship with anything in its vicinity and that it alone is the object that the orator is looking for. By contrast, the author's comments imply that if the orator visits a crowded memory location, the crowd's proximity to the memory token will make it difficult for the orator to recognize that the token does not have a

⁴¹ For orientational metaphors in Latin, see Garcia-Jurado (2000) and Fedriani (2016).

close relationship with this crowd and thus that it is not also part of this background tableau. Given that a large part of the Roman elite received oratorical training, memory locations thus provide evidence that many educated Romans were familiar with rhetorical techniques that encouraged them to mentally plot conceptual difference onto secluded physical spaces.⁴²

8. Conclusion

This project is a study of when spatial self-seclusion in the literature of the early Roman empire is interpreted as a sign of enduring social estrangement. Seclusion is a subjective interpretation of observable behaviour that identifies an individual as spatially separated from others, with an obstacle interposed that impedes regular association with those other people. As an interpretive spatial orientation, it can appear in a wide variety of settings and scales of space. Seclusion can also be associated with a variety of social contexts, one of which is social estrangement, a situation in which someone ascribes little or no worth to the values deeply held by a group that he is affiliated with, leading him to limit his interactions with that group. As a social (non-)relationship, estrangement often associates an individual with the cultural sphere of leisure and the private domain, yet these fields of cultural life accommodate many other kinds of social relationships and social estrangement does not always mark an individual's preference for the private, otiose sides of Roman culture. The associations that Romans sometimes drew between self-seclusion and social estrangement were facilitated by the fact that Latin permitted them to conceptualize social relations in spatial terms, imagining estrangement in terms of spatial distance. At times, imperial Roman authors draw on these associations to express different forms of estrangement as a metaphorical withdrawal and self-seclusion. Given that Latin speakers were able to conceive of estrangement as a form of metaphorical distance and separation, it thus

⁴² Bergmann (1994) draws a suggestive parallel between Roman architectural mnemonics and domestic architecture, citing the former as a analogue for how the artistic programme of a Pompeian house creates a 'memory theatre'.

makes sense that they sometimes interpreted a written account of someone's physical seclusion as a symbol of his enduring social estrangement.

CHAPTER 2: PSYCHIC WITHDRAWAL INTO THE SELF IN IMPERIAL ROMAN STOICISM

Recede in te ipse quantum potes "Retreat into yourself, as much as you can"
(Seneca, *Epistulae Morales* 7.8).

Introduction

This chapter examines the motif of psychic withdrawal into the self as found in imperial Roman Stoic authors, when the individual retreats into himself in a spatialized manner, away from everything external to the self, where this retreat expresses the individual's profound and enduring alienation from the outside world.⁴³ It seeks to discover the nature of this inner, spiritual space, how it relates to and informs the moral discourse that it expresses, as well as how this spiritual refuge speaks to its early imperial context, particularly to the imperial narratives of alienation and physical withdrawal that will form the focus of chapters 3 and 5.

The motif of withdrawal into the self first appears clearly within Roman literature in Seneca, who also makes the greatest use of it in his writing, yet other, mostly Stoic authors of this period also employ this imagery at times.⁴⁴ Imperial Roman Stoics recognized extensive parallels between psychic retreat and its physical counterpart and sometimes argued that psychic self-seclusion was a more effective response to issues that ultimately were of an ethical nature. These accounts of mental retreat reflect a largely coherent set of conceptual metaphors that describe the moral journeys of different individuals at various stages of philosophical attainment. Viewed

⁴³ For the metaphor of withdrawal into the self, see Grilli (1953) 149-56, 210, 266-71, Festugière (1954) 58-65, Rabbow (1954) 91-100, Garbarino (1996) 283-85, Lotito (2001) 76-79, Sabato (2006) 233, Traina (2006a) 9-23, 50-66, Bartsch (2009) 201-4.

⁴⁴ The concept of the individual's metaphorical retreat into the self has its origins in the 5th and 4th century BCE philosophers Democritus and Plato, though its use and development by subsequent authors is largely obscure due to the loss of many texts (Grilli (1953) 149-56, Festugière (1954) 58-59, Cary (2011) 123-26). On retreat into the self in Seneca, see especially (Sabato (2006) 233, Traina (2006a) 14, 18, 63-64). Beyond Stoic writers, the first-century CE Neoplatonic philosopher Philo uses this image several times (*Leg.* 2.25, 2.85, *Prob. Lib.* 151-52), while Statius uses this image in a poem about an Epicurean friend (*Silv.* 2.2), addressed in chapter 3.3.2.2. In the high empire and late antiquity both the pagan Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus and the Christian Neoplatonist Augustine make use of this motif (Festugière (1954) 64-65, Cary (2003), (2011)).

together, these accounts relate a moral journey that begins with misbegotten efforts to retreat in the physical world before shifting to a steadier spiritual withdrawal into a secluded, and at times, fortified psychic refuge inside the body that articulates the Stoic's inner resolve to align his thoughts and actions to his moral commitments as he rejects both inner mental states and other individuals who would hinder this goal.

By figuring the assumption of an ascetic moral attitude as a retreat into the self, these metaphors highlight the centrality of this moral journey to individual identity and portray it as an often heroic, largely solitary endeavour whose success consists of persevering in one's moral commitments without aspiring to convert others. In turn, within the broader context of early imperial Rome, portraying this moral stance as a psychic retreat presents it as a more effective strategy than physical withdrawal for dealing with vulnerability to the emperor and to other powerful enemies. More broadly, the valorized Stoic portrait of spiritual retreat suggests that elites can achieve certain cherished cultural ideals through the solitary pursuit of wisdom even or especially when the customary means of achieving these objectives within the community had become less accessible under the principate.

1. Changing Physical Locations and Psychic Withdrawal

In a well-known topos of Roman moralists, writers disparage the efficacy of a disgruntled person's physical withdrawal, which is sometimes a simple change of location, and at others, a circular, repetitive journey that brings the traveler back to his original location one or more times.⁴⁵ These men restlessly change physical locations out of perpetual discontent with the

⁴⁵ On the origins of this belief, which dates back at least as far as the fifth century BCE, see Otto (1890) 61, La Penna (1993) 344-50, Garbarino (1996) 270n26, Abel (1997) 2.550, and Montiglio (2006) 563n33. Socrates is one distant source of this sentiment for Roman authors, though scholars disagree on its affiliation to the various post-

place that they are relinquishing or in the hopes that their new destination has what the old place lacks.⁴⁶ Every time, however, the withdrawal fails to fill the existential void, and ennui follows the discontented man wherever he flees. Analyzing this predicament, the moralists prescribe instead that these men distance themselves mentally from the spiritual source(s) of their discontent.

Out of the larger motif of physical travel motivated by spiritual disturbance, this section analyzes a subset of these accounts in which the Stoic philosopher Seneca describes restless changes of place that are brought on by harmful spiritual issues such as fear of death or insatiate desire.⁴⁷ One of Seneca's favoured solutions for this problem is for the self to withdraw to a secluded psychic location, which will prepare us to examine a wider array of psychic withdrawals in the rest of the chapter. These accounts thus demonstrate that Roman Stoics could recognize parallels between mental and physical retreat while identifying certain antagonizing moral issues best treated by self-distancing, and at times seclusion, in psychic, rather than physical space.

The common thread that runs through this topos is that men are mistaken about what they are fleeing. Their withdrawal from one physical location to another expresses their desire to rid themselves of the discontent that afflicts them. Yet the mistake they share is that they believe that the cause of their dissatisfaction lies in the physical place that they currently occupy. Hence, they leave one place for another, in the belief that this will free them from their malaise.

Socratic schools of philosophy and intellectual traditions (Sabato (2006) 227, 229). On the afterlife of classical expressions of this idea, see Tosi (1991) 48, and Sabato (2006) 228-29.

⁴⁶ μεμψιμοιρία 'blaming one's lot' denotes a variety of behaviors that express existential discontent, among which is included restlessly changing locations. On the origins of this topos, see Rudd (1966) 20-22, Fraenkel (1957) 92-94, and Nisbet-Hubbard (1970) 10-11.

⁴⁷ Parallels found in non-Stoic authors of the late-Republic and early empire are cited in the notes.

In these various episodes, Seneca and several other Roman moralists dismiss the efficacy of a physical retreat from one place to another while drawing attention to the terrain of the soul as the (micro-)space that is really at issue. Despite their beliefs to the contrary, these men are not antagonized by their physical environment or by those who occupy it, and consequently, their movements from one geographical location to another do nothing to diminish their persistent discontent; indeed, Seneca claims that the agitation from these peregrinations only makes things worse (*Ep.* 104.14).⁴⁸ Something within the soul is the cause of the problem.

These spiritually vexed men undertake a variety of physical journeys in their eagerness to escape the feeling of dissatisfaction that afflicts them. Closest to home, some quit the City's common spaces for their townhouse. Seneca describes men whose ambitions in public life are thwarted, leading them to flee to the seclusion (*Tranq.* 2.9 *solitudinem*) of their urban residence, whereupon they grow dissatisfied with this arrangement and undertake restless journeys all over Italy.⁴⁹ Others leave urban life behind for their villa in a nearby region. In letter 55, Seneca describes the quest of Servilius Vatia for *otium* and *inertia* at his seaside villa out of fear of political danger during the reign of Tiberius. Vatia's retreat brought him physical security, but little else, for after describing Vatia's villa, the philosopher exclaims, "yet location (*locus*) contributes little to tranquillity: it is the soul that furnishes itself with everything. I have seen gloomy men in a cheerful and pleasant villa and men in the middle of the wilderness (*in media*

⁴⁸ On the problem of travel-induced agitation, see also *Ep.* 28.2-3, and Chambert (2005) 205-8, 212-13.

⁴⁹ In Plut. *Tranq.* 466b-c, men afflicted with anger and fear flee the marketplace for 'quiet', which fails to placate them.

solitudine) who seemed like they were preoccupied (i.e. with business)" (*Ep.* 55.8).⁵⁰ The implication of Seneca's point here is that a retreat like Vatia's to a villa in Rome's vacation country is the wrong way to attain inner calm and freedom from fear. This lies in the power of the *animus*; physical isolation such as Vatia enjoyed has little to offer in this respect.

Such misguided travel could range further afield than Campania. In a vivid, extended description (*Tranq.* 2.13), Seneca relates how boredom and persistent dissatisfaction motivate a restless vacation circuit throughout Italy, from Rome to the delights of Campania, to the wilds of Bruttium and Lucania, to the regional luxury of Tarentum, and back to Rome again for the games. Several times we even hear of ill-conceived journeys extending across the sea, drawing Greece into the spiritually sick man's peregrinations.⁵¹ Physical travel, consequently, cannot bring spiritual relief.

As Seneca emphasizes, this is because we are the cause of our own dissatisfaction, not the places that we occupy or the people, lifestyle, and values that are found there. The problem is not external; rather, it arises within us (*Sen. Ep.* 104.21).⁵² This internal issue is often identified as disquiet, alongside an inability to reconcile oneself with present circumstances, instead of yearning for something and somewhere else. Roman writers cite a variety of disruptive emotions as the cause of these men's desire to change locations, ranging from sadness, fear of death,

⁵⁰ Cf. *Lucr.* 3.1053-75 for another image of retreat to a villa - and back to the City. For the sentiment in Seneca's work that spiritual change is a better solution for malaise than physical relocation, see Ramondetti (1999) 654, Padilla Carmona (1995) 39-183, von Albrecht (2000) 24-33, Traina (2006b).

⁵¹ See *Hor. Carm.* 1.11, 2.16.18-20, 3.1.37-40, *Sen. Ep.* 28.1-2, 82.4, 104.8, 104.19.

⁵² Restless travel indicates an unstable soul (*Sen. Ep.* 69.1).

boredom, worry and anger to desire and pleasure.⁵³ Seneca aptly sums up the numerous causes, saying, "the qualities...of the failing are countless, but there is one result, dissatisfaction with the self" (*Tranq.* 2.7). Stoicism posits a self-sufficient inner tranquility (ἀπάθεια 'freedom from suffering') as its optimal state, and so all manner of emotions that disrupt this spiritual calm can lead those who are misinformed about the cause of their inner turmoil to associate their ennui with their physical environment and consequently to change locations as an attempt at a solution for this disquiet.⁵⁴

Seneca and the other moralists sometimes express the problem in spatial terms in order to better illustrate the paradox. When the self is pictured as its own micro-scale of space, writers are empowered to represent physical travel as a futile change of location at the wrong scale of space, inasmuch as such movements bring no distance between the self and the source of dissatisfaction, for the problem lies within the space of the self. Using similar phrasing, Lucretius, Horace, and Seneca all describe the sick man's retreat as his soul's attempt to 'flee itself' (*se fugere, se effugere*), an inherently futile endeavour.⁵⁵ The reflexive language employed illustrates the paradoxical nature of this behavior, for the individual appears as both subject and object of the withdrawal motion, that is, as both the misinformed, mobile subject who attempts to flee his problems by physical relocation and, in his capacity as the source of his problems, as the location that is withdrawn from. The incongruous image conveys the spiritually vexed man's

⁵³ Fear: Lucr. 3.1053-75 with Kenney (2014) 225, Hor. *Carm.* 2.16.15, 3.1.37, Sen. *Ep.* 82.4, 104.19, Plut. *Tranq.* 466c; desire: Hor. *Carm.* 2.16.15-16, Sen. *Ep.* 104.13, 104.19-20, *Tranq.* 2.7-8, 2.10; disquiet: Hor. *Carm.* 2.16.21-24, 3.1.40, *Serm.* 2.7.114, *Epi.* 1.11.25-26, Sen. *Tranq.* 2.6, 2.10; gloom: Sen. *Ep.* 28.1, 82.4; pleasure: Sen. *Ep.* 104.13; anger: Sen. *Ep.* 104.13, 104.19, Plut. *Tranq.* 466c; love: Sen. *Ep.* 104.13; emotions: Sen. *Ep.* 104.17.

⁵⁴ Garbarino (1996) 269. For ἀπάθεια within the context of Stoicism, see Peters (1967) 18-19.

⁵⁵ Cf. Sabato (2006) 229-33. Lucr. 3.1068-69 (quoted approvingly at Sen. *Tranq.* 2.14) "This is the way that every man flees himself (*se...fugit*), yet it is evidently the case that he is incapable of effecting his escape". Similar

hopeless predicament.⁵⁶ A change of location is as unlikely to change one's character as a person's escaping a location when both person and location are one and the same.

Consequently, these writers continue, when the ailing man attempts his escape, his self pursues him and forcibly accompanies him, an onerous companion (Sen. *Tranq.* 2.14 *sequitur se ipse et urget gravissimus comes*).⁵⁷ In this metaphor, rather than picturing the self as a mobile agent attempting to flee the self-location, now the self is pictured as two mobile agents. The fleeing entity is the ailing traveller in his ignorance about the ethical issue that plagues him, while his burdensome companion embodies this individual's moral deficiency doggedly following the fleeing entity wherever he goes, as persistently as a person's character follows him, no matter what physical journey he undertakes. Much as with the image of the soul fleeing itself, by picturing the self as its own noxious companion, Roman authors illustrate the naive nature of the ailing traveller's attempts to escape his ennui by changing physical locations, for, by definition, the self is always its own companion. At the same time, however, the image of the self-as-companion often externalizes the problematic parts of the personality, holding out hope that the ailing man can distance himself from the negative parts of himself much as one might leave a noisome companion in the lurch.⁵⁸ However, such a result cannot be achieved through physical movement.

language at Hor. *Carm.* 2.16.18-20, *Epi.* 1.14.12-13, Sen. *NQ* 1 *pr.* 6. Cf. Plaut. *Trin.* 261, where the lover "puts himself to flight" (*fugat ipsus se*).

⁵⁶ Cicero conveys the absurdity of such behavior when he says that unnatural uses of the body such as walking on one's hands make a man appear "to flee himself" (*Fin.* 5.35 *fugere...se*) or to abjure human nature. Fleeing oneself is elsewhere associated with awareness of and the desire to forget one's misdeeds (Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1166b14, Sen. *Phoen.* 216), and disobeying reason and nature (Cic. *Rep.* 3.33).

⁵⁷ Sabato (2006), esp. 232-33. For the flawed self as a burdensome companion, see also Hor. *Serm.* 2.7.112-15, *Carm.* 3.1.38-40; Sen. *Ep.* 10.1, 28.1-2, 50.1, 82.4, 104.7, 104.17, 104.20; Plut. *Tranq.* 466c.

⁵⁸ This is particularly true when a writer creates a little distance between the self and its problematic companion through an ontological metaphor that reifies the moral issue-cum-fellow-traveller in terms such as 'care' or 'emotion',

At other times, the aspects of the vexed man's personality that antagonize him are externalized as burdens that he counterproductively brings with him on his travels. Seneca uses this image, picturing the mind's sadness and ennui as a noisome weight. He recounts that Socrates once said to a man lamenting the ineffectiveness of journeys at relieving such discontent "why are you surprised that your travels abroad do you no good when you are carrying yourself around?" (*Ep.* 28.2 *quid miraris nihil tibi peregrinationes prodesse, cum te circumferas?*).⁵⁹ Here, just as with the metaphor of the self-as-companion above, negative, undesirable properties of the self are pictured as lying outside the essential part of the self, particularly when the burden is described in terms other than the reflexive pronoun. Imagined as burdens, states of mind such as grief and fear of death appear to be secondary, separable parts of the self that may potentially be cast off, though physical travel manifestly fails to effect this.

As a solution to this inner dissatisfaction, Roman moralists often advise these disgruntled men in figurative terms to distance themselves from the problematic parts of the self in psychic, not physical space. The nature of figurative self-distancing depends on the precise metaphor that is being used. When the inner disturbance is pictured as a burden, Seneca advises that "the soul's burden (*onus animi*) should be set down - you will not enjoy any location before you do this" (*Ep.* 28.2).⁶⁰ Unburdened, the self achieves tranquillity.

rather than describing it using the reflexive personal pronoun, which emphasizes the shared identity of the self and its troublesome companion.

⁵⁹ For a similar image, see *Lucr.* 3.1053-59, *Sen. Ep.* 28.2-3 *passim*, 104.17, 104.19-20.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Lucr.* 3.1059; *Sen. Ep.* 28.2-3 *passim*, 104.20.

When the problematic parts of the self take the guise of a noxious companion, the ideal response to the presence of such a malignant internal fellow traveller is to leave it behind by effecting a successful retreat, preferably replacing it with better companions in the form of ethical models such as philosophers or men who lived morally exemplary lives, such as Socrates or Cato. For instance, Seneca advises that "if you would like to be relieved of your vices, you must withdraw (i.e. mentally) to a distance from examples of the vices. The miser, cheat, bully, fraudster, men who would have done you great harm from proximity, they are within you (*intra te sunt*). Switch to better companions..." (*Ep.* 104.21).⁶¹ However, such a result is often difficult and even the partial relief of being followed a little less closely would be desirable (*Ep.* 104.17 *Utinam quidem sequerentur! Longius abessent*). For these moralists, Seneca included, spiritual self-distancing succeeds where its physical counterpart fails to provide relief from disruptive emotions.

Seneca gives further elaboration to this image of spiritual self-distancing as a substitute for ineffectual physical withdrawal, proposing that individuals not merely distance themselves psychically from what ails them but also retreat to a secluded spiritual refuge. In letter 82.4-5, for instance, he writes that we cannot withdraw to a location that is so distant, so deep or so lofty and fortified that fear of death, pain and human ills in general cannot reach us, using language that calls to mind a trans-marine voyage, a den, and an elevated fortress as examples of refuges that will fail to protect us. Solitude (*solitudo*) itself provides no relief from internal issues. Here, Seneca goes a step further than the non-Stoic writers who employ this motif and advocates that

⁶¹ When men are bad companions to themselves due to internal moral issues, they should retreat away from themselves, even into the untutored crowd (*Ep.* 25.6-7, 103, 104.8, *Tranq.* 17.3, *NQ* 4a *pr.* 19-20 with Traina (2006b) 742). On finding better internal companions, see also Sen. *Ep.* 104.16 with Davies (2014) 82-83. At *Ep.* 104.20, Seneca suggests curing the noxious self-companion in order to have pleasant journeys abroad.

the soul not merely psychically distance itself from these troublesome emotions, but retreat to a secluded spiritual space, protected by an impregnable fortress of philosophy. By describing the suffering man's use of philosophy as a retreat to a fortress of reasoned solitude, Seneca employs a spatial metaphor of inner withdrawal to articulate the spiritually disturbed man's rejection of compromising emotions that would bind him to the outside world and his turn to self-reliance, aided by philosophical study. While the image of the spiritual citadel in this passage will be discussed more fully in section 4, its importance here is that it reveals Seneca explicitly setting physical and psychic retreat alongside each other and advocating for the latter on the grounds that it alone will bring the desired relief from harmful emotional irruptions.

Through this retreat to a Stoic mindset and the resulting inner tranquility, these once-troubled men become spiritually autonomous and self-sufficient. As a result, their physical or social environment can no longer influence their equanimity, regardless of whether their circumstances are adverse or favorable. Consequently, physical space largely ceases to matter.⁶² With the acquisition of spiritual equilibrium, changing physical locations is unnecessary, and as Seneca writes to Lucilius, "even if you are banished to the ends of the earth, stationed in any nook of a barbarian country," (Sen. *Ep.* 28.4 *in ultimas expellaris terras licebit, in quolibet barbariae angulo conloceris*) happiness can be found in any location.⁶³

⁶² Sabato (2006) 233. For Seneca, while physical space no longer matters for the individual's moral progress once he has addressed his internal issues, some places remain less desirable than others when we consider the individual within his social context. There is little point in surmounting one's own internal failings only to occupy a milieu where we will be surrounded by others with these very problems. Consequently, Seneca advises that when possible, men should avoid fleshpots such as the Forum (*Ep.* 28.6-7), Canopus or Baiae (*Ep.* 51.2-5) so as to avoid hindering their own moral progress.

⁶³ Garbarino (1996) 274, Chambert (2005) 233-40. Seneca advises (*Ep.* 28.4) the inverse as well: given that happiness relies on inner well-being rather than location, we should not become attached to any particular location. Cf. Hor. *Epi.* 1.11.29-30.

A number of Roman moralists, Seneca in particular, thus describe the plight of men who practice a defective form of physical withdrawal, mistaking their inner dissatisfaction for alienation from their physical surroundings. These writers describe the ethical issue and its solution in figurative, spatial terms. The problem is an unseemly emotion that requires the self, not the body, to distance itself from the internal source of the problem. For Seneca the solution is to withdraw into the self, marking a shift to ethical self-sufficiency and a consequent detachment from one's physical environment, allowing the individual to deal with all manner of challenging circumstances.

2. Spiritual Withdrawal from Externals

Rather than these futile attempts at physical self-distancing from impediments to moral progress, for Seneca, and, to a lesser extent, other mostly Stoic writers of the imperial era, the path to wisdom, happiness, and freedom consists in a psychic withdrawal into the self. In these Stoic accounts, the inward retreat expresses the wise man's rejection of almost everything that lies outside of his inner moral core, articulating his goal of aligning his thoughts and actions with a moral perspective on life. In Stoic terms, the individual's spiritual withdrawal into himself expresses his consistent adherence to a moral perspective in how he evaluates his inner thoughts and the world around him, as well as his abstention from, and in the case of the soul-as-fortress metaphor (section 4), his resistance to judging these phenomena from other, non-moral points of view.

The imagery of withdrawal into the self articulates how the Stoic takes refuge in his ability to judge his perceptions, and thus reality, objectively, that is in accordance with universal Nature, and in parallel, in his goal of rejecting subjective judgements about reality that do not conform to

Nature's decrees.⁶⁴ In so doing, he judges as good and bad only what is morally good and bad, viewing everything else as irrelevant to his personal moral development. While outside reality and even his initial reactions to that reality will often be beyond his control, through the 'discipline of assent' the Stoic has final control over his responses to the world outside the self and hence over the ultimate meaning of that external reality for his life, producing a state of inner autonomy and self-sufficiency that Seneca defines as freedom (*libertas*).⁶⁵

The Stoic refrains from false attachment to externals through the exercise of reserve.⁶⁶ This detachment does not manifest in everyday life as disregard for or indifference towards commonplace priorities such as care for the body, pursuing relationships with family and friends, and participating in community life.⁶⁷ Instead, the Stoic balances his commitments to such objectives with an acceptance of the order of universal Reason, his ultimate priority. In practice, it is often not possible for an individual to know whether or not his priorities with respect to externals are in accord with the preordained order of things, and so according to the principle of reserve, he is to pursue goals that he believes to be reasonable with the ever-present proviso that he will relinquish these priorities if some impediment prevents him from attaining his goals, for such an impediment will make clear that his original desires were not in accordance with Reason's universal plan. In theory, such a spiritual strategy ensures that the Stoic will not experience disappointments or regret, or revise his priorities. By attaching such a proviso to his

⁶⁴ The Stoic's assent to or rejection of his initial value judgements is the fourth and final stage in the Stoic theory of moral cognition, on which see Appendix 1.

⁶⁵ Pierre Hadot (1998) describes Stoic moral cognition as the 'discipline of assent' in the title of his fourth chapter. On *libertas* as the Stoic's control over his moral assent, see Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2014) 174-76, with Sen. *Const.* 19.2. See Degl'Innocenti Pierini (2014) 168n3, for references to scholarship on the concept of *libertas* in Seneca.

⁶⁶ See Inwood (1985) 119-26, Lotito (2001) 111-12.

⁶⁷ By contrast, since the Stoic can be confident that actions in accord with our inner reason do not conflict with the order of things, individuals can pursue moral good without reservation.

desires, the Stoic maintains a spiritual reserve that allows him to endure the frustration of his reasonable goals and objectives, large and small.

Imperial Stoic authors thus use the image of withdrawal into the self to illustrate how the Stoic adherent exercises this reservation of his moral judgement to reject attachment to a variety of attitudes, things, and individuals. Let us examine these in order. To begin with, the Stoic withdraws into himself away from emotions that are not based on an objective view of reality. Thus, Seneca advocates (*Pol.* 18.1) that the emperor Claudius' freedman Polybius create an inner fortress composed of serious-minded literature behind whose walls he will find refuge from grief at the loss of his brother.⁶⁸ Similarly, both Seneca (*Ira* 1.7.2-3, 1.8.1-2) and Plutarch (*Mor.* 454a) liken the wise man's soul to a secure fortress whose ramparts block the irruption of anger and Seneca advocates drawing in on ourselves from all sides (*Ep.* 14.11) away from hatred, envy, and contempt. Earlier in the same letter (*Ep.* 14.3) Seneca also urges a retreat to inner safety away from fear, which he says has three primary objects: poverty, disease, and violence inflicted on us by someone more powerful than ourselves, and this latter, he continues, is considered the most fearful.⁶⁹ All these fears betray an attachment to the body and a worry that it will suffer harm, and ultimately, death, and indeed, in other passages, the individual is pictured withdrawing from false attachment to his body and his life.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Marcus Aurelius (8.48) describes withdrawal from the passions in general, writing that when the mind's rationally functioning directive faculty withdraws into itself, it becomes a citadel. Passions are also left behind in the sage's inner withdrawal at M. Aur. 12.3.

⁶⁹ At Sen. *Brev.* 2, fear is among the factors that prevent many men from retreating back to themselves. In letter 101.9, the sage's life draws into itself in his efforts to stop worrying about the future; see also M. Aur. 12.3, where the sage withdraws into himself from concern over the past and future.

⁷⁰ See Sen. *Ben.* 7.1.7, *Beat.* 8.4, 49.8-11, *Tranq.* 14, M. Aur. 4.3.1-3, 4.3.6, 12.3. On the relationship between withdrawal into the self and devaluing one's body and life, see Lotito (2001) 129-30.

Separated from his passions, the wise man also spiritually detaches himself from the objects and people in his life. He will treat his material possessions and property as temporary belongings whose loss will not upset him.⁷¹ After his advice to Serenus to withdraw into himself away from externals in *De Tranquillitate Animi* (14.2), Seneca recounts how Zeno of Citium, the founder of the Stoic school, calmly responded to news that he had lost all his possessions in a shipwreck by saying, "Fortune...bids me practice philosophy less encumbered," (*Tranq.* 14.2 *iubet...me Fortuna expeditius philosophari*).⁷²

The wise man must also spiritually detach himself from the vast majority of his fellows who do not share his sense of moral purpose. Seneca devotes his seventh letter to criticizing the abysmal moral standard of the Roman people, vividly describing a gladiatorial spectacle at Rome as a bloodthirsty case in point for that fact that "contact with the many is harmful: there is no one who does not either recommend or impress or smear some vice on us unawares. Without doubt, the larger the group we interact with, the greater the danger is" (*Ep.* 7.2). Such association with society at large causes a rapid decline in character because men are prone to confuse the common practice of a large group with moral rectitude (*Ep.* 123.6), and with this in mind, later in letter 7, Seneca counsels Lucilius that "a mind that is tender and not yet able to hold onto what is right should be withdrawn from the people" (*Ep.* 7.6 *Subducendus populo est tener animus et parum tenax recti*) and into the self, as he states shortly thereafter (*Ep.* 7.8), adding in a caveat that those

⁷¹ On Seneca's metaphors of spiritual self-detachment from material possessions, see Bartsch (2009) 204-8 and Sjöblad (2015) 50-55.

⁷² For withdrawal into the self away from possessions and wealth, see also *Tranq.* 9.3, *Brev.* 2, *Ben.* 7.1.7, *Const.* 5.6-6.8, *Ep.* 74.17 with 74.20, 113.27-30; Epictet. *Diss.* 4.1.87.

few can be admitted who are similarly committed to moral progress; the wise man will not have to leave his spiritual seclusion for these friends.⁷³

Yet spiritually withdrawing from one's fellows is not simply a matter of rejecting the masses for the more congenial association of the Stoic wise man's typically elite social peers or in favour of his intimate social network comprised of close friends and family. In the introduction to his *De Vita Beata*, Seneca issues the now familiar injunction to his brother Gallio that he shun the crowd and its faulty moral judgement in his quest for happiness, noting that if the mind is given the opportunity to retire into itself (*Beat.* 2.2), it will quickly recognize the errors of its prior false attachments, implicitly those that it shared with the rest of society. Yet the multitude that the good Stoic leaves behind by retiring into himself is not just the common crowd: "On the contrary, by 'multitude' (*vulgum*) I am referring just as much to men who wear cloaks (*chlamydatos*) as to those wear crowns (*coronatos*), for I pay no attention to the colour of the clothes that cover their bodies" (*Beat.* 2.2).

Even loved ones must be left behind, for the misguided good intentions of those who wish us well "send us off after distant goods, uncertain and unstable, when we can produce happiness at home" (*Ep.* 94.54 *mittit...nos ad longinqua bona et incerta et errantia, cum possimus felicitatem domo promere.*), a statement that contrasts the worldly goods that our friends and family benevolently wish us to have with the moral wealth that lies within the spiritual domicile of our soul. Even if our loved ones share our moral commitments, both Seneca (*Const.* 5.6, 6.5, cf. *Ep.* 9.18) and Epictetus (*Diss.* 4.1.87) stress that spiritual withdrawal requires us to detach ourselves

⁷³ On the latter point, see pgs. 66-70, 75, 78-81. For the less morally mature, solitude is counterproductive; see note 61 and pgs. 7.

from them, for we must not confuse our genuine affection for them with a moral attachment, inasmuch as they are not essential to our moral progress; the wise man is *se (ipso) contentus* (thirteen times in *Ep.* 9) "self-sufficient", or more literally, "self-contained".

The wise man also rejects the traditional Roman esteem for social reputation and ambition, holding himself at a spiritual distance from the opinions others hold about him. This is not to say that his psychic withdrawal from fame and marks of honour will end his participation in public life. A Stoic aristocrat was expected to be an active member of his social and political community, through public life unless some impediment prevented this, and to contribute to the welfare of the community by whatever means were available to him if his circumstances precluded public service.⁷⁴ However, his motivations for his involvement in community life differed from those of most of his fellow elites. Where many Romans in public life desired the respect of their peers, the sage undertakes this activity so as to contribute to Nature's order and to benefit the community of rational beings. While he may seek out a good reputation, marks of honour and political offices like his fellows, he only values them as 'preferred indifferents', insofar as in their essence they do not help him to live in accordance with universal Nature, his foremost priority. In consequence, he will not be affected by their acquisition or loss.

With this attitude in mind, in *De Tranquillitate Animi* Seneca derides the laborious social posturing that some men constantly engage in so as to be favourably perceived: "nor are we ever freed from care when we think that we are being evaluated whenever we are seen (*Tranq.* 17.1 *Nec umquam cura soluimur, ubi totiens nos aestimari putamus quotiens aspici*). Instead, he

recommends that we present ourselves to others with unpremeditated candour, a social strategy predicated on the Stoic's lack of concern over how others view him, an attitude that is spatially expressed by his inner withdrawal away from others who are falsely attached to the judgements of their fellows. Such a retreat into the self is often necessary, he writes, "for interaction with others who are not like us disrupts our settled comportment and stirs up passions and exacerbates whatever is weak and incompletely healed in the mind" (*Tranq.* 17.3). Despite his inner detachment from the judgement of his peers, the Stoic continues to engage with his community, for as Seneca goes on to say, "solitude and company (*solitudo et frequentia*) must nevertheless be blended and alternated: the first will engender a longing for men, the second for ourselves, and the one will serve as a remedy for the other; solitude will heal a loathing for the crowd (*turba*) and the crowd our weariness of solitude." (*Tranq.* 17.3).⁷⁵ With this account of what the wise man leaves behind now complete, let us turn to examining his inward journey and its destination in greater detail.

3. *The Secluded Self-Location*

For Seneca, spiritual withdrawal away from the externals examined in the last section is the culmination of the philosophic journey, the substitute for the unenlightened man's erratic, unsatisfying physical travels.⁷⁶ While ignorant men take many different paths to manifold locations in a vain attempt to escape their inner turmoil, the Stoic *proficiens* (literally 'someone

⁷⁴ For references to discussion by Seneca and other imperial writers about the Stoic attitude toward public service and benefiting the community, see Williams (2003) 78-79 and Richardson-Hay (2006) 273-74. The standard discussion on Seneca's attitude(s) on public service and retirement is Griffin (1976) 315-66.

⁷⁵ For the need to withdraw into oneself away from concern over social rank, reputation, distinction and the like, see *Tranq.* 14.1-2, *Beat.* 2, *Brev.* 2, *Helv.* 13.4, *Ben.* 7.1.7, Epictet. *Diss.* 4.1.87, M. Aur. 12.3. See also Sen. *Helv.* 5.4 and *NQ* 4a *pr.* 13, both of which speak in favourable terms about maintaining a great "distance" (*intervallum*) between oneself and money, offices, influence and flatterers.

⁷⁶ Garbarino (1996) 284, Sabato (2006) 233, Traina (2006a) 19, 63-64. On the image of moral life as a journey in Seneca, see note 135.

who makes forward movement') has no need of a physical journey, long or short, to reach a state of well-being. Instead, an intellectual path leads him to happiness, which lies "at home" (*Ep.* 94.53 *domo*).⁷⁷ In contrast to the physical travels of unenlightened men, the Stoic's inward psychic journey is safe and pleasant (*Ep.* 31.9), and follows a single path. Critiquing Lucilius' desire for more books to read while off in Sicily, Seneca admonishes, "the man who wants to reach the point that he has marked out should follow a single path; he should not wander over many - that is not travelling but getting sidetracked" (*Ep.* 45.1 *Qui quo destinavit pervenire vult unam sequatur viam, non per multas vagetur: non ire istuc sed errare est.*). Similarly, in letter 2.1-2, he notes that Lucilius' ability not to rush from (physical) location to location is a good sign of his moral progress, yet drawing on this imagery of restless physical travel, he says that he is still concerned that his friend may be engaging in the intellectual equivalent of this behavior, that is, a 'wide-ranging' appetite to read every sort of book and author.⁷⁸

Instead, as he writes in the same passage, the culmination of the Stoic's centripetal moral journey is reaching a stable position within the self, from which no further movement is needed: "I reckon that the first proof of a settled mind is its ability to stay in one place and pass time with itself" (*Ep.* 2.1 *primum argumentum compositae mentis existimo posse consistere et secum morari*).⁷⁹ As we saw in section 1, this journey into the self takes the form of a withdrawal, even a flight: "one must therefore flee and withdraw into oneself" (*NQ* 4a *pr.* 20 *Fugiendum ergo et in se recedendum est*); the restless vacationers described in section 1 had the correct instinct to flee,

⁷⁷ For the location of happiness and goodness within the self, see also Sen. *Ep.* 23.3, 23.6, 41.1, Epictet. *Diss.* 3.22.38-39, M. Aur. 7.59.

⁷⁸ On the single path to wisdom, see also Sen. *Ep.* 20.2, 23.6-7, 37.4, and 74.6.

⁷⁹ Montiglio (2006) 562-64, 579. For staying in the same place (*constantia*) as a sign of spiritual attainment, see also Sen. *Ep.* 47.21 and 69.1.

even if they were mistaken about what they were fleeing and where they should take refuge. Likewise, in letter 35, Seneca advises, "Hurry to me, but to yourself first. Seek to make progress and above all take care to occupy the same position as yourself" (*Ep. 35.4 Propera ad me, sed ad te prius. Profice et ante omnia hoc cura, ut constes tibi.*). In this statement Seneca urges Lucilius to retreat to himself and maintain his position there, a metaphor for behavioral consistency as the following passage makes more explicit. Lucilius will recognize the security of his moral attainment by the stability of his position in his self-location. Though he may be stirred by outside forces, as a Stoic adherent of some accomplishment, it is still possible for him to maintain his position; the Stoic sage will not even feel these forces.

Such references to withdrawal (in)to the self-location are numerous, taking the form of a variety of different figurative movements, most of which share the use of reflexive language, a feature which communicates the shared identity of the mobile subject and the secluded self-location. At times, the destination is described as 'reason', 'philosophy', 'virtue', the 'soul' and the like, each case emphasizing how the individual takes refuge in a particular attitude or reified aspect of his personality. For instance, in letter 103, Seneca advises Lucilius, "retreat, moreover, into philosophy as much as you can" (*Ep. 103.4 quantum potes autem in philosophiam recede*). The withdrawal into philosophy illustrates the relief available to Lucilius from the dangers posed by other men if he adopts a philosophical mindset.

Often, this withdrawal movement is conveyed with verbs that denote backward, returning movement, such as when Seneca advises Serenus, "it is often necessary to retreat into oneself," (*Tranq. 17.3 multum et in se recedendum est*) since interactions with others who do not share his

moral commitments will impede his philosophical progress. Likewise, Seneca counsels Lucilius that one should not become like the great number of bad people, but neither should one become hostile toward them. The solution is to "retreat into yourself, as much as you can" (*Ep.* 7.8 *Recede in te ipse quantum potes*).⁸⁰ Similar in nature are various passages that describe how the soul turns in on itself, often a trope for a shift in mental focus from externals to one's own moral state. When we are in the noisy city surrounded by men who praise things that have no moral value such as wealth, influence, and power, Seneca advocates that we find a counsellor who keeps us company and who praises "a soul turned away from externals back towards its own affairs" (*Ep.* 94.72 *animum ab externis ad sua reuersum*). Likewise, Epictetus says that if men wanted to find what is good, "you would find it in yourselves, and you would not wander outside...focus on (literally 'turn yourselves towards') yourselves" (*Diss.* 3.22.39 εὑρετε ἂν αὐτὸ ἐν ὑμῖν ὃν οὐδ' ἂν ἔξω ἐπλάξεσθε...ἐπιστρέψατε αὐτοὶ ἐφ' ἑαυτούς). Epictetus himself models correct behaviour, for while he scrutinizes others, he 'turns to himself' (*Diss.* 4.4.7) in self-scrutiny, to see if he is making the same mistakes as the men he observes.⁸¹

While these accounts of backward movement and turning backwards to the self do not provide abundant spatial information, the language of these retreats casts the self as a secluded refuge within the body.⁸² The use of phrases such as *in se* and εἰς αὐτὸν ("into oneself") communicates not merely movement toward or to the self-location, but movement *into* it, lending it the form of a container within the body with an interior that is separated by a semi-permeable bounding

⁸⁰ Verbs of backward, returning movement used in psychic retreat include *recedere* (*Ep.* 25.7, 52.1, 74.29, 103.4, *NQ* 4a pr. 20 (used with *fugere*), *Tranq.* 14.2 (used with *revocare* and *adplicare*), *Beat.* 2.2), *secedere* (*Ep.* 25.6), *resilire* (*Ep.* 82.6), *recurrere* (*Brev.* 2.3); ἀναχωρέω/ἀναχώρησις (Dio Chrys. *Or.* 20.8, M. Aur. 4.3.1) ἐπανερχομαι (M. Aur. 6.11).

⁸¹ For the need to turn toward the self and introspect, rejecting sensory stimuli and the temptation to value them, see also Sen. *Beat.* 8.4 (*in se reuertatur*) and Epictet. 3.16.15 (οὔτε προσοχὴ οὔτ' ἐπιστροφή ἐφ' αὐτὸν).

surface from things external to it, whether they are elsewhere within the body or lie outside of it. The self-location is accessible to the individual who retreats to it, but its ontological distinction from things external to the self illustrates the fact that these externals cannot always enter the self-space, a point that will be further discussed below. The use of reflexive pronouns alongside prefixes such as *re-* and *ἀνα-* that connote backward movement reinforce the sense that this reflexive retreat brings the individual back to his point of origin, and implicitly back to where he belongs.

Several passages provide an image of the individual compressing himself as he enters the self-location, leaving the sense that it is not only an enclosed but also a small and confined interior space, articulating his restricted moral judgements. Seneca, for instance, urges readers not to fixate upon the future, or more literally, not to 'lean out' (*Ep.* 101.9 *prominebit*), a precarious gesture that communicates the uncertainties of the future. Instead, if our life "gathers itself into itself" (*in se colligitur*) and is lived one day at a time, we will be untroubled by whatever happens.⁸² Similarly, in *De Tranquillitate Animi*, he counsels that material wealth is vulnerable to loss, and thus we are vulnerable when we value something so precarious. Consequently, "we should compress our possessions into a narrow space," (*Tranq.* 9.3 *cogendae in artum res*) so that Fortune's missiles fall wide. Lightly alluding to the theme of spiritual siege, Seneca therefore advises his readers to value only inner moral wealth, which lies within the self, expressing this thought by an image of condensing the possessions (*res*) that we value until they fit inside the

⁸² Sabato (2006) 233 and Bartsch (2009) 201-2.

⁸³ Cf. *Beat.* 9.3, where Seneca describes how the mind that is self-sufficient "has filled its space up and enclosed itself with its bounds" (*suum inpleuit et finibus se suis cinxit*). See also *M. Aur.* 12.3.2, discussed below.

narrow confines of the self-location.⁸⁴ Such a figure of self-compression into a narrow space conveys a difficulty of access and a degree of seclusion from what lies outside, a stance that expresses the Stoic's moral detachment from the outside world. This motion contributes to the martial subtext that is sometimes present in accounts of retreat to the self, evoking the image of a soldier gathering himself together, or retreating to a stronghold, and indeed, in the last passage quoted, this image contributes to a metaphor of the directive faculty as a fortress.⁸⁵

The wise man's refuge within himself is twice likened to containment within a sphere. In satire 2.7, Horace's slave Davus lectures the poet on his fickle desires. Like the spirit-sick men examined in section 1, Horace cannot spend an hour with himself, vainly fleeing himself (*Serm.* 2.7.112-13). By contrast, Davus lectures, the wise man is free from fear of poverty, imprisonment or death, and beyond the reach of desire and ambition. Such a man is like a sphere, for "he is completely within himself, smooth and well-rounded, so that nothing external may tarry on his smooth surface, against whom Fortune always feebly rushes" (*Serm.* 2.7.86-88 *in se ipso totus, teres atque rotundus, externi nequid valeat per leve morari, in quem manca ruit semper fortuna.*).⁸⁶ Marcus Aurelius writes similarly that when we separate the mind's directive faculty from the body and its vital force, freeing us from externals such as the passions and fear of the future and concern over the past, then one becomes "like the Empedoclean 'rounded sphere, rejoicing in its ecstatic changelessness'" (12.3.2 οἷος ὁ Ἐμπεδόκλειος 'σφαῖρος κυκλοτερὴς μονίῃ περιγηθεῖ γαίων' [Emped. DK 27-28 D89]). In both philosopher and satirist,

⁸⁴ Marcus Aurelius takes up this image, urging himself and his readers to "gather yourself into yourself" (7.28 Εἰς ἑαυτὸν συνειλοῦ). Once this takes place and an individual's governing rational faculty is "compressed in on itself" (8.48.1 εἰς ἑαυτὸ συστραφέν), such a person then gains an impregnable inner calm and self-sufficiency.

⁸⁵ Cf. Farquharson (1944) 2.776.

⁸⁶ On the Stoic tenor of *Serm.* 2.7 and this scene in particular, see Muecke (1993) 212-14, 223.

the sage self-separates from externals in order to occupy space in the most authentic part of himself, a movement that Marcus explicitly analogizes to the joyous self-containment of the Empedoclean sphere, a symbol in the pre-Socratic philosopher's writings of the universe brought into a state of concord with itself through Love. Withdrawn into his reasoning faculty, the wise man's happy and self-contained retirement is akin to the secluded inner harmony of the Empedoclean sphere. Its smooth and polished surface projects an image of impregnable, god-like perfection and self-sufficiency, thwarting external attachments just as surely as the sage's self-possession repels the temptation to accord value to external goods.⁸⁷

Similar to these accounts of self-compression and containment are two passages that cast retreat to the self as a descent into a hidden place. In his ninth letter, Seneca writes that the wise man is self-sufficient and when he is taken away from his friends, "he is stowed away in himself" (*Ep.* 9.16 *in se reconditur*), a location in which he will be left to philosophical contemplation without disruption. The backward, withdrawing motion of the prefix *re-* and the concealment implied by the action of the simpler verb-form *condere* conjure an image of the sage's refuge as not merely narrow and removed, but secluded and hidden from others.⁸⁸ The Stoicizing poet Persius creates the same sense of downward retreat in his fourth satire when an acid-tongued Socrates upbraids young Alcibiades and society at large for focusing on the faults of others rather than scrutinizing their own conduct, expressing the latter sentiment through a metaphor of descent into the self: "how no one attempts to climb down into himself - no one!" (4.23 *ut nemo in sese temptat descendere, nemo!*). Much like Seneca, Persius deploys an image of downward retreat, implicitly

⁸⁷ Cf. Muecke (1993) 223, and Hadot (1998) 119. For the soul as an invulnerable, self-contained sphere, see also M. Aur. 8.41, 11.12.

⁸⁸ See Rimell (2015) 28-72, esp. 40, for discussion of the symbolic potential of hidden, often subterranean enclosures created by use of the verb *condere*.

locating the self in a cave-like place that is hidden from others. Yet he differs from the passage of Seneca quoted above in drawing on the immoral associations of negative elevation,⁸⁹ and in his observation that the self-location is most importantly secluded from the individual to whom it belongs, for as his Socrates bitterly observes, no one is enthusiastic about clambering down into his own inner depths in order to discover the moral muck that is really down there.

Such language of retreat thus creates an image of a concealed refuge that is difficult to access. Entrance is possible, as these accounts reveal, but it is hidden away from everything outside of it, even from ourselves if we do not occupy it, and it requires effort to clamber down, squeeze in and enter it. Repeated emphasis on *return* to the self and the frequent use of reflexive language bind the self-location and the mobile subject to each other, casting their reunion as organic and natural.

4. The Self as a Fortress

At times, this enclosed, solitary self-location acquires further specificity in the form of a fortress.⁹⁰ A key part of this imagery is the protective wall that surrounds the soul, shielding the individual behind it from hostile external forces on the other side. While the image of the wall sometimes appears on its own alongside the man who withdraws into himself, it often appears as part of a more developed metaphor including features such as a view of the entire fortress that it

⁸⁹ For the pejorative associations of negative elevation in Seneca's work, see Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 171-72.

⁹⁰ The image of the soul as a citadel offering refuge from besieging outside forces is widespread in imperial literature and appears as early as the 5th and 2nd centuries BCE in Greek and Latin literature respectively. This section addresses this imagery when it appears in Stoic authors as the destination (explicit or implicit) for an individual's retreat into himself in estrangement from an outside force. Seneca's broader use of metaphors of fortification is examined here since his repeated discussions of retreat into the self form an important context for the imagery of inner fortifications in his writing, even when the metaphor of the inner citadel does not occur directly alongside mention of retreat into the self. On the background of this metaphor prior to Seneca, see Alfonsi (1949) 208-9, Nisbet-Hubbard (1978) 105, Tietze (1985) 196-97, La Penna (1997) 89n10, Gazzarri (2010) 173-88, and

is attached to, as well as descriptions of the enemy and his siege weaponry. The material of the surrounding wall and the substance of the citadel as a whole frequently articulate the behaviour, attitude and resources that the withdrawn individual must adopt in order to successfully maintain his self-imposed seclusion from external forces.

At its most abstract, the defence wall expresses the necessity of relying on the guidance of philosophy.⁹¹ In letter 82, as we have seen, Seneca disparages physical retirement as an ineffective solution for miseries such as anxiety, pain, and fear of death that are experienced when an individual attributes importance to external things such as his body and his vital life force. Instead, he urges, "we should surround ourselves with philosophy, an impregnable wall, that Fortune does not cross, though it challenges with many siege-towers. The soul that forsakes what lies outside and lays claim to itself within its citadel stands in an insurmountable location; every missile falls short." (*Ep. 82.5 Philosophia circumdanda est, inexpugnabilis murus, quem fortuna multis machinis laccessitum non transit. In insuperabili loco stat animus qui externa deseruit et arce se sua vindicat; infra illum omne telum cadit*).⁹² In this vivid image, philosophy appears as a well fortified citadel wrapped around the soul, its impregnable walls positioned on a point of elevation. In this advantageous position, the soul regains control over itself (*se...vindicat*), undertaking a vigorous self-defence (*stat animus*) that enacts its self-sufficiency, thanks to its freedom from fears that would subjugate it to what lies beyond its moral compass.

Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 188n131, (2011) 72-73. On Seneca's use of this metaphor, see esp. Hamacher (2006) 131-40, Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 123, (2011), and Sjöblad (2015) 43-59.

⁹¹ Cf. philosophy occupying a sacred, secluded inner space at *Ep. 52.15 (penetralia)* and 103.4 (*sacrarium*).

⁹² The same metaphor also appears in more compressed form at *Sen. Ep. 13.3, 53.12, 95.14, 111.2*.

More frequently, the wall embodies reason, which is both the primary subject of philosophy and the systematic method of navigating life in a way that will lead to happiness in Stoic terms.⁹³ In letter 74, for instance, Seneca writes that "we should fortify ourselves" (*Ep.* 74.19 *muniendi sumus*) against over-reliance on the ephemeral goods of fortune. Many flourishing empires have collapsed from such behaviour, for "no wall...is impregnable against fortune. Let us draw up inner fortifications. If that part is safe, a man may be struck, but he may not be captured" (*Ep.* 74.19 *Nullus...contra fortunam inexpugnabilis murus est: intus instruamur; si illa pars tuta est, pulsari homo potest, capi non potest*). These spiritual defences, the passage continues, consist of adopting the perspective of universal Reason when we evaluate events in our lives. 'Armed with a love of reason' (*Ep.* 74.21), we should not consider ourselves harmed by misfortune, pain or injury, for such things are part of the ordained plan by which Reason governs the universe for the good. By taking such a view of things and rejecting the conclusion that these experiences are bad, the Stoic "cannot be conquered" (*Ep.* 74.20 *non potest vinci*).⁹⁴

Epictetus conveys a similar conception of the soul's defences when he says that our "judgements" (*Diss.* 4.5.26 δόγματα, cf. 4.5.25-32) fortify our soul much as an indomitable wall, food and other provisions render a city impregnable for those who would lay siege to it. Epictetus advocates the same approach to externals as that set forth by Seneca in letter 74. The Stoic is to fortify his soul by following the dictates of reason and by refusing to accord moral value to externals such as material possessions and political power, which may be gained or lost as

⁹³ Earlier Stoics sometimes liken logic or reason to a protective wall that surrounds philosophy (SVF 2.38 = LS 26B3), an image that illustrates the instrumental role of logic in protecting ethics (Hossenfelder (1995) 19), whereas in the imperial-era authors examined here, reason is likened to a barrier encompassing a location that represents an individual, albeit from an ethical perspective.

⁹⁴ Similarly, at *Ep.* 95.12, Seneca writes that generally applicable principles of reason, not specific instructions, fortify us (*muniant*). The principles embodied by these fortifications protect our security and tranquillity.

Fortune dictates. Judging such things to be important merely makes one vulnerable to emotions such as fear and sorrow while withholding such false value-judgements renders one impregnable.⁹⁵

At times, the soul's defences embody a more specific disposition or state of mind that the wise man will adopt through his adherence to philosophy. In letter 113 Seneca compares bravery to a fortification, writing, "what is bravery? It is an impregnable fortification for human weakness. The man who encircles himself with it lives secure through this life's siege, for (i.e. thanks to this psychic fortress) he makes use of his own strength, his own weapons" (*Ep.* 113.27 *Quid est fortitudo? Munimentum humanae imbecillitatis inexpugnabile, quod qui circumdedit sibi securus in hac vitae obsidione perdurat; utitur enim suis viribus, suis telis.*).⁹⁶ By courageously following the dictates of reason and assigning no moral value to the outside world controlled by Fortune, this passage indicates, the philosophical adept forms a metaphorical barrier wall that prevents his human frailty from succumbing to Fortune's siege upon his resolve. Succeeding in this endeavour is a triumph of self-sufficiency, for the only weapon at our disposal is our own disciplined refusal to attribute any significance to what does not affect our moral well-being.

In Seneca's poignant example of the philosopher Stilpon, the wise man's inner fortress comes to represent a Stoic version of *virtus*.⁹⁷ In his *De Constantia Sapientis*, Seneca recounts the case of

⁹⁵ In a more detailed image, Marcus Aurelius writes (8.48) that when the soul's directive faculty withdraws into itself and operates according to reason, thus liberating itself from the passions, it becomes a citadel (ἀκρόπολις) and the individual becomes impregnable (ἀνάλωτος).

⁹⁶ Cf. *Ep.* 76.25, where the soul's residency in the body is a form of confinement and siege (*clusas et obsessas*).

⁹⁷ Armisen-Marchetti (2011) 71, 76-77, 80-82. At *Prob. Lib.* 151-52, Philo writes that men who flee to sacrosanct places owe their security to these locations and thus remain vulnerable to being conquered by a range of chance events that can compromise their well-being, "but those (i.e. who flee) to virtue as to an indestructible and well

the philosopher Stilpon, who lost all his property and his wife and children when Demetrius Poliorcetes sacked and plundered his native city of Megara in 307 BCE. When Demetrius summons Stilpon to an interview and asks him whether he has lost anything, the philosopher responds "nothing...all my things are with me" (*Const.* 5.6 = *Ep.* 9.19 *nihil...omnia mea mecum sunt*).

Seneca uses Stilpon's philosophical indifference to losing his possessions and his loved ones to contrast the insecurity of such moral externalities, poorly safeguarded by physical battlements and fallible political authorities, with the unassailable security of moral goods, protected by the impregnable fortifications of the wise man's soul.⁹⁸ As Stilpon says, though Demetrius successfully used siege warfare to destroy the fortifications of many cities (including his own), "still, no siege engine can be found that could disturb a well-founded mind" (*Const.* 6.4 *at nulla machinamenta posse reperiri quae bene fundatum animum agitent*). Continuing in his own voice, Seneca writes that this is how the consummate wise man should be understood, who possesses all the virtues:

"His goods are ringed by fortifications that are solid and cannot be overcome. You could not compare them to the walls of Babylon that Alexander entered, nor to the ramparts of Carthage or Numantia, captured by a single hand, nor to the Capitolium or its citadel - they bear a trace of the enemy: the ramparts that protect the wise man are safe from flame and irruption, they offer no entrance, they are lofty, impregnable, equal to the gods" (*Const.* 6.8 *Bona eius solidis et inexcuperabilibus munimentis praecincta sunt. Non Babylonios illis muros contuleris, quos Alexander intrauit, non Carthaginis aut Numantiae moenia una manu capta, non Capitolium arcemue – habent ista hostile*

fortified wall (ἀκαθαίρετον καὶ ἐρυμνότατον τεῖχος) disregard the missiles that the passions' ambushes hurl and shoot at them."

⁹⁸ A similar contrast between the frailty and security of fortifications physical and psychic appears at Epictetus *Diss.* 4.1.85-88 and Fronto *ad Ver.* 2.1.5, Sen. *Ep.* 74.19 and *Ep.* 94.61, where Seneca describes men who successfully sack cities but in doing so are conquered by their own desires. On the passage from Fronto, which uniquely celebrates the sacking of the psychic citadel and the conquest of worldly values, see Appendix 2.

*uestigium: illa quae sapientem tuentur et a flamma et ab incursu tuta sunt, nullum introitum praebent, excelsa, inexpugnabilia, dis aequa.)*⁹⁹

Seneca's contrast between the security afforded by physical and spiritual fortifications not only highlights the superiority of the latter but also illustrates the protection that they offer from the frailty of their physical counterparts. As Stilpon's case demonstrates, any physical wall may be overcome, and consequently, there is always the risk of losing one's homeland, loved ones and material possessions. Retreating within one's moral fortress of virtue, however, engenders an inner self-sufficiency that mitigates grief at the loss of such things, for they are ultimately external to the moral individual. Such a contrast also implicitly likens moral *virtus* to military valor, and suggests that maintaining one's moral convictions is like a military victory. Indeed, the superiority of the psychic stronghold over its worldly counterpart is such that it can ensure a moral victory even in the face of a catastrophic military failure, thus 'conquering' the defeat and illustrating the superiority of moral over military prowess.

While the defence wall typically embodies philosophy and its approaches to life, one opaquely worded passage departs from this uniformity. In Seneca's consolation to the emperor Claudius' freedman Polybius, the exiled philosopher congratulates him on dealing with heartache at the loss of his brother by immersing himself in intellectual pursuits that are diminishing his grief and augmenting his happiness, before likening these studies to a bulwark: "now surround yourself with them (i.e. your studies) like fortifications for your soul, so that in no part of you may grief find a way in" (*Pol.* 18.1 *nunc illa* (i.e. *tua studia*) *tibi uelut munimenta animi circumda, ne ex ulla tui parte inueniat introitum dolor.*). *Studia*, the term used for 'intellectual pursuits' or 'studies' here, is vague, for it typically refers to learned activities of various sorts. Seneca alludes

⁹⁹ Similar to the impregnable nature of moral virtue, at *Ep.* 85.19, Seneca writes that the happy life "holds within itself a complete and impregnable (*inexsuperabile*) good."

here to intellectual activities distinct from the study of wisdom, recalling his earlier advice (*Poly.* 8) that Polybius ward off grief by losing himself in the study of the serious subject-matter of Homer and Vergil.¹⁰⁰ Seneca thus steps back from orthodox Stoic doctrine here as he flatters the behaviour of a man whom he hoped might help to engineer his return from exile on Corsica.

However, in this less doctrinaire context, it is possible that Seneca considers such literary subject-matter at least somewhat philosophical in nature. In this passage, the liberal arts that 'fortify' Polybius against his grief perform the same literal and metaphorical role that Seneca elsewhere ascribes to philosophy and its characteristic features, inasmuch as Polybius' intellectual pursuits are increasing his happiness while serving as a bulwark against his grief. Furthermore, in the consolation that he writes to his mother Helvia on his banishment to Corsica, Seneca makes a similar equation of liberal studies and philosophy, once again ascribing the latter's curative properties to the former. He urges his mother to flee to liberal studies (*Helv.* 17.3 *liberalia studia, bonae artes*) to quell her grief. Without explicitly equating this literary study and philosophy, Seneca then notes that Helvia had undertaken, but not mastered liberal studies when she was younger before saying that he wishes she had gone further in her study of the "precepts of wisdom" (*praecepta sapientiae*) as a younger woman.¹⁰¹ These studies are the "very firm strongholds" (*Helv.* 17.5 *certissima praesidia*) that will keep her heart "shut" (*clusum*) to grief and other vices. In these two passages, it thus appears that philosophy in an attenuated form serves as a figurative bulwark that protects Polybius and Helvia from irruptions of grief. Seneca's opaque wording in his consolation to Helvia may convey, as it does in his letter to Polybius, that

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 123, Kurth (1994) 217.

¹⁰¹ Favez (1918) 18, 45, 92, interprets Seneca's mention of literary studies in this passage as references to philosophy.

she is not fortifying herself with philosophy tout court, but perhaps with some work of literature endowed with philosophical themes.¹⁰²

Thus far, we have seen how the psychic citadel appears as a symbol for ways of protecting the self-location from harm by externals. The wise man constructs it and seeks it out for refuge, an image that confirms his adherence to the behaviour and principles that the citadel's barriers represent. Conversely, neglecting the wall can suggest an individual's preoccupation with activities that will not protect him from moral relapse. In letter 49.7-9, Seneca makes such a comparison when he writes that a man would seem deranged if he fusses over the subtleties of a syllogism while his city is under siege, while the townspeople rush to reinforce the walls, and while the ground shakes from subterranean tunnelling. Yet, Seneca continues, it is just as culpable if he himself should be presently occupied with the same intellectual niceties, for as he explains, "I am also under siege at this very moment" (*Ep.* 49.9 *et nunc obsideor*), going on to clarify that he is under attack by the fear of death.¹⁰³ Thus, failure to take care of such a psychic barrier can embody neglecting to avail oneself of attitudes and behaviour that offer protection from moral harm.

At times the image of the psychic citadel includes details of other aspects of the fortress besides its walls, and a view of the enemy's weapons, additions that allow our Stoic authors to insert further nuance into these metaphors of psychic retreat. As many of the passages above illustrate,

¹⁰² Elsewhere, especially in *Ep.* 88, Seneca expresses a low opinion of intellectual pursuits as distinct from philosophy on the grounds that they do not teach virtue. This may also suggest that his approval of such *studia* in these passages from the two consolations reflects his opinion that they contain improving philosophical subject-matter.

¹⁰³ In this instance of the siege metaphor, the wise man is uncharacteristically not alone inside the besieged city, though the focus remains on him and his behaviour.

the psychic citadel is frequently described as elevated. Indeed, such a characteristic is evoked by the very notion of a citadel, whose defensive fortifications are typically constructed at a height sufficient to deter or at least to impede ascent. Furthermore, these strongholds are often positioned on natural points of elevation to add a further measure of security. Such elevation is often emphasized in descriptions of the inner citadel: thus for instance the Stoic wise man stands "on an insurmountable location" (*Ep.* 82.5 *in insuperabili loco*) on the "lofty" (*Const.* 6.8 *excelsa*) ramparts of his citadel of philosophy.

The most immediate function of such height is the invulnerability that it provides from externals, contributing to the citadel's protective function.¹⁰⁴ A consistent feature of Seneca's metaphors of moral elevation is the irreversibility of the Stoic's ascent: upward progress is secure, it will not be lost in a subsequent fall, a recurring risk in the philosopher's metaphors of social elevation.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, the spiritual citadel's lofty placement has an intrinsic security. Furthermore, with expressions such as "in an insurmountable location" (*Ep.* 82.5 *in insuperabili loco*) and "fortifications that cannot be overcome" (*Const.* 6.8 *inexsuperabilibus munimentis*), Seneca describes the great height of the spiritual citadel in terms that expressly convey the impossibility of an enemy successfully ascending it so as to harm the wise man's moral resolve lying within.¹⁰⁶

In addition to the safety that it provides from hostile incursions, as a form of spatial distance, the citadel's elevation consistently represents its occupant's social distance from externals. As

¹⁰⁴ Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 262-63, (2011) 70.

¹⁰⁵ Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 169-71.

¹⁰⁶ For connections between the inner citadel's elevation and its invulnerability, see also *Ep.* 82.5 again (the citadel is too lofty to be struck by missiles), as well as *Const.* 6.8.

vertical distance, this elevation does not merely call to mind difference and alienation, but also evokes vertical metaphors of knowledge and wisdom.¹⁰⁷ In Greek and Latin, as in English, greater elevation structures correspondingly greater superiority, and in a moral and philosophical context, as here, it can convey greater virtue and wisdom. When externals are juxtaposed at a level of lower elevation, their comparatively inferior value becomes more clear. Thus, in Seneca's eighty-second letter, the Stoic wise man occupies a citadel of philosophy that is too highly placed for Fear of Death and Anxiety to force their way in from below. The superior virtue and wisdom conveyed by this height often bring the wise man's citadel close to the (good) gods, for the citadel (*arx*) sometimes serves as a metaphor for heaven, and its terrestrial and psychic facsimiles occupy the same position in their respective settings as heaven does within the cosmos.¹⁰⁸ Both of these tendencies give the sage's spiritual stronghold a god-like position: for Seneca, the height of the wise man's inner ramparts is "equal to the gods" (*Const.* 6.8 *dis aequa*).¹⁰⁹

The image of the wise man in his lofty spiritual stronghold looking down upon externals below him also helps to illustrate his superior enlightenment. Both Greek and Latin can conceive of knowledge as a form of sight, and thus looking out over an expansive vista can express a comprehensive understanding of a wide array of others whose inferior position illustrates their corresponding lack of knowledge about the observer above them, about their own respective

The sage's elevation is associated with his invulnerability to missiles at *Const.* 1.1 and 4.1, though the inner fortress is not explicitly mentioned.

¹⁰⁷ On vertical metaphors of wisdom in Seneca, see Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 170-71, 261-63, 269-70.

¹⁰⁸ On the *arx* as a metaphor for heaven in Seneca, see *Marc.* 26.1, *Oed.* 48, Armisen-Marchetti (2011) 70. On the divine associations of the wise man's elevation in Seneca, see *Helv.* 5.2, *Const.* 8.2, *Tranq.* 2.3, *Ep.* 41.4 and Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 262-63; cf. SVF 2.1027.

¹⁰⁹ For further parallels between the spiritually withdrawn sage and divinity, recall pgs. 50-51, 74-75.

positions, or about their fellows who share their inferior placement. The wise man's downward gaze structures a disdainful, condescending attitude engendered by his greater wisdom, a disposition sometimes confirmed by haughty laughter.¹¹⁰

Seneca portrays the wise man who has withdrawn into himself as haughtily looking down from a great height, though when he does so, the self-location is not explicitly characterized as a fortress. In letter 101.9, the Stoic sage stows himself away in his inner spiritual space (*in se colligitur*) away from fear of the future, an act of auto-enclosure that is located on a point of elevation that permits the sage to look down upon what he has left behind and laugh scornfully, simultaneously framing the inward movement as a retreat to safety and an ascent to a higher plane of knowledge: "then from a height (the mind) looks out upon whatever days and events are to come and with great laughter contemplates the sequence of time" (*quidquid deinceps dierum rerumque venturum est ex alto prospicit et cum multo risu seriem temporum cogitat*).¹¹¹

As many of the passages quoted above illustrate, the imagery of a military siege often accompanies discussion of the psychic fortress.¹¹² Both Plutarch (*Mor.* 454a) and Epictetus (*Diss.* 4.5.25-26) state that philosophy and value-judgements (δόγματα) in accordance with philosophy, respectively, serve as provisions that help the wise man endure this siege. Most frequently, Fortune and other hostile external forces such as Fear and Desire lob missiles (*tela*) at

¹¹⁰ Cf. Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 262-63. For haughty laughter and a lofty view in the context of an Epicurean inner withdrawal, see chapter 3.3.2.2.

¹¹¹ Similarly, at *Ben.* 7.1.7, Seneca approvingly quotes his friend Demetrius the Cynic, who associates the wise man with a similar spatial schema that links his spiritual withdrawal and metaphorical elevation above external attachments to his scorn for Fortune and everything else that lies outside of his moral core, an attitude conveyed by the words *contemnere* 'to scorn' and *contemptor* 'scorner', terms which Seneca associates with the concept of looking down from a height (Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 262-63).

the moral refuge, occasionally supplemented by siege-engines (*machinae, machinamenta*) that hurl these projectiles or that seek to break down the walls.¹¹³ The sustained frontal assault facilitated by these weapons conveys the forceful attempts of externals to break down the wise man's resolve. Such a man has withdrawn into his inner citadel, indicating his desire to retreat from false value-judgements that would make him beholden to the outside world. Yet the consequent military-style assault shows why the citadel is necessary - such judgements will be difficult or impossible to resist without the protection of philosophy. The frontal assault against the fortress walls embodies the sheer force that presses us to give in to these feelings - the wise man recognizes the harm that yielding to fear or desire brings but nevertheless he may still be overcome if he does not avail himself of philosophy's ramparts.

While such passages illustrate how attachment to externals seeks to overwhelm resolve to the contrary, the gates of the fortress highlight how the wise man's refuge may also be compromised through a combination of subterfuge and ignorance. Discussing anger in his eponymous work (*Ira* 1.8.1), Seneca writes that it must be suppressed immediately, for this is our only chance to stop it. Shifting to the fortress metaphor, he continues, "the enemy should be kept away, I say, at the initial boundary, for once it enters and passes through the gates, it accepts no limitations from its captives" (*Ira* 1.8.2 *In primis, inquam, finibus hostis arcendus est; nam cum intrauit et portis se intulit, modum a captiuis non accipit.*). In this metaphor, anger seeks to penetrate the wise man's fortress: *arcendus* 'should be kept away' adumbrates *arx* 'fortress', for *arcere* 'to keep

¹¹² Terms for siege at Sen. *Ep.* 49.9 113.27, Epictet. *Diss.* 4.5.25-26, Plut. *Mor.* 454a. In less detail: Sen. *Beat.* 11.3, *Ep.* 95.4.

¹¹³ Siege-engines: Sen. *Const.* 6.4, *Ep.* 82.5. Missiles: *Tranq.* 9.3, *Ep.* 45.9, 53.12, 82.5. Flames: *Const.* 6.8. Army: Fronto *Ad Ver.* 2.1.5. See Tac. *Ann.* 3.15.2 (chapter 5.2) for an image of spiritual siege on the inner refuge of the emperor Tiberius.

away' was believed to be the etymological root of *arx*.¹¹⁴ Yet here, anger does not seek to destroy or surmount the ramparts but tries instead to slip in unnoticed through the gates. The implication is that the wise man may misjudge the harm that anger can bring, and let it in, at least to the foremost spaces of the refuge. Yet as Seneca goes on to say, absolute exclusion is necessary, for once passion enters the soul's citadel, it captures the entire space, or in Seneca's terms, the soul thereupon *becomes* passion. In other words, the Stoic should no more relax his estrangement towards states of mind that are contrary to his moral progress than a besieged man should let an enemy in through the gates, for both actions will incur perilous consequences.¹¹⁵ Consequently, according to the fortress metaphor, the enemy can seek to overwhelm the refuge either by force or through deception.¹¹⁶ In either scenario, the wise man's security relies on maintaining the integrity of the philosophical barrier that protects him from external harm.

When the enemy sneaks in through the soul's gates or breaks through its ramparts, taking over the stronghold, the wise man must fight his way into his fortified refuge and conquer it before it can serve as a suitable sanctuary. Reprising the now-familiar contrast between the physical and spiritual citadel, Epictetus writes that rather than violent force, value-judgements (*Diss.* 4.1.86 δόγματα, cf. 4.1.85-88) are the best way to sack a physical citadel and turn out its tyrant. The reason for this recommendation, he continues, is because there is little point in attempting such an act if we have not captured our own inner citadel and driven out its tyrants. In other words,

¹¹⁴ Varro *LL* 5.151 *arx ab arcendo*. This ancient etymology is considered to be accurate (de Vaan (2008) 57).

¹¹⁵ Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 72.11 and 85.13-15 for a similar sentiment of opposition to any admission of undesirable feelings or behaviour, lest they gain complete control over us.

¹¹⁶ At *Pol.* 18.1 and *Const.* 6.8, Seneca extols the ramparts of *studia* and moral virtue, respectively, for their function in preventing "entrance" (*introitus*), suggesting a somewhat similar concern with emotions entering the self-location without the use of force. In these two passages, however, the ramparts of learning block the ingress of emotion, whereas, in the passage quoted above from *De Ira*, the gates illustrate how even someone with philosophical attainment may ill-advisedly let emotion into his psychic fortress.

the best solution for an upsetting situation like the threat posed by a fearsome tyrant or emperor in his citadel is not an attempt to neutralize the potential danger, in this example, by attacking his fortress. Instead, the problem is resolved by seizing control of the inner stronghold of our own soul, an act that figuratively expresses an inner, spiritual transformation that reconfigures our value-judgements so that we no longer value the externals that the tyrant can take away from us, such as our body, possessions, family, friends and our status in the community. This act of valuing only what impacts our moral progress is the most potent 'weapon' that one can wield against a corrupted soul that experiences fear. As Epictetus says later in the same work (*Diss.* 4.5.25-26), once the (now-)wise man has cast off these cares and acquired control of his spiritual stronghold, his value-judgements transform from an offensive weapon into the defensive ramparts that will protect his soul from the return of these same false attachments.

5. *Inside the Secluded Self*

Retreat to this refuge often facilitates moral progress, where the individual attempts to harmonize his ethical ideals and his behavior through a set of inwardly focused behaviours that Foucault brought renewed attention to in his discussion of 'the care of the self'.¹¹⁷ Upon successfully performing these actions, the individual in question will achieve inner well-being and happiness.¹¹⁸ Imperial writers frequently characterize an individual's state after a successful spiritual withdrawal as 'being with himself', the opposite of the hopeless 'flight from the self' that dogs the spirit-sick itinerants examined in section 1.¹¹⁹ 'Being with oneself' marks the spatial

¹¹⁷ Foucault, e.g., (1990) 41-50. For Foucault and care of the self in Seneca, see esp. Long (2009), Inwood (2009), Ker (2009b), Bartsch (2015), and Porter (2017).

¹¹⁸ E.g. Sen. *Tranq.* 14.2.

¹¹⁹ For the motif of the subject's being with himself, see Otto (1890) 377, Powell (1988) 201-2, Traina (2006a) 17, 60, and Sabato (2006) 233. This motif has Greek origins and appears in a few late-Republican and Augustan authors (including Hor. *Serm.* 2.7.112-15, cited in section 3) before being used with especial frequency by Seneca and other imperial Stoic authors.

convergence of the self as mobile agent with the self-location, an intersection that expresses the inner harmony of an individual who aligns his thoughts and actions with his ascetic inner moral disposition. For instance, after Persius' Socrates bitterly complains that no one climbs down to inspect his inner self, he ends his harangue and the fourth satire by urging Alcibiades and his readers to "live with yourself!" (*Sat.* 4.52 *tecum habita*), in other words, to effect an inner withdrawal and to undertake a regime of self-scrutiny rather than merely criticizing the morals of others.¹²⁰

Indeed, occupying one's self-space frequently occasions such 'introspection'. Inner withdrawal into one's own company often leads to self-talk, where the individual scrutinizes his thoughts and actions, listens to his feelings and exhorts himself to persevere in his moral progress.¹²¹ For instance, after Epictetus describes the sage's inner withdrawal, he continues, "we too (should) be able to speak with ourselves, have no need of others, nor be at a loss for a way to spend our time" (*Diss.* 3.13.7 οὕτως καὶ ἡμᾶς δύνασθαι αὐτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς λαλεῖν, μὴ προσδεῖσθαι ἄλλων, διαγωγῆς μὴ ἀπορεῖν). In such a state, he continues, the wise man will consider the divine order of things, his relation toward external events and his own disposition toward them, as well as how to surmount his remaining moral difficulties, if he has any. In letter 68.6 Seneca writes that such self-talk is the purpose of retirement, adding that this introspection will be as frank and unsparing as the way we speak about others, giving us a clear view of our moral weaknesses. As these

¹²⁰ On 'being with oneself' as a state of Stoic introspection, see also Sen. *Brev.* 2, *Ot.* 6.3, *Ep.* 2.1, 9.16, 25.6-7, 58.32, 104.7, Dio Chrys. *Or.* 20.7-8, Epictet. *Diss.* 3.13.7.

¹²¹ On Stoic self-talk see e.g. Sen. *Ep.* 26.4-7, 105.6, *Ben.* 7.2.2, *Clem.* 1.1.1, *Prov.* 2.10; see also Star (2012) 23-61. Sometimes self-talk occurs in close association with inner withdrawal: *Ep.* 8.6, 27.1-2, *Beat.* 2.2-4. Dio Chrysostom associates withdrawal into the self with 'attention to one's own affairs' (*Or.* 20.8 τὸ προσέχειν τοῖς αὐτοῦ πράγμασιν). Despite these examples, it should be noted that 'self talk' is a motif that extends beyond its association with Stoic interiority and spiritual withdrawal, dating back to Odysseus' address to his baying heart (*Od.* 20.16-21); see OLD *se* 7b, Star (2012) 218n1.

passages of introspective retreat show, the secure tranquillity and seclusion of spiritual withdrawal can facilitate uninterrupted philosophical contemplation on critical moral issues, free from the hindrance of outside forces.¹²²

Failure to effect a spiritual retreat impedes such introspection. In *De Brevitate Vitae* Seneca describes men ensnared in vice who are thus unable "to retreat to themselves" (*Brev.* 2.3 *recurrere ad se*). Addressing one such man out of the larger group, Seneca faults him for his lack of self-analysis in terms that link his failure to retreat into himself to his consequent inability to share his own company and engage in introspective self-talk: "you never deemed it worthwhile to examine (lit. 'look at' *inspicere*) or listen to yourself. And so you have no reason to reckon your favours to anyone as a cause of obligation for him since you performed them not because you wanted to share the company of another but because you could not keep company with yourself (*cum...tecum esse non poteris*)" (*Brev.* 2.5). Such a man, Seneca says, has failed to effect a spiritual retreat and so he is naturally unable to align his inner disposition with salutary moral objectives.

When the spiritual withdrawal is successful and an individual is able to harmonize his thoughts and actions with his inner reason, his act of self-enclosure paradoxically brings him into intellectual contact with the whole world, an act that Rimell describes as, "seeing the big picture through your pinhole."¹²³ In letter 8.1, for instance, Seneca associates his spiritual (and physical) seclusion with his newfound ability to benefit a larger group of people in both present and future

¹²² Beyond the spatially expressive passages cited here, it is not necessary to cite the numerous statements of Seneca's commitment to introspection. As a representative example, however, in letter 118, Seneca compares his own epistolary corpus with Cicero's letters, which he notes were full of the trials and tribulations of the great men of his day. By contrast, Seneca assigns an inward focus to his own work (*Ep.* 118.2).

time through his writing.¹²⁴ As we have seen thus far, for the Stoic, withdrawal into the self articulates living according to one's own reason, a state that involves shedding the attachments to one's material and social environment that can prove so disruptive to inner tranquility and provoke the unenlightened to attempt a physical withdrawal. In place of the now-diminished ties to the physical world, living in harmony with one's inner reason aligns the individual with the Reason that governs the universe.

In turn, living in accord with universal Reason strengthens the individual's attachment to the community of the wise, the Stoic's primary community, an immaterial, universal state of those rare individuals past and present who similarly live(d) in harmony with r/Reason.¹²⁵ While such moral companionship sometimes benefits from shared physical proximity (*Ep.* 6.5-6, 94.40-43), the wise man's primarily mental interaction with that tiny coterie who share his moral commitment allows him to associate with individuals who are physically and/or temporarily absent, even as he avoids the company of most of his fellows.¹²⁶ In letter 62.2, Seneca writes, "when I devote myself to my friends, I do not even then withdraw from myself, nor do I pass time with those that some occasion or some reason arising from political business has joined me to, but I share the company of all the best men; I send my spirit to them, in whatever place, in whatever age they lived. (*Cum me amicis dedi, non tamen mihi abduco nec cum illis moror quibus me tempus aliquod congregavit aut causa ex officio nata civili, sed cum optimo quoque*

¹²³ Rimell (2015) 123.

¹²⁴ For similar statements by Seneca, see Richardson-Hay (2006) 276-77.

¹²⁵ For the Stoic cosmopolis, see esp. Schofield (1991) and Vogt (2008) 65-160.

¹²⁶ For parallels between the Stoic's intellectual interaction with his textual, philosophical models and with his absent friends, see Edwards (2015) 49-52.

sum; ad illos, in quocumque loco, in quocumque saeculo fuerunt, animum meum mitto.)¹²⁷

Typically these individuals from past ages are philosophers and men whose lives display exemplary moral virtue.

Thus, Seneca writes of interacting with morally-improving books and virtuous men of the past in terms that typically convey in-person communication, a manner of speaking that expresses the intellectual relationship that he forms with them and that at the same time implicitly asserts the parity of these text-based interactions with their physical counterparts. In letter 67 Seneca declares that his senescent ill health has hindered some of his bad habits by confining him to bed so that now "most of my conversation is with my books," (*Ep.* 67.2 *cum libellis mihi plurimus sermo est*). More often, Seneca speaks of interacting with philosophical men of the past in vivid terms.¹²⁸ In *De Brevitate Vitae*, Seneca writes that no age is off-limits to those who practice philosophy, and thus, "we can debate with Socrates, entertain doubt with Carneades, enjoy calm with Epicurus, conquer human nature with the Stoics or go beyond it with the Cynics," (*Brev.* 14.2), interactions that Seneca elsewhere associates with the solitude and retirement from public life (*Ot.* 1.1) that allow the sage to "be with himself" in his self location (*Ot.* 6.3 *secum esse*).¹²⁹

Seneca writes that we can also share this intellectual connection with our friends, whether or not they share our physical location. Indeed, in letter 55.9-11, Seneca calls attention to the benefits that friendship derives from physical absence, which allows friends to focus on their intellectual

¹²⁷ A friend's death is no obstacle to benefiting from their friendship (Sen. *Ep.* 99.4).

¹²⁸ Davies (2014) 71.

¹²⁹ At the fragmentary opening of *De Otio*, Seneca declares that by withdrawing from public life to solitude (1.1 *secedere...singuli*) we can "withdraw to the best men (*secedere ad optimos uiros*) and choose a model to direct our life by". For the continued vitality of great men of the past and the possibility of befriending them, see also *Brev.* 14.5, *Ep.* 52.7, 64.3, 104.21-22.

connection without the distractions that come from proximity. Further, when a friend is absent, we can mentally interact with them as often and long as we want, for, "a friend should be held onto by the mind, for it (i.e. the mind) is never absent; every day it sees whomever it wishes" (*Ep.* 55.11 *Amicus animo possidendus est; hic autem numquam abest; quemcumque vult cotidie videt.*).

At times, Seneca's evocative language suggests that these friends can join us in the self-location. In letter 7.8, Seneca urges Lucilius to retreat into himself before adding that he should pass his time with men who will morally improve him and to admit (*admitte*) those for whom he can perform the same service.¹³⁰ Similarly, in letter 27, Seneca shares with Lucilius the moral exhortation that he directs at himself within his own inner refuge: "So listen to me as if I were speaking with myself; I admit you into my sequestered space and once you have been brought in, I conduct an inquiry with myself. I shout at myself..." (*Ep.* 27.1-2 *Sic itaque me audi tamquam mecum loquar; in secretum te meum admitto et te adhibito mecum exigo. Clamo mihi ipse...*). In this passage and in several others, the frank, philosophical conversation between friends is analogized to the wise man's introspective self-talk that takes place within the self-location.¹³¹ In consequence, as the Stoic retreats into his secluded psychic refuge, he thus embraces this rarified, rational community through intellectual, rather than spatial means.

Yet for those who have not yet reached moral maturity, the self-location is not always such an ideal refuge. As we have seen in the excerpt from *De Brevitate Vitae* (2.5), spiritual retirement is

¹³⁰ At *Ep.* 109.6, Seneca writes that although the wise man can develop his own abilities when he has been "left to himself" (*relictus sibi*), he can still benefit from another wise man's encouragement.

¹³¹ See also Sen. *Ep.* 3.2 and 26.7.

not always seen as possible for those who live an unintrospective life, and as Persius (4.23) and Epictetus (*Diss.* 4.4.7) suggest, the self-location's concealment can also remove it from the external scrutiny of other people and from the oversight of our own conscious thought, both of which are sometimes thought to act as a restraining force on immoral or merely inadvisable instincts, leaving an unobserved inner depravity to fester within the self.¹³² Hence, from this perspective, retiring to oneself can be a mission of self-scrutiny, to investigate whether we are truly acting in a manner in accord with our beliefs.

Nevertheless, under such circumstances, withdrawing to one's own company for introspective self-talk can be problematic. In letter 25.6-7, Seneca instructs Lucilius that once he has made enough moral progress, he should withdraw into himself when he is compelled to be in a crowd. By contrast, the individual members of such a crowd lack Lucilius' moral attainment, and are thus unfit to withdraw into themselves, since they still require external moral scrutiny, however unrefined: "there is no one (i.e. from the crowd) who would not be better off in anyone's company rather than his own" (*nemo est cui non satius sit cum quolibet esse quam secum*).¹³³ Likewise, in letter 10.1, Seneca reports that when the philosopher Crates happened upon a young man walking by himself, he asked him what he was doing there alone. The youth replied, "I am speaking with myself" (*'Mecum' inquit 'loquor.'*) to which Crates responded 'Be careful, I beg you, and pay close attention: you are speaking with a bad person'. At all events, whether these psychic retreats bring the individual to an ideal philosophical refuge or to an inner compound that requires some ethical renovation, despite their apparent dissimilarity, these two types of mental withdrawal share one common feature. In both, the individual retires with the aim of

¹³² If men suffer from unresolved moral issues, it is better to withdraw *away from* the self, see note 61.

¹³³ On solitude as an encouragement to vice, see also *Tranq.* 3.7-8, *Ep.* 10.2.

fostering psychic harmony. However premature, these types of withdrawal to oneself indicate a move to align one's behavior and priorities with the precepts of morality and reason, and to thereby eliminate any cognitive dissonance.

The moral journey of the Stoic *proficiens* to this secluded self-location leaves him in a state of profound solitude.¹³⁴ Parallels between the journey of wisdom and journey of life metaphors in Seneca's writings suggest that the Stoic adherent's journey into himself brings about a state of solitude in some ways akin to death. Metaphors comparing the passage of life and the acquisition of wisdom to a journey are frequent in Seneca.¹³⁵ Both metaphorical journeys share the same basic structure of movement towards a goal. In the journey of life, the traveller makes forward progress as he lives his life, ultimately reaching his destination when he dies. Similarly, the journeyer on the road to wisdom advances as he progressively attains more Stoic wisdom. Arrival at his destination marks the completion of his acquisition of wisdom. Within these parallel metaphors, therefore, death and wisdom stand as parallels to each other, since both are figured as the journey's destination. When the Stoic adherent lives his life in accordance with wisdom, these two metaphors align, and the passage of time will mark correspondingly consistent progress towards wisdom. The Stoic's death, then, whether natural or voluntary, marks his achievement of wisdom.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ By contrast, Seneca writes (*NQ* 4a *pr.* 2) that the worst part of being emotionally attached to externals is the lack of this solitude.

¹³⁵ On the images of life and moral progress as a journey in Seneca, see Steyns (1906) 71-87; Smith (1910) 113-126; Tietze (1985) 158-168; Armissen-Marchetti (1989) 82-83, 86-90, and especially Sjöblad (2015) 37-38, 61-74.

¹³⁶ Sjöblad (2015) 71-74.

As Sjöblad has argued, similarities between their destinations help readers recognize that a premature death brought about by suicide (the end of life's journey) is not a deviation from the road to wisdom, but its culmination if the Stoic ended his life with the right motivations. Sjöblad's argument thus shows how the journey to wisdom maps onto the journey of life, provided that the two are in accord: whenever a virtuous Stoic comes to the end of his life's journey, he also reaches the destination of his moral journey, wisdom. I contend that the inverse is also true, namely that the journey of life also maps onto the journey of wisdom, particularly with respect to their destinations. In other words, parallels between these journeys' destinations help us see wisdom as a form of death: not as a cessation of consciousness, but as an analogous state that brings about the soul's permanent detachment from the body, and from its former life as part of a social and political community.¹³⁷

For instance, Seneca declares that the sage is self-sufficient when he is 'left to himself' (*Ep.* 109.6 *relictus sibi*), but that he can still benefit from the aid of another wise person. Likewise, Seneca writes to Marcia, consoling her over the death of her son Metilius: he is now in a better state, relieved of his body's burdens and 'left to himself' (*Marc.* 24.5 *sibi relictus*).¹³⁸ Just as death has freed Metilius' soul from his body, leaving it in a happy, self-supporting solitude, so the wise man's self-sufficiency - achieved upon retreating into himself - is associated with a similarly

¹³⁷ For philosophy as form of preparation for death, see Sen. *Marc.* 23.2, who approvingly cites Plato (*Phaedo* 64a, 67c-e). Both philosophers portray the wise man's soul separating as much as possible from the body in a manner that prefigures the soul's full separation from the body at death. Cicero also describes philosophy as practice for death as he portrays the soul retreating to itself (*Tusc.* 1.75). See Lotito (2001) 129-30.

¹³⁸ Cf. *Tranq.* 2.9, where men whose political ambitions are thwarted retreat in frustration to the seclusion of their homes, where their soul begrudges that it has been "left to itself" (*sibi relictum*). This phrase appears only once elsewhere in Seneca's works. Cf. Traina (2006b) 738-39.

pleasant solitude, even if those very few others who have also achieved wisdom can broach this seclusion.¹³⁹

Withdrawn within himself, the Stoic's virtual isolation also recalls the solitude of Zeus/Jupiter after the conflagration that Stoics believed periodically destroyed the universe, before its subsequent renewal.¹⁴⁰ In his ninth letter, Seneca writes that while the wise man considers close relationships with family and friends deeply meaningful, he is nevertheless self-sufficient and so they are ultimately external to him. Although he would prefer not to lose such relationships, his happiness is in no way diminished should he lose them. Therefore, if the wise man should find himself far from his friends, he will be self-sufficient and his life will be like that of Jupiter when the world has been destroyed and nothing and no one else exists, whereupon the supreme deity "finds repose in himself, given over to his own thoughts. The wise man does something like this: he is stowed away in himself, he keeps himself company" (*Ep.* 9.16 *adquiescit sibi cogitationibus suis traditus. Tale quiddam sapiens facit: in se reconditur, secum est.*).¹⁴¹

In this passage, the depth of the sage's psychic seclusion is underscored by its similarity to the total isolation of Jupiter during the interludes between iterations of the universe, when he is the only sentient being in existence. While Seneca's statement quoted above implies that the sage only retreats into himself when his friends are absent, the overall context of the letter suggests that such spiritual solitude is his lot more generally. Although Seneca concedes in this letter and

¹³⁹ On these two passages, see Traina (2006a) 18.

¹⁴⁰ Comparisons of the Stoic sage's inner isolation to Jupiter's seclusion after the universal conflagration are originally drawn from Chrysippus (SVF 2.1064 = Plut. *Mor.* 1077d8-e2).

¹⁴¹ For similar analogies between the inward retreats of god and of reason, and between the self-sufficient and intellectually productive solitude of the Stoic and of Zeus during the ekpyrosis, see Sen. *Beat.* 8.4 and Epictet. *Diss.* 3.13.4-8, respectively.

elsewhere in his writings that the wise man intellectually connects with those rare other individuals alive and dead who share his commitment to moral progress, all others who do not share this dedication, even loved ones, are excluded from the sage's inner circle. Earlier in the same letter Seneca explains the apparent paradox as to how the sage can be self-sufficient and yet value companionship with others who are not fellow philosophers: the wise man is self-sufficient with respect to living a good life (*Ep.* 9.13 *ad beate vivendum*), but not with respect to life in general (*ad vivendum*). The wise man requires many things for life in general, but only a properly disposed mind to live a good life, for "he will place the boundary for every good within himself" (*Ep.* 9.18 *omne intra se bonum terminabit*). Thus, in general terms, the sage is not alone: he will enjoy having family and friends. Yet in moral terms, he is alone, or very nearly so. Once his moral journey is complete, he is now alone in himself, "self-sufficient" and "self-contained" (*se ipso contentus*).

6. Moral Implications of Psychic Withdrawal

Whether their destination is a less clearly defined self-location or an inner citadel, picturing the moral nonconformism of these socially estranged Stoics as a spiritual withdrawal to the self leads to a number of important implications for interpreting the philosophical message behind the metaphor, as well as for situating the image and its underlying point in their early imperial socio-political context (section 7). By picturing an individual's exercise of his faculty of reasoned assent (or dissent) as withdrawal into himself, these metaphors vividly articulate the doctrine that the essential part of a person is the mind, or more specifically, his faculty of assent.¹⁴² Through this association of individual identity with the mind's rational behaviour, images of spiritual withdrawal reinforce the message found in Seneca and the other authors examined in this chapter

that what is most truly 'human' in an individual is his ability to shape the meaning that reality holds for him through his commitment to Stoicism, and to liberate himself thereby from the influence of his physical and social environments, all of which in large part lie outside of his control. The man who has withdrawn into himself will have the same experiences as his unenlightened fellows, but only he will be spiritually self-sufficient, whether he is healthy or sick, rich or poor, and so on.

In turn, by relocating our sense of individuality from the body to the self-location secluded within the body, ontologically distinct from other mental processes and from the body itself, spiritual withdrawal portrays our unreasoned feelings and the body as a whole as extrinsic to individual identity.¹⁴³ Indeed, Seneca often inveighs against the body and its shortcomings: it is putrid like a corpse, a decrepit or decaying dwelling, a fetter or a prison for the soul, and so on.¹⁴⁴ Yet, insofar as it is located somewhere within the body, this ideal self-refuge is thus located in hostile territory: we are often liable to form false attachments to the body and the physical life that it sustains, and in turn, they frequently bind us to other externals.¹⁴⁵ Withdrawal into the self through moral asceticism is thus a limited escape since it cannot completely separate us from the body that we rely on for physical sustenance. As we have seen, it is an imperfect facsimile of the full retreat from externals that each individual achieves at death, when the soul

¹⁴² E.g., Sen. *Ep.* 65.22 "the soul will draw every privilege to itself" (*animus ad se omne ius ducet*), *Marc.* 24.5-25.1. See Lotito (2001) 126-30, Bartsch (2009) 204.

¹⁴³ For Seneca's devaluation of the body, see Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 263, Bartsch (2009) 201-4 and esp. Lotito (2001) 97-130.

¹⁴⁴ Putrid body: Lotito (2001) 123-24; decaying dwelling: Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 110, 112; fetter or prison: Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 154-55.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Bartsch (2009) 202. Sen. *Ep.* 14.1 "the man who is a slave to his body is a slave to many things."

definitively severs its attachments to the body and to the material world, thus liberating itself from the conflicts that arise when its refuge is located in the body.

As a consequence of this emphasis on the mind rather than the body, spiritual withdrawal thus also deemphasizes the individual's physical and social environment. The imperial Stoic writers examined in this chapter frequently draw on the image of withdrawal into the self to articulate moral lessons with this theme. Disagreeable situations such as turbulent political circumstances (Sen. *Ep.* 55.8) or thwarted political ambitions and an unfulfilling life of retirement (*Tranq.* 2.6-15) are best dealt with by altering our expectations so that we can live in such states with contentment rather than by attempting to physically and socially remove ourselves from the perceived source of our disquiet, or by feeling that our happiness depends on taking some other remedial action that rectifies the distressing circumstances. Just as it devalues the importance of what happens to the body, retreat into the self suggests that our physical environment and social circumstances play - or ought to play - a minimal role in our moral well-being. The imperial Stoic writers who employ this image thus emphasize that the preponderating importance of the individual's moral mission requires that he mentally distance himself from everything and everyone else in his life, even from parts of his own personality. He will not necessarily divest himself of these things or stop valuing them, but he must consciously consider them to be of secondary importance to his own ethical journey. In a moral manner of speaking, the wise man is largely set apart from the world.

Indeed, spiritual withdrawal emphasizes the solitary individual's pivotal role in his own moral progress. We have often seen how such metaphors emphasize the solitary nature of this retreat,

and with a few exceptions to be discussed below, how the self-location only serves as a refuge for the individual to whom it belongs. The image of withdrawing into *oneself* away from and sometimes in active resistance to externals thus emphasizes that personal moral progress and the proper use of one's moral consent in particular are a matter that each individual must undertake on his own. From the perspective of this metaphor, moral self-betterment emerges as a largely solitary activity that requires self-sufficiency to reach and to retain wisdom. While spiritual withdrawal does not necessarily or even typically coincide with a retreat to physical and social isolation, it morally alienates the philosophical adept from virtually everyone and everything in his life, leaving him morally alone, or nearly so.

In place of these old attachments based on the physical world, spiritual withdrawal allows the wise man to interact with select others by intellectual means concerning moral matters. Due to the psychic nature of these interactions, it becomes less important that such friendships occur in shared time and space, allowing the sage to forge personal relationships with virtuous men of the past and contemporary friends, especially when they are physically absent. Nevertheless, because of the same psychic nature of these relationships, the individual is firmly positioned at the centre of this restricted intellectual community.

Scholars disagree over whether the withdrawn man's intellectual relationships are primarily imaginary and projected, or whether they are conceived of as truly interpersonal, an issue that impacts just how central the spiritual recluse is within his supra-sensible community. If his deceased and absent friends are principally viewed as figments of his imagination, then his spiritual withdrawal is in large part solitary, for the wisdom that these internal moral guides offer

will wholly depend upon his desire to interact with them.¹⁴⁶ By contrast, if such friendships have some objective substance, then we will be more inclined to view the retired sage as one party in a series of reciprocal interactions and thus as less central to his intellectual relationships.¹⁴⁷

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to weigh in on this disagreement as regards Stoic doctrine, the image of withdrawal into the self highlights the spiritual recluse's leading role in these intellectual relationships without diminishing the potential for dynamic interaction. The withdrawal metaphor highlights the individual's control over his inner space: it is up to him whether to grant his friends admission. In letter 7.8, Lucilius is urged to withdraw into himself, whereupon Seneca instructs him to 'let in' only worthy friends, and in letter 62.2, Seneca emphasizes that he does not need to leave himself when he spends time with his friends, past and present.¹⁴⁸ Likewise, in letter 27.1-2 he invites Lucilius into his inner spiritual sanctum to listen to his introspective self-talk, while in letter 55.11, he emphasizes the mind's control over such admissions. The withdrawn man maintains control over his intellectual interactions with his friends: Lucilius cannot enter Seneca's inner sanctum uninvited, while Seneca can associate with whomever he likes without departing from himself.

In philosophical terms, this emphasizes that no matter how profound and real the wise man's interaction is with his psychic friends, these relationships depend upon his will to initiate and sustain the interaction. Seneca's friendship with chronologically or physically distant friends like

¹⁴⁶ Op. cit. Bartsch (2006) 200-2, 244-45, who emphasizes intellectual relationships with virtuous men of the past, contending that Seneca only rarely converts contemporary friends into internal witnesses to his thoughts.

¹⁴⁷ Davies (2014) *passim*.

¹⁴⁸ The wise man exerts control over his intellectual interactions with the dead. Seneca (*Ep.* 104.20-21) writes that spiritual self-improvement requires distancing oneself from harmful internal companions and spending time instead in the spiritual company of virtuous men of the past.

Socrates or Lucilius requires him to pick up a work of philosophy or a letter and spiritually commit himself to interacting with their ideas and their example. Even in a case where a friend is physically present, the withdrawal metaphor highlights how intellectual interaction requires Seneca to 'open himself up' to what his friend has to say.

From a practical perspective, withdrawal into the self and the intellectual friendships that it promotes valorize self-driven moral growth assisted by moralizing literature, casting Seneca's own philosophical works, in particular his *Epistulae Morales*, as ideal forms of psychic communication.¹⁴⁹ The letters that Seneca exchanges with Lucilius repeatedly facilitate the same nonphysical 'meeting of minds' that the wise man has with his friends within his spiritual seclusion. For instance, drawing on the long-standing convention of analogizing epistolary communication to in-person conversation,¹⁵⁰ Seneca writes that whenever Lucilius' letters interrupt his conversations with books, "I think that I am with you and in my mind I feel that I am not writing back but answering you (i.e. orally)" (*Ep. 67.2 tecum esse mihi videor et sic adficio animo tamquam tibi non rescribam sed respondeam*). Indeed, we have already seen how Seneca's philosophical letters facilitate Lucilius' psychic entrance into Seneca's inner spiritual sanctum where he can share in his friend's philosophical introspection.

In turn, just as the spiritually withdrawn man befriends great men of the past, Seneca envisions that through his written works, future readers on their own inner journeys will be able to befriend

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Liebeschuetz (1979) 112-13.

¹⁵⁰ For this convention within Seneca, see Thraede (1970) 68-74; more broadly, see Malherbe (1988) 12, and Thraede (1970) *passim*.

him and learn from his moral example.¹⁵¹ In letter 8.1-2, for instance, Seneca writes to Lucilius that he has retired to seclusion not only socially and physically but also spiritually "so that I might benefit a greater number...I am doing this work for posterity". Seneca does this by writing out his philosophy, a written document that will allow him to intellectually communicate with and instruct men of the time to come, who themselves will have to draw in on themselves and invite him in to hear what he has to say. In ethical terms, then, psychic withdrawal casts moral progress as a task that each individual must undertake on his own, taking precedence over his other attachments and obligations: his body and life, familial and social connections, and his social and political persona. Instead, it offers an intellectual portal via texts such as those that Seneca wrote through which the wise man may learn from those few individuals past and present who share his moral commitment.

6.1. Moral Implications: The Self as a Fortress

As we have seen, picturing retirement to the self-location as withdrawal to a fortified citadel casts this move as a military retreat to a defensible location that is likely to come under siege. The very concept of a citadel and its protective ramparts implies the threat of violence from an enemy, whose physical presence in the refuge is excluded by the wall. Indeed, this hostile enemy is often present in these portraits of the inner stronghold, laying siege or trying to sneak in. Thus, the military connotations of the spiritual citadel connect the imagery of retreat into the self to a much broader network of military metaphors that frequently occur in Seneca's work that compare our efforts to attain wisdom to an armed conflict, although not all of the varied instances of this

¹⁵¹ Davies (2014) 70, 84, 87, 90, Edwards (2015) 51-52.

source domain in Seneca and other imperial authors are compatible with the citadel's image of solitary retreat and self-defence.¹⁵²

The military scenario entailed by picturing withdrawal into the self-location as retreat to a fortified citadel leads to a number of important implications for interpreting the philosophical message behind the metaphor. First, moral progress is cast as a warlike struggle. Inasmuch as the citadel's ramparts imply the presence of an armed enemy, this metaphor suggests that attaining and then preserving our spiritual well-being is not possible by making peace with the world that lies outside the moral self, for these outside forces are violently opposed to our spiritual well-being. The only solution is conquering them.

Yet, the fortress casts moral progress as a decidedly defensive struggle. The spiritual citadel is a fortified refuge that facilitates withdrawal to a place of security. It contains strong ramparts that protect the party inside from the threat of an attacker outside the walls. The nature of the structure implies that the party outside the walls is the aggressor while the individual inside is the target. The besieged wise man never defends himself with offensive weapons or ventures outside his fortress. The only 'weapon' that he has is his wall of wisdom, an inherently defensive weapon, whose impregnability depends upon his consistent adherence to his moral beliefs.¹⁵³ Epictetus illustrates the wise man's characteristically non-aggressive pose in the citadel, writing that the same value judgements (*Diss.* 4.1.86 δόγματα) that the wise man wields as weapons to capture his spiritual stronghold back from Fear transform into his ramparts once he has gained control of

¹⁵² For the military metaphor in Seneca, see the extensive references at Berno (2006) 108-9 and Sjöblad (2015) 38n74, to which may be added Sommer (2001), (2002) 12-20, and Gazzarri (2010) 156-210.

¹⁵³ Within the military metaphor in Seneca more broadly, the Stoic adherent does sometimes appear with weapons, though only rarely (e.g. *Ep.* 87.41) is he portrayed as taking an aggressive stance (Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 77-79).

the citadel (*Diss.* 4.5.25-26). The spiritual fortress thus casts withdrawal into the self as a defensive military manoeuvre aimed at providing the individual with a shelter that is safe from danger.

Yet within this military scenario engendered by the image of the citadel, a tension arises between the wise man and Fortune, for neither of them can be defeated in their own territory.¹⁵⁴ On the one hand, despite the constant menace of outside forces, Seneca and others repeatedly describe the sage's stronghold as impregnable and insurmountable,¹⁵⁵ conveying the absolute protection that philosophy offers provided that its adherents do not ill-advisedly neglect the walls or foolishly open the gates, actions that signify the admission of extraneous considerations into their process of forming value judgements, which should be closed off to everything except the perspective of morality. On the other hand, in these scenes of the wise man's self-sequestration within his citadel, Fortune and the other externals that attack the stronghold control all the space outside the soul's ramparts and appear to be essentially invulnerable, for they persistently ring the fortress and unrelentingly assault it, giving no indication of any meaningful weakness.¹⁵⁶ Faced with such a powerful enemy, it would be futile for the virtuous individual to sortie out of his citadel to try to attack and defeat this superior force, especially when he has only the most defensive of weapons at his disposal, his spiritual walls.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Bartsch (2015) 193.

¹⁵⁵ Armisen-Marchetti (2011) 72. The soul-citadel or its walls are called impregnable at Sen. *Const.* 6.8, *Ep.* 74.19, 82.5, 113.27, M. Aur. 8.48. Likewise Seneca (*Ep.* 111.2) and Marcus (8.48) call the wise man "insuperable" and "impregnable", respectively, evoking the spiritual fortress he holds within himself. Recall how Seneca's metaphor of moral elevation repeatedly stresses its security: insofar as the inner citadel is elevated, it also benefits from this additional sense of security.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Asmis (2009) 117, 126. Fortune's domain is invincible (*Marc.* 10.6).

Consequently, this tension between the mutual invulnerability of the wise man and Fortune, and the wise man's need for victory to secure his moral progress leads to a more limited (re-)definition of moral victory. Instead of conceiving of this conquest as defeating externals on their own 'turf' outside of the citadel, it simply consists in the wise man's successful persistence in his psychic withdrawal by maintaining the integrity of the fortified spiritual refuge, and in preventing Fortune from sacking the stronghold and thereupon adding it to its surrounding domain.¹⁵⁷ In philosophical terms, this defines victory as individual moral survival in the face of the ever-present temptation to attribute value to externals that are unrelated to our moral progress. Such a definition thus forbears from assigning intrinsic value to effecting change in issues that lie outside our moral core, such as caring for our body out of fear of death or overthrowing a tyrant who has confiscated our material possessions. This is not to say that writers such as Seneca advocate neglect of the body or disregard for one's property or for the political community. Instead, when viewed through the lens of this metaphor, these moralizing writers allow for behaviour such as care of the body, keeping hold of one's possessions, participation in the community, and so on, but they urge their readers not to assign moral value to such things inasmuch as they do not contribute to one's moral progress. As the citadel-metaphor makes clear, total spiritual security is possible even if our body suffers grievous harm or if we lose our possessions, indeed, this inner security depends on our equanimity in the face of such things.

The prospect of absolute security in the spiritual citadel offers further insight into the respective situations of the *proficiens* and the philosophical adept. On the one hand, the student of

¹⁵⁷ Asmis (2009) 126.

philosophy is someone who is still on his moral journey and who has not yet (fully) withdrawn to the fortified spiritual refuge within himself. As a result, he is still vulnerable to the attacks of Fear, Desire and similar emotions based on irrational value-judgements.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, the image of the citadel and its siege illustrates Seneca's definition of the wise man's ἀπάθεια as an absolute security from spiritual suffering that is nevertheless repeatedly tested.¹⁵⁹ Even though a man has attained wisdom and withdrawn into himself, his enemies follow him and besiege his refuge, now that he has reached his destination and stopped moving. It is clear that the sage is all too aware of the siege on his refuge, for the continued security of its walls depends upon him maintaining his resolve in the face of this unrelenting blockade.

Consequently, this metaphor portrays the state of virtue and wisdom as a paradox, something impregnable, yet simultaneously fragile.¹⁶⁰ Unlike the less extensively described self-location, the citadel of the soul is constantly under siege by an enemy of one's moral judgement, for there will always be the temptation to yield to irrational feelings such as fear, ambition, and desire, even for the sage. It is not enough to mentally distance oneself from value-judgements and states of mind that we disapprove of, for our enemies will follow us on our moral journey right up to the destination, where they besiege our enlightened refuge, demonstrating that wisdom brings no relief from temptations to stray from a moral mindset, only the means to resist them. We resist these enemies through adhering to philosophy and moral virtue and by continually fostering our feelings of estrangement from externals, states of mind that form a barrier strong enough to

¹⁵⁸ For this reason, Rimell (2015) 127n39, suggests that the prospect of the inner citadel's invulnerability may be an unrealistic ideal, given how few individuals become sages. Most Stoics never make it into the citadel.

¹⁵⁹ See esp. *Const.* 3-9, 10.4, *Prov.* 2.2, *Ep.* 9.2-3. Seneca makes practical, humane allowances for emotions such as grief in circumstances such as a child's death, yet he urges that such reactions be kept to a minimum (*Ep.* 99.15).

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Gazzarri (2010) 187-88. For a different interpretation, see Asmis (2009) 134-36.

exclude these irrational feelings from corrupting the soul's judgements. Thus, the citadel metaphor illustrates that wisdom is a fragile and potentially temporary state. It is not a single achievement but a process that must be continually re-enacted for our spiritual defences to hold, for a feeling of complacency towards our moral enemies will endanger the spiritual refuge and our philosophical attainments. The image of the fortified soul thus illustrates that wisdom is only secured from the ever-present dangers of a moral relapse by the Stoic's continued opposition to the idea that the world outside his inner rational core has inherent moral value.

7. Psychic Withdrawal in the Early Imperial Period

7.1. Limitations to Physical Withdrawal

Within the social and political context of the early principate, spiritual withdrawal's relocation of the sense of self away from the body allows imperial authors to position the moral asceticism that this metaphor represents as the 'active ingredient' of or replacement for the physical withdrawal that imperial elites sometimes undertook as a response to frustrating and at times distressing social and political circumstances. In consequence, the narratives of defective physical withdrawal and successful psychic retreat examined in this chapter offer a partial critique of physical withdrawal as an ineffective response to an assortment of unsettling circumstances ranging from restless leisure-time to political turmoil and danger, while simultaneously suggesting that stationary moral asceticism is also subject to certain social constraints.

As we have seen, Seneca represents physical withdrawal from one place to another as ineffective to address inner moral turmoil on its own. While he presents this issue as a timeless ethical

problem, his ethical critiques often situate these unsatisfying physical withdrawals in a recognizably early imperial context. Accounts of misguided retreat sometimes function as censure of how elites (mis)use their leisure-time and waste their resources on material forms of recreation and sterile intellectual study rather than devoting time to moral self-improvement.¹⁶¹ For instance, in letter 104.6-7, Seneca uses an account of a trip that he took from Rome to his villa at nearby Nomentum to improve his health in order to criticize the idea that such a restorative villa retreat on its own could offer any benefit to his spiritual progress. Similarly, he censures restless vacationing in Italy (*Tranq.* 2.13) and leisure trips to remote locations such as Athens or Rhodes (*Ep.* 104.7-8) for the same reason. Although perceptions of the misuse of leisure time are an important issue for elites in many eras and cultures, they are particularly pertinent for the early principate, when political distinction was increasingly limited for members of the aristocracy and the use of one's leisure time took on an increasing importance for elite identity.¹⁶²

Some of these accounts of restless retreat also criticize the ineffective responses of certain aristocrats to restricted possibilities for attainment in public life under the empire or even to an unstable and sometimes dangerous political situation. The vivid account just mentioned above in *De Tranquillitate Animi* (2.13) of the disturbed men who frenetically vacation all over Italy suggests that their sense of malaise arises from frustrated ambitions in public life. Seneca describes the soul of such men as "eager for civic life and yearning for action" (*Tranq.* 2.9), yet when their hopes for accomplishment and recognition in this sphere of life are thwarted, "they

¹⁶¹ Montiglio (2006) 563-64. See Appendix 3 for a similar critique of misspent leisure-time in Lucretius' and Horace's descriptions of erratic travel.

¹⁶² Cf. Hopkins and Burton (1983) 166-71, Stein-Hölkeskamp (2003), (2011), and Roller (2011).

flee to leisure and sequestered pursuits" (*ad otium perfugerunt, ad secreta studia*). Yet ambitious as they are, they cannot bear the solitude of their house (*domum solitudinem parietes*) and they begrudge the fact that they have been left to themselves (*se sibi relictum*), and so they undertake restless journeys all over Italy.¹⁶³

Seneca's argument here thus criticizes enterprising aristocrats who react to political disappointments by quitting public life to waste their time in solitary study at their secluded homes or in restless vacationing when they could find the tranquillity they seek by withdrawing into themselves (cf. *Tranq.* 14.2, 17.3) instead and by thereby letting go of these career ambitions while continuing to serve their fellow citizens at Rome (cf. *Tranq.* 3.1, 4.1-3). While Seneca does not associate this passage with a specific political context, it might profitably be connected to the increasing importance of cultural pursuits for elite self-definition under the early empire, and to the sentiment of some disillusioned elites that the opportunities for achievement and recognition in public life had diminished under the principate, since emperors and their courts held most of the real power and the traditional Republican institutions and offices afforded less scope for exploits that would distinguish them from their peers (or from their Republican ancestors).¹⁶⁴

Seneca also employs the leitmotif of physical retreat as an ill-advised response to a moral issue in order to highlight effective and ineffective responses to political turmoil and danger. In his

¹⁶³ The phrasing *sibi relictum* draws a close parallel between the malcontent's physical-spiritual solitude and the spiritual solitude that the sage (*Ep.* 109.6 *relictus sibi*) and a dead person enjoys (*Marc.* 24.5 *sibi relictus*). The restless man's mistake is that he is too morally immature to pursue physical or spiritual solitude. His mind has not distanced itself from its faulty judgements and so the physical and spiritual solitude that the restless individual achieves in this passage fails to alleviate his discontent.

¹⁶⁴ See note 162.

fifty-fifth letter, Seneca criticizes Vatia for wallowing in idle *otium* at his secluded Baian villa while avoiding the turbulent political situation during the reign of Tiberius. The philosopher then comments (*Ep.* 55.8) that the right spiritual disposition engenders tranquillity, not this or that location, and then ends the letter with a description of the interiority that he shares with Lucilius through epistolary communication (*Ep.* 55.9-11), a condition created through spiritual withdrawal. The letter thus instructs readers that a withdrawal to physical seclusion like Vatia's sea-side villa is ineffectual in the face of political instability such as that which Vatia experienced due to the rise and fall of Tiberius' friend Sejanus. By contrast, inner tranquillity will help such a man face political dangers while staying at Rome, or cope with negative outcomes of that danger, such as exile (*Ep.* 28.4). Through the examples of Vatia and the unnamed itinerants, Seneca suggests that changing locations does not offer a solution for challenging political circumstances that aristocrats may find under the principate.¹⁶⁵ Instead, the solution is intensifying one's spiritual self-reliance, figured as a psychic withdrawal into the inner space of the self, a lesson with no little relevance for Seneca himself, given that he wrote his letters to Lucilius during a self-imposed retirement after his loss of influence at Nero's court, shortly before his forced suicide.¹⁶⁶

By contrast with the failed retreats and relocations examined above, these accounts of withdrawal into the self also illustrate that physical withdrawal can offer relief if it coincides with a successful psychic retreat into the self. Seneca frequently uses his own retirement as a positive example, associating his withdrawal from Rome and from public life in 62 with a

¹⁶⁵ See Appendix 4 for a similar critique of misguided physical retreat in Horace possibly engendered by fear of a hostile political situation.

renewed devotion to philosophy. Upon retreating to his villa at Nomentum to improve his health, he gains new mental clarity, yet he writes, "location is of little use for this (i.e. mental clarity) unless the mind delivers itself over to itself (*nisi se sibi praestat animus*)," (*Ep.* 104.7), a reflexive expression that evokes the individual's retreat into himself. Likewise, in letter 8, Seneca describes his retirement from public life in terms that evoke a parallel spiritual withdrawal: "I have stowed myself away (*In hoc me recondidi*) and shut my doors so that I might be able to benefit a greater number...I have retired not only from men but also from business, in particular from my own business: I am doing this work for posterity" (*Ep.* 8.1-2), adding a little later in the letter that these writings are as much a dialogue with himself as with posterity (*Ep.* 8.6 *haec mecum, si haec cum posteris loquor*). In this letter, Seneca shuts himself away both physically and psychically using terms that will reecho in the following letter's description of the sage's Zeus-like retreat into himself: "he is stowed away in himself, he keeps himself company" (*Ep.* 9.17 *in se reconditur, secum est*).¹⁶⁷ In letter 8 too, Seneca engages in introspective self-talk and intellectual communication with posterity, behaviour that we have seen is associated with retreat into the self, explicitly contrasted with participation in public life (*Ep.* 8.6). As this letter illustrates, to the extent that Seneca has been able to retreat into himself successfully, his physical retreat from Rome's public life affords him a greater measure of inner peace.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Seneca's retirement from public life at Rome occurs in 62 (Tac. *Ann.* 14.52-56; 15.45, Suet. *Ner.* 35.5). The scant datable evidence from the *Epistulae Morales* suggests that they were composed between autumn 63 and Seneca's death in April 65. See Griffin (1976) 347-53, and Marshall (2014) 43.

¹⁶⁷ The expression *se recondere* only once elsewhere in Seneca's writing besides these two passages.

¹⁶⁸ For further instances of the association between worthwhile physical retirement and spiritual withdrawal, or activities closely associated with the latter, see *De Ot.* 1.1. & 6.3 (cf. note 129) and *Ep.* 68, esp. 68.1-2, 6. Elsewhere, Seneca writes (*Ep.* 56.9) that his retirement from politics has not fully eliminated his ambition; in other words, that his withdrawal into himself - at least in this passage - is not yet complete, and that to a corresponding extent, his retirement from public life has failed to bring him inner peace. Philo writes (*Leg. Alleg.* 2.85) in a similar vein that he has often forsaken friends, family and his native country for the wilderness (ἐρημίαν) in order to devote his mind to a topic worthy of contemplation, only to derive no benefit from his self-seclusion because his mind is preoccupied with other things. Here too, the psychic cause for the failure of Philo's retreat into the wilderness indirectly affirms that such physical retreats can be useful if they are accompanied by spiritual withdrawal.

Indeed, as a natural consequence of the preeminent importance of spiritual withdrawal over its physical counterpart, our imperial authors frequently emphasize that withdrawal into the self can offer spiritual calm without any physical withdrawal at all. Endowed with his psychic refuge wherever he goes, the wise man is free to occupy locations and to participate in activities that are highly uncondusive to inner tranquility. In particular, he can frequent the Forum and mingle with large crowds, which are associated with a contagiously low standard of morality.¹⁶⁹ In a well-known example (*Ep.* 56), Seneca uses his struggles to philosophize while living in an apartment above a clamorous public bath complex as an object-lesson as to how inner retreat into the self provides him with unshakeable serenity amidst the constant din of externals attempting to distract him from his inner turn to reason.¹⁷⁰ As these passages illustrate, spiritual withdrawal enables the wise man to participate in Roman society without moral harm, despite his estrangement from its priorities, thus facilitating Seneca's expectation that men continue to pursue their own moral self-improvement even when they are engaged in their civic duties.¹⁷¹

Seneca's use of the charged example of Socrates in letter 28 also implies that withdrawal into the self can offer spiritual solace in the face of mortal danger from political opponents where restless travel fails to help. In letter 28, one of Seneca's primary discussions of restless travel, he cites Socrates as an example of the imperturbable inner calm that disgruntled itinerants lack. Near the end of the letter, he advises that when a man has been cured of his wanderlust by directly

¹⁶⁹ See Sen. *Ep.* 25.6-7, 104.7, Dio Chrys. 20.9-10, 20.12-13; cf. Philo *Leg. Alleg.* 2.85. Quintilian (*IO* 10.3.22-30) appears to have adapted this largely Stoic image of spiritual retreat amidst the crowd for rhetorical purposes (see chapter 4.2). However, Seneca still advises that readers avoid places where unnecessary association with immoral men may impede their moral progress. Cf. note 62.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Berno (2006) 278, Rimell (2015) 163-78.

¹⁷¹ Cf. *Ep.* 61.1-2, 72.2-4, 104.7.

addressing his internal turmoil, he should perform his required duties in public life, but should not seek them out. While doing so, the now-wise man will recall Socrates' steadfast attitude toward the threats uttered by the Thirty: "[the sage] says 'the thirty tyrants surrounded Socrates but were not able to break his spirit'. What does it matter how many masters there are? Slavery (*servitus*) is a single thing; the man who scorns (*contempsit*) it amidst a crowd of masters of any size is free" (*Ep.* 28.8).

By recollecting Socrates' confrontation with the tyrannical Thirty as he contemplates engaging in public service, Seneca's sage implies that the present-day Stoic's participation in public life faces or may possibly face comparably antagonistic forces, with the Thirty perhaps obliquely hinting at Nero, the autocrat in charge when Seneca wrote this letter in self-imposed retirement from public life. Indeed, within the larger context of the letter's focus on restlessly changing places as an ineffective solution for spiritual turmoil, the example of Socrates suggests that acquiring a sense of inner equilibrium will help virtuous men deal with adverse, even dangerous political circumstances, and by implication, that the frenetic peregrinations discussed earlier in the letter may be unenlightened responses to such difficulties.

Instead of changing physical locations, Seneca's solution for the "slavery" (*servitus*) of the Stoic adherent's marginalized public service is contempt (*contemnere*) for that very marginalization. In other words, faced with a difficult political situation, the Stoic should not seek solace by physically removing himself from the situation, but instead, should distance himself emotionally from his role in civic life, an action that, as we have seen, is often spatialized elsewhere in

Seneca's writing as withdrawal into the self.¹⁷² When he adopts this spiritual stance, the wise man will have nothing to lose if he incurs the emperor's hostility. By recalling the example of Socrates' contempt for his persecutors here, Seneca thus appears to recommend withdrawing to one's inner moral resolve away from externals as a more effective strategy than physical retirement for coping with political persecution, and, *a fortiori*, for coping with everyday life's more plentiful and mundane obstacles.

These critiques of physical retirement from politics as well as the suggestion that mental withdrawal is sufficient on its own to address frustrations and fear produced by public life all help express Seneca's fear that physical withdrawal could incur unwelcome, even dangerous consequences. They also illustrate his belief that the moral asceticism expressed by the image of spiritual withdrawal is an unobtrusive social strategy less likely to incur offence or danger for the philosopher, yet that it is still something best kept private. Throughout the early imperial period, both custom and law produced the expectation that senators and certain equestrians would normally be at Rome.¹⁷³ Combined with Rome's traditional centrality to Roman culture and government, these customs and restrictions rendered the absence of a high-ranking aristocrat from the City or its common spaces noteworthy.

In Seneca's opinion, sometimes this notoriety was precisely the point: "glorying in one's leisure is an idle form of ambition" (*Ep.* 68.3 *gloriari otio iners ambitio est*). The philosopher inveighs

¹⁷² Seneca often depicts valuing externals as a form of slavery (Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 113-14). As section 4 illustrates, disdain and contempt are emotions associated with the elevated solitude of the spiritual fortress.

¹⁷³ Beginning with Augustus and continuing throughout the imperial period with uneven success, the emperors sought to enforce senatorial attendance, particularly that of sitting magistrates during their term in office. During this same period they also subjected senatorial travel (as well as that of certain equestrians beginning with Claudius) to imperial control. See Talbert (1984), 134-45, and Drogula (2011) 230-31, 243-57.

against certain men who adopt a form of seclusion that is so excessive that it paradoxically draws everyone's attention (*Ep.* 68.5 *iactandi autem genus est nimis latere et a conspectu hominum secedere*): they move far away to Tarentum or Naples, or shut themselves within their homes for years on end. Seneca provides a well-known example of this in letter 55 when he recounts how Servilius Vatia became famous for his self-seclusion at Baiae, turning his name into a byword for solitude (*Ep.* 55.4). At times, such ostentatious absences must have appeared to be one form of that perversion of philosophical behaviour in which enterprising men in quest of admiring attention cultivated the appearance of philosophers while paying insufficient attention to philosophy itself (e.g. *Ep.* 5.1-2).¹⁷⁴

Yet at other times, self-seclusion was interpreted as a political statement, even a condemnation of the regime, for as Seneca writes, "one condemns what one flees" (*Ep.* 14.8 *quae quis fugit, damnat*). Tacitus reports (*Ann.* 14.56.2) that when Seneca sought permission from Nero to retire from public life in 62, the emperor rejected his request, in part because neither of them could preempt others from inferring that poor relations between the two would be the cause of such a withdrawal.¹⁷⁵ This became a problem for Stoics who sought to withdraw, whatever their motivations. As was common knowledge in aristocratic Roman society of the time, Stoicism obliged its adherents to participate in public life unless some impediment intervened, and two of the three primary impediments to the Stoic's participation in Seneca's telling cast a negative light on the imperial regime. The Stoic may withdraw, he writes, "if the state is too depraved to be

¹⁷⁴ Seneca's statements in favour of inconspicuous retirement (*Ep.* 14.14, 19.2) also indirectly reveal that certain others evidently sought notoriety through their withdrawals.

¹⁷⁵ Even when there was no apparent political alienation at issue, withdrawal risked being interpreted as a snub. The praise that Trajan receives from Pliny and others for tolerating the retirement of an unnamed praetorian prefect (*Plin. Pan.* 86-87.2) as well as Silius Italicus' failure to emerge from retirement to greet him on his arrival to Rome in 99 (*Ep.* 3.7.6-7) suggests the negative interpretation that many likely placed on such withdrawals.

helped, if it is seized by wickedness...if (i.e. the sage) has insufficient influence and power and the state is not prepared to allow his participation" (*Ot.* 3.3).¹⁷⁶ Neronian and Flavian opponents of the Stoics weaponized this doctrine to cast Stoic withdrawal as a treasonous statement *ex silentio* that the regime was so badly run that a good man could make no contribution whatsoever, thus justifying his retreat, thereby opening such quietists up to charges of disloyalty and sedition.¹⁷⁷

The demise of the Neronian senator Thrasea Paetus provides a well known case in point.¹⁷⁸ Thrasea's various failures to demonstrate consistent support for Nero's regime culminate in his withdrawal from Rome and his absence from the senate for three years (63-66), leading his opponents to prosecute him with accusations that his withdrawal has rendered him no less than a "traitor to the traditions and rituals of his ancestors and...an enemy of the state" (*Ann.* 16.28.2), ultimately leading to a sentence of death by suicide.

Accordingly, Seneca urges that when physical withdrawal is necessary, it should be inconspicuous. The philosopher opens letter 68 by advising Lucilius, "hide yourself in leisure, but also hide the leisure itself" (*Ep.* 68.1 *absconde te in otio, sed et ipsum otium absconde*), because "many pass by what is in plain sight (but) pry into what has been stowed away and

¹⁷⁶ On the attitude(s) of Seneca and other imperial Stoics towards public service and retirement, see also note 74.

¹⁷⁷ See Wilson (2003) 538, 540-41, (2015) *passim*, esp. 140, 143-46. In the later 20th century, scholars have debated Stoicism's saliency to the opposition to the emperors during the 1st century CE. While many scholars have discounted the notion of a 'Stoic opposition' and represent the Stoicism of dissidents as largely incidental to their political stance, I follow the views of Wilson (2003) and (2015), who argues that whether or not Stoicism was truly the motivating factor for certain opponents of the principate, perceptions of its justifications for retirement from public life were an important factor in how the quietism of Stoic adherents was interpreted. For an overview of the debate, see Wilson (2003) 534-38, (2015) 148-49.

¹⁷⁸ Likewise, Cassius Dio reports (67.13.2) that the Stoic Herennius Senecio was executed in 93 in part due to his retirement from politics.

concealed" (*Ep.* 68.4 *Multi aperta transeunt, condita et abstrusa rimantur*).¹⁷⁹ Instead of simply secluding oneself and attracting unwelcome attention, he advises, "there is no reason to title it 'Philosophy' and 'Quiet': give your plan another name - call it poor health, frailty and laziness" (*Ep.* 68.3), advice that resembles the strategy that he employed for his own retirement, using poor health and devotion to philosophy as pretexts for withdrawal from Rome and from public life when Nero denied his formal request to retire (*Ann.* 14.56.3, 15.45.3).¹⁸⁰

Spiritual withdrawal is a yet more stealthy and unobtrusive strategy than physical withdrawal for dealing with a sense of estrangement. Sometimes, as in letter 68, Seneca has in mind a physical withdrawal that coincides with a spiritual retreat, yet in letter 103, for instance, Seneca's call for a covert retreat into the sanctuary of philosophy (*Ep.* 103.4 *sacrarium*) does not have a physical component. The act of self-distancing common to spiritual withdrawal and to its physical counterpart helps Seneca to draw a parallel between physical retreat and the moral asceticism represented by the metaphor, and to express his belief that this inner moral resolve constitutes a social strategy that is less likely to incur offence or danger for the philosopher. At times, as we have seen above, Seneca concedes that physical withdrawal is necessary to protect one's moral commitments, and in such a situation, his advice is to conceal the nature of that retreat so as to minimize the social disruption, and in some circumstances, the offence and even danger that physically and socially uprooting oneself can bring.

¹⁷⁹ See also Sen. *Ep.* 19.2-3, 22.8, *Tranq.* 4.

Letter 14 also discusses inward retreat from fear of suffering violence at the hands of those who are powerful, as well as the need to avoid such potentially harmful individuals in an unobtrusive way that conceals the avoidance so as not to offend them. Consequently, the wise man who has withdrawn from public life should neither upset public customs nor draw the people's attention by a strange manner of living.

Yet cases such as Thrasea's illustrate that such physical relocation will often not be the most desirable or prudent move, however morally motivated. Above we have seen how accounts of spiritual withdrawal without changing physical locations portray moral asceticism as a strategy parallel to physical retreat that is more effective, allowing the wise man to continue to participate in society without suffering moral harm, and from the present discussion it also emerges as a less offensive, less dangerous strategy for managing one's inner estrangement from the world. Seneca's advice in letter 103 to spiritually withdraw in a covert, unobtrusive fashion with no mention of physical retirement illustrates his belief that men who maintain their place in society and in Rome would do well to exercise the same discretion in practicing their inner asceticism as those men who leave society at Rome behind. Those Stoics who deem such a relocation undesirable or indeed unsafe should also avoid public suspicion in their existing circumstances by presenting a non-threatening, apolitical, 'normal' appearance to the world, even as they continue to practice a very different manner of life.¹⁸¹ As Seneca writes in letter 103.4-5, philosophy should take care to avoid condemning what it itself does not do, an accusation levelled against Thrasea's retirement (*Ann.* 16.28.2) and a common interpretation of physical withdrawal (*Ep.* 14.8), as we have seen above. Withdrawal into the self thus illustrates from Seneca's point of view the limited relief that physical retirement can offer from danger and dissatisfaction, yet it also suggests that the renunciatory moral attitude that it represents is similarly liable to unfriendly interpretations - it too must be concealed.

¹⁸⁰ At *Ot.* 3.3 (see above), Seneca lists poor health as the third acceptable reason for a Stoic not to participate in public life.

¹⁸¹ Cf. *Ep.* 5 *passim*, 14.14, 29.11, fr. 79-80 Vottero. For Seneca's concerns about the politicization of Stoicism, see Griffin (1976) 338-39, 360-66. In letter 73, Seneca argues openly that philosophy is not opposed to the government, and indeed, that it is well-disposed toward it. For a summary of Roman suspicions about philosophers, see Griffin (1989) 19-22. Seneca also seeks to put a 'normal face' on philosophical practice so as not to frighten off potential adherents (*Ep.* 5.3).

7.2. *Accepting Vulnerability*

Even as spiritual withdrawal offers a safer and a more effective alternative to the social vulnerability produced by physically withdrawing from the community, we have seen that the change in behaviour that it signifies is also vulnerable to hostility and misunderstanding, wherever we are. Yet in relocating the individual's sense of self from the body to the self-location secluded within the body and by consequently severing moral ties with his social and physical environment, spiritual withdrawal simultaneously offers a strategy for elites in any setting to cope with the vulnerability of their bodies and most everything and everyone else in their lives to the superior power of the emperor, or some other, more powerful enemy.¹⁸² Thus, while spiritual withdrawal offers a solution for managing everyday changes such as fear of an aging body or an unhealthy appetite for wealth and reputation, certain accounts of withdrawal into the self suggest that its valourization of the mind at the expense of the body and its environment may speak to the anxieties of early imperial aristocrats and offer a potential solution.

At times, withdrawal into the self offers a strategy for fending off fear of violence from one's political rivals, not least the emperor himself. In *De Tranquillitate Animi*, Seneca counsels the aptly-named Serenus that he should not fear a change of plan or status. Instead, he continues, the soul should withdraw into itself away from all externals and focus on itself (*Tranq.* 14.2), thereby rendering itself insensible to any losses and able to interpret even adversities favourably.

¹⁸² Cf. Rimell (2015) 126-27.

Immediately after this image of psychic retreat from fear, Seneca supplies three cases of adverse changes in plan and status that philosophical men endure without fear, two of them dealing with life-threatening adversity of a political nature (*Tranq.* 14.3-10). In the first, more concise political example, Seneca cites the case of the philosopher Theodorus of Cyrene, who was sent by King Ptolemy I of Egypt on his behalf to King Lysimachus of Thrace sometime after 299 BCE. Theodorus speaks very freely to Lysimachus, prompting the "tyrant" (*tyrannus*) to threaten him with death without burial. To this, the philosopher valiantly responds by belittling the death-threat and mocking the burial prohibition as irrelevant to a dead man. In a more contemporary and longer example, Seneca describes the case of Julius Canus, who was condemned to death after a lengthy quarrel with the emperor Gaius, yet upon hearing his sentence, Canus calmly confounded the emperor by saying, "thank you, excellent sovereign" (*Tranq.* 14.5), and proceeded to pass the ten days before his death in complete tranquillity, demonstrating his fearlessness in the face of his impending execution.¹⁸³

In these two examples, the behaviour of Theodorus and Julius Canus demonstrates how spiritually withdrawing away from fear for one's body and from fear of death allows them to manage the prospect of suffering violence at the hands of an autocrat, a terrifying prospect for most people (*Ep.* 14.3). Such a point would have resonated with elite readers during the early empire when the perils of incurring the emperor's enmity were ever-present, especially under erratic emperors such as Gaius and Nero. Indeed, such fears were all too real for Seneca himself,

¹⁸³ As Seneca goes on to write in this passage (*Tranq.* 14.7), when he is finally taken into custody to be executed, Canus is playing the 'game of little soldiers' (*ludus latrunculorum*), a game of military strategy. Canus counts his tokens and tells his friend not to lie after his death and claim victory (*vicisse*) for himself. Then turning to the arresting centurion, who has a "column" (*agmen*) of condemned men in tow, he says "you will be witness that I was one piece ahead". The military subtext of the board game and of the scene as a whole suggests that Canus has outmanoeuvred Gaius by complying with his order and by refusing to fear his imminent death (Wilcox 2008)

for like Canus he was also condemned to death by Gaius (Dio Cass. 59.19.7-8), albeit temporarily, and the thanks he gives to Nero upon the emperor's denial of his request to retire (Tac. *Ann.* 14.56.3) may echo Canus' sarcastic reply to Gaius.¹⁸⁴ So too, Seneca's portrait in letter 82.4-5 of the wise man's inner retreat away from anxiety and fear of death may autobiographically reflect his own efforts not to worry about his precarious position as he wrote his letters in retirement, beset with enemies at the imperial court, soon afterwards compelled to commit suicide by Nero.¹⁸⁵

Just as we have seen with fear for the body and fear of death above, spiritual withdrawal from the objects and people in the wise man's life does not merely evoke everyday moral challenges faced by Roman elites, but also calls to mind the political tensions present at various points between elites and the emperor during the early imperial period. For instance, the wise man's commitment to spiritually separate himself from others' contagious immorality extends from everyday circumstances, to, *a fortiori*, the challenge posed by immoral or hostile political leadership. While Stoicism generally expects its (elite) practitioners to benefit the community through their participation in public life, political circumstances that impede the Stoic from making a meaningful contribution authorize a psychic withdrawal.¹⁸⁶ In *De Otio*, Seneca concedes that it is best if the wise man's virtue is put to use in political life and then asks rhetorically, "but if the impediment does not lie with the wise man himself, if there is no lack of a doer, but a lack of things to be done, then will you permit him to be with himself? (*Ot.* 6.3). As

461n23). Coming so soon after Seneca's advice that Serenus withdraw into himself, this image of Canus as a Stoic soldier may suggest that he has figuratively withdrawn to his inner fortress to resist fear of his looming execution.

¹⁸⁴ Griffin (1976) 442-43, Motto (2001) 115-17.

¹⁸⁵ Hamacher (2006) 125-26.

¹⁸⁶ On the Stoic attitude towards participation in public life, see note 32 of this chapter.

Seneca's argument here makes clear, while the wise man is willing to contribute to public life, external circumstances such as powerful political opponents who marginalize or compromise his efforts, permit him "to be with himself" (*secum esse*, glossed in the next phrase as "to withdraw to leisure" *ad otium secedere*), a phrase that expresses his successful withdrawal into himself, that is, the convergence of his self, conceived simultaneously as a mobile entity and as a location.¹⁸⁷

As the context of this passage illustrates, in the case of external limitations on the wise man's conduct, withdrawal into the self coincides with a retreat from public life. Yet, in such circumstances, as Seneca goes on to say (*Ot.* 6.4-5), the Stoic is freed to serve the greater community of mankind through philosophically instructing others. Such a situation and the response that Seneca recommends call to mind his own behaviour when the death of his political ally, the praetorian prefect Afranius Burrus, in 62 left him increasingly vulnerable to the attacks of his opponents, leading him to retire from public life (*Tac. Ann.* 14.52), an action that coincides with an outpouring of philosophical writing including his *Naturales Questiones*, *Epistulae Morales*, at least some of his *De Beneficiis* and perhaps his *De Providentia* and his *De Otio* as well.¹⁸⁸ Faced with an intractable political situation where his own contributions would be marginalized, if we trust Tacitus' account of Neronian court politics, Seneca withdrew both physically and mentally from Rome's political life, and sought to better the community of mankind through his philosophical output.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Williams (2003) 104.

¹⁸⁸ Marshall (2014) 42.

Even the wise man's retreat from and resistance to Fortune (*Fortuna*) can have such political tensions as a subtext.¹⁸⁹ For Seneca, Fortune is a broad term referring to all those circumstances that are external to our inner moral disposition, many of which have been described thus far in the present chapter. It includes all of mankind in its domain, insofar as we are all subject to events outside of our control to which we are prone to falsely ascribe moral significance. Yet for Seneca's aristocratic readers, the political sphere forms an important part of Fortune's all-encompassing domain. Here too individuals are subject to changes of circumstance, both mundane and life-altering.

At times it is clear that Seneca is thinking about Fortune's control of the political side of life. Fortune is sometimes pictured as a cruel tyrant ruling an invincible kingdom (*regnum*), an image that evokes the coercive force that powerful political opponents can exert over our lives.¹⁹⁰ Conversely, Seneca describes powerful men who seek to injure us as the "hands of Fortune" (*Const.* 8.3) and even more significantly, describes Augustus (*Brev.* 4.4) and Nero (*Clem.* 1.1.2) as dispensing Fortune to their subjects, an association aided by the fact that emperors were regularly linked with Fortune during the imperial period.¹⁹¹

In several passages, the wise man retreats within himself away from Fortune and subsequently defends his fortified spiritual refuge from Fortune's siege.¹⁹² In these images, the wise man's spiritual withdrawal from and subsequent resistance to the predations of Fortune express his

¹⁸⁹ On the political aspects of Fortune in Seneca, see Asmis (2009) 115-16, 120, 126-27, 128-32, 135.

¹⁹⁰ Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 160-61, Asmis (2009) 117-18, 135, *Brev.* 10.4 *Beat.* 25.5, *Prov.* 6.7, esp. *Marc.* 10.6.

¹⁹¹ Wallace-Hadrill (1981) 323, supplemented by Asmis (2009) 130-31, and Braund (2009) 168.

¹⁹² At *Ep.* 45.9, 74.16-21, 113.27-30, *Ben.* 7.1.7, and *Helv.* 17.3-5, Seneca depicts inward retreat away from Fortune when it is unclear or unlikely that the wise man is retreating from a toxic political situation.

struggle to maintain his willing obedience to the fated order of the universe (Nature, Fate, god, etc.) in the face of compelling temptation to assent to false judgements about the goods of Fortune.¹⁹³ At least one of these images of retreat from and resistance to Fortune may evoke a political context. In letter 82.5, Seneca urges that the reader should retreat to his inner fortress of philosophy, which will not give way to Fortune's siege. We have already seen above how Seneca's retreat from the fear of death (*Ep.* 82.4) may well evoke his efforts to maintain inner calm in the face of his precarious position in Rome's public life at the time that he wrote. If we accept such a reading, then Seneca's resistance to the attacks of the hostile tyrant Fortune besieging his inner refuge may reflect his resistance to the temptation to be upset by his declining status and the consequent danger. While these accounts of retreat from and resistance to Fortune do not expressly refer us to a political context, Fortune's 'realm' includes the political sphere, and some Roman readers may well have viewed these accounts as a strategy to cope with their fluctuating political fortunes.

Just as with retreat from fear of death and bodily harm, withdrawing into oneself away from the care of possessions, reputation and even one's loved ones also emerges as a strategy that allows the Stoic to insulate himself from the threat posed by a hostile and predatory emperor who could deprive aristocrats of all of these things. Seneca uses the story of the philosopher Stilpon and the loss of his property and family during Demetrius Poliorcetes' sack of his native city as the basis for contrasting the insecurity of the goods of Fortune, protected by worldly power and physical ramparts, with the invulnerability of moral goods, shielded within the fortress of the wise man's soul (*Const.* 6.4). In this *exemplum*, the superior security of the spiritual fortress in comparison to

¹⁹³ For the role of Fortune in Seneca, see Asmis (2009).

its physical counterpart suggests that imperial aristocrats will find safety from a hostile ruler by imitating Stilpon and spiritually distancing themselves from false attachment to the material possessions and loved ones that they could lose in an attack by the emperor or his allies.¹⁹⁴

Epictetus' advice (*Diss.* 4.1.85-88) to occupy one's spiritual citadel as a means of coping with a powerful opponent makes a similar point. In his diatribe on freedom (*Diss.* 4.1), Epictetus writes that when someone else gains power over what we value, he can inspire fear in us. Such an enemy's urban stronghold (*Diss.* 4.1.86 ἀκρόπολις...ἐν τῇ πόλει) can best be destroyed, he continues, not by force, but by wielding our value-judgements as a weapon to oust the spiritual tyrants who occupy our inner citadel, thereby neutralizing the danger posed by such a powerful opponent by spiritually disinvesting in externals including our body, possessions, loved ones, social standing, and political offices that our opponent can take away from us (*Diss.* 4.1.87).

In a similar manner, Epictetus' account suggests that his readers will benefit from practising spiritual withdrawal as a means of coping with the possibility that a more powerful opponent - perhaps even the emperor - may harm or confiscate virtually everything in their lives. The paired physical and inner strongholds in this passage, the latter initially dominated by spiritual tyrants,

¹⁹⁴ Comparing Seneca's description of this meeting with the version of Diogenes Laertius (2.115) suggests that Seneca has shaped it to facilitate such an interpretation. Diogenes' account implies that the two men's meeting was less hostile than Seneca depicts it. Diogenes reports that the encounter took place after the sack of Megara because Demetrius was taking measures to preserve Stilpon's residence and to restore his plundered property to him. In Diogenes' telling, it was only when Demetrius asks Stilpon for a list of possessions that he could restore to him that Stilpon denies that he has lost anything at all. By contrast, in his two accounts of the meeting, Seneca omits all mention of Demetrius' benevolent disposition towards Stilpon and then describes Stilpon's shocking reaction as overturning Demetrius' military victory, since the Megarian philosopher's resolve had not been conquered. Lacking this context of Demetrius' goodwill towards Stilpon, Seneca's account comes across as a wise man's adversarial interview with a tyrant, influencing aristocratic Roman readers to interpret the episode as an object-lesson in practising spiritual withdrawal to cope with the emperor's ever-present ability to confiscate their possessions and seize their loved ones. For variations on this oft-told story in other ancient authors, see Armisen-Marchetti (2011) 71n3 for further references.

suggest that the opponent in the urban citadel is a tyrant, a ubiquitous figure in Epictetus' writings based on his experience of Domitian, an interpretation supported by tyrants' frequent association with citadels, not least Domitian himself.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, Epictetus himself endured a situation similar to the one he describes in this passage when Domitian exiled him along with the other philosophers at Rome, likely in 95.¹⁹⁶ In these two examples, Seneca and Epictetus thus put forward spiritual withdrawal as a figurative way of expressing how a constrained moral disposition can help one cope with the ever-present threat of losing one's property, social position and loved ones to the attacks of a powerful enemy such as the emperor.

Furthermore, in both of these passages, Seneca and Epictetus explore the potential for armed attack against both physical and spiritual fortifications to evoke the futility of seeking physical security as a remedy against the coercive power of the emperor and his allies. In light of the superior security of the rationally ruled spiritual fortress in comparison to its physical counterpart, the upper classes will find safety from their political opponents by spiritually detaching themselves from their concerns over issues such as ambition and physical security, rather than by seeking the protection of a physical refuge or attacking the stronghold of their enemy. Seneca's emphasis on the failure of physical fortifications in his accounts of the Megarian philosopher Stilpon (*Const.* 5.5-6, *Ep.* 9.18-19) highlights how futile it is for men who are not monarchs to seek the protection of a physical refuge and of potentially defending it through force. Just as Demetrius Poliorcetes, the emperor and his allies will always have greater physical force at their disposal than those they deem to be their opponents, thus undermining the

¹⁹⁵ On Domitian as the inspiration for the figure of the tyrant in Epictetus' writings, see Starr (1949). On Domitian's association with citadels, see Tac. *Agr.* 45.1, Juv. 4.145, Plin. *Pan.* 48-49, and Dio Cass. 67.1.2. On the autocratic associations of citadels, see note 628.

¹⁹⁶ On the date of Epictetus' exile, cf. Long (2002) 10.

security that any place of retirement could offer. Elites would be better off dealing with the ever-present threat of such force by following the example of Stilpon and spiritually separating themselves from the people and things in their lives that they could lose in an attack by the emperor or his allies.

Likewise, Epictetus' call to sack and then occupy one's spiritual citadel (*Diss.* 4.1.85-88) may be read as a proxy discourse illustrating the pointlessness of contemplating violence against a bad emperor. When Epictetus writes that we can destroy the urban citadel of the Domitian-like tyrant who threatens us, not by attacking the enemy's stronghold, but by spiritually disinvesting in everything that he can take from us, he implicitly points out the futility in trying to match the overwhelming force of a powerful enemy like the emperor; better to effect an inner change. The metaphor of the inner stronghold can thus highlight the futility of seeking physical security through either offensive or defensive reactions to the ever-present threat of force posed by formidable opponents such as the emperor, recommending in their stead a constrained moral disposition that will render the attacks of such adversaries meaningless.

7.3. Meeting Cultural Objectives

From a broader perspective, whether it serves as a strategy for preserving equanimity in the face of political danger and discontent or whether it addresses more mundane, everyday concerns, spiritual withdrawal bears witness to a diminished valuation of and confidence in the social and political communities occupied by elite Romans and conveys a desire to re-conceive one's identity free of the influence and interference of these cultural contexts.¹⁹⁷ The metaphor of withdrawal into the self relocates traditional elite male cultural objectives such as recognition for

¹⁹⁷ For the following discussion, see esp. Roller (2001) 97-108, Bartsch (2009) 203-4, (2015) 193.

virtus and *imperium* from a social and political context, where some elites felt they were not sufficiently accessible, to the isolated moral domain of the self, where these constraining social and political factors were no longer at play. Viewed from such a perspective, this inward moral turn contributes to a moralizing proxy discourse formed by authors such as Seneca and Epictetus, in which "moralism [can] supply a metaphorical substitute for the world", a safely apolitical discourse that permits philosophically-inclined authors and their elite readers to relocate key elite male cultural objectives to a personal sphere of life that remained more accessible to them.¹⁹⁸ Thus, within the social and political context of the early principate, picturing the restriction of our moral concern to the self as a withdrawal into the self-location invests the individual's solitary moral experience with a heightened sense of cultural value.

Freedom is one key value that the spiritual withdrawal metaphor relocates to the moral domain of life. Before the withdrawal, man is a slave to externals, unable to control the significance that they hold for his life.¹⁹⁹ The image of psychic retreat expresses the assumption of a moral attitude that frees the wise man from the harmful influence that such externals will otherwise exercise in his life. This liberation is often achieved by 'taking possession of oneself'. For instance, Seneca writes that the wise man's mind "takes possession of itself within its citadel" (*Ep.* 82.5 *arce se sua vindicat*); the verb *vindicare* that is used here often holds connotations of liberation.²⁰⁰ In his beatific state of withdrawal, the wise man's moral judgements are beyond the reach of the outside world - he is free to determine the meaning that reality holds for him.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Roller (2001) 107; quote from Ker (2009a) 257. On proxy discourses, see esp. Habinek (1998) 137-50, and Roller (2001) 64-126, who both address this issue in Seneca's philosophical writings.

¹⁹⁹ On this motif in Seneca, see Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 113-14.

²⁰⁰ On this issue in Seneca, see Traina (2006a) 11-14, 52-53, and Bartsch (2009) 205-8. For Marcus too, spiritual retreat is associated with freedom (4.3.9, 8.48).

As a natural consequence of his freedom from externals, the secluded wise man becomes the source of everything he needs, marking his self-sufficiency as well. For instance, Seneca writes, "the soul should be called back into itself from all externals: let it trust in itself, rejoice in itself, respect its own possessions (*sibi confidat, se gaudeat, sua suspiciat*), retreat as far as it can from what is alien to it and focus on itself (literally 'fasten itself onto itself'), feel no losses and interpret even adversities favourably" (*Tranq.* 14.2).²⁰¹ The withdrawal journey is solitary and self-motivated and in the case of the inner citadel, its defence is an individual endeavour. Whatever shape the self-location takes, this metaphor highlights moral asceticism and the wisdom it aims at as a solitary, individual achievement. Indeed, our moralists often emphasize the sage's freedom and self-sufficiency precisely when he does not appear to be free or self-sufficient from the perspective of his socio-political environment: Stilpon stands before the conquering monarch Demetrius, deprived of his family and his property, Julius Canus faces the prospect of imminent execution at Gaius' orders, and Epictetus pictures an individual facing danger from a Domitian-like tyrant. Such juxtapositions hold out inner withdrawal and the moral asceticism that it represents as a new locus of these traditional cultural objectives and simultaneously draw our attention to the restricted opportunities for attaining them through customary strategies that include involvement in one's community.

In turn, the wise man's retreat to spiritual autonomy from externals also displays the power and control that he exerts over himself. The act of retreat itself requires considerable effort, conveying the individual's inner struggle to master and then prudently exercise his moral

²⁰¹ For similar statements of the Stoic sage's inner self-sufficiency, see Sen. *Ep.* 9.16, 85.9, Epictet. *Diss.* 3.13.7.

judgements: Seneca repeatedly exhorts his readers to retreat into themselves "with all their power".²⁰² The sage controls access to his refuge: he decides if and when to allow his friends to enter, and when the inner refuge is pictured as a citadel, his defence of its walls against a besieging enemy highlights the self-control that he must maintain in order to overcome temptations to depart from his resolve.

Indeed, the imperial connotations of self-control in Roman Stoicism allow adherents to imagine that their successful psychic retreat installs them as emperors, as it were, of their inner, spiritual kingdom.²⁰³ The image of the mind as a king- or emperor-like ruler of the rest of the individual supports this association.²⁰⁴ In letter 114.23-25, for instance, Seneca makes an extended analogy, writing that when the mind rules the body justly, it is a king (*rex*), yet it becomes a tyrant (*tyrannus*) when it assents to immoral behaviour.²⁰⁵ Likewise Seneca writes that the sage's wisdom (*Ben.* 7.10.6) and spiritual invulnerability (*Tranq.* 8.4) give him a "kingship" (*regnum*) over his inner disposition.²⁰⁶

This analogy appears several times in relation to the metaphor of withdrawal into the self. In letter 113, for instance, Fortune lays siege to the wise man's inner refuge, but fails to surmount the bulwarks formed by his courage (*Ep.* 113.27). The security of this refuge frees the Stoic from the acquisitive spirit that dogged Alexander the Great and others like him who seek ever greater

²⁰² Variations on *quantum potes* at *Ep.* 7.8, 82.6, 103.4, *Tranq.* 14.2.

²⁰³ Cf. Béranger (1953) 244-47, Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 217-18, (1999) 106-8, Star (2012) 23-61.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Béranger (1953) 224.

²⁰⁵ For the mind's rule over the body or over the individual as a whole, described in language also applicable to governance, see *Sen. Tro.* 396, *Ben.* 5.7.5, *Clem.* 1.3.5, *Ira* 1.3.7.

²⁰⁶ Cf. Asmis (2009) 121-22. At *Phoen.* 104-5, Oedipus likens his self-control to the kingly rule that he has relinquished. The sage is also likened to a king several times in Seneca (Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 160).

dominions while neglecting to exert control over themselves (*Ep.* 113.29-30), "a thinly veiled allusion to the lust for power of the Roman emperor, Nero", Asmis writes.²⁰⁷ Such men, Seneca continues, "are ignorant of that immense, godlike kingdom: exercising command over oneself is the greatest command of all" (*Ep.* 113.30 *ignari quod sit illud ingens parque dis regnum: imperare sibi maximum imperium est.*).²⁰⁸ In such passages, the wise man's mind is likened to a kingdom that he asserts control of by properly exercising his faculty of assent. Indeed, as these cases show, the wise man's kingdom is given pride of place over its earthly counterparts, for cities and empires eventually fall, while only the wise man's reign over himself is unshakeable and yields true contentment.

These imperial connotations of spiritual self-control are further reinforced by the fact that several times Seneca inverts the source and target domains of this metaphor to liken Nero's political power to the mind's control of the body.²⁰⁹ Near the beginning of his *De Clementia* (1.3.5-1.4.1), for instance, Seneca likens Nero's rule over his subjects to the mind's administration of the body in order to illustrate the emperor's crucial role. Just as the mind's prudent command over the body is essential to the latter's successful functioning, so the emperor is the "vital spirit" (*spiritus vitalis*) of the state, the "mind of the empire" (*mens illa imperii*); the state-cum-body cannot function without his judicious administration.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Asmis (2009) 122.

²⁰⁸ For parallels between the soul's fortifications and the security of a city or an empire, favouring the former, see also *Const.* 5.6-6.8, *Ep.* 74.19-20.

²⁰⁹ For this metaphor in Seneca, see Armisen-Marchetti (1989) 100, 208-9; for its earlier history, see Béranger (1953) 218-52. Seneca links the mind-as-monarch metaphor to the image of monarch-as-mind by quoting the same lines of Vergil's *Georgics* (4.212-13) alongside instances of each metaphor (*Ep.* 114.23 and *Clem.* 1.4.1, respectively).

²¹⁰ For a similar sentiment, see *Clem.* 1.5.1, 2.2.1.

Indeed, for readers of the early empire, the terminology often used to describe the mental destination of the individual's inner retreat offers additional support for the sense that his successful spiritual withdrawal endows him with an emperor-like power over himself. As we have seen thus far, retreat into the 'self', 'mind' and so on articulates the individual's recourse to the ability of his mind's directive faculty (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν) to grant or withhold its assent to its own interpretations of external reality. Both the original Greek term for the directive faculty and Seneca's Latin translations evoke common terms in both languages for the emperor (*princeps*). In Greek, τὸ ἡγεμονικόν is a substantive drawn from ἡγεμών 'general', 'leader', a common 1st century CE Greek translation for *princeps*.²¹¹ Seneca often translates τὸ ἡγεμονικόν with the substantive *principale* or some close variation, which also associates the operation of the directive faculty with the power of the *princeps*.²¹² Although accounts of retreat into the self only rarely use these terms directly, the metaphor describes retreat to an inner refuge that expresses the proper functioning of the directive faculty.²¹³ Accordingly, successful retreat into the self allows Stoics to imagine themselves as emperors of an inner, spiritual kingdom.²¹⁴

Through the figure of the spiritual citadel, elite Romans who felt dispossessed of a leadership role in society were able to reimagine a moral attitude that valorizes passively accepting one's circumstances, especially disagreeable and degrading ones, as a behaviour that would permit them to enact values that were widely esteemed by the upper classes, indeed, more successfully

²¹¹ For the imperial associations of ἡγεμών and its related forms during the principate, see Mason (1974) 12, 51-52, 144-46, 151.

²¹² *Ep.* 92.1, 113.23, 121.10, 121.13, *Ira* 1.3.7.

²¹³ M. Aur. uses τὸ ἡγεμονικόν in two accounts (8.48, 12.3.2) of retreat into the self.

²¹⁴ As we have seen (pg. 61 with note 109), withdrawal into the self sometimes even likens the wise man with god.

so than by traditional methods.²¹⁵ The military connotations of this metaphorical structure in particular and its accompanying portrait of the wise man as an heroic soldier in retreat prompt readers to recognize parallels between the cultural spheres that each figure occupies, thereby endowing the philosophical adept with the cultural capital that accrued to the soldier in imperial Roman society. Viewed through the lens of this metaphor, successfully aligning our value judgements with our moral convictions in the face of repeated temptation to do otherwise takes on the heroism of a soldier who successfully resists a siege. Moral *virtus* comes to resemble military valour.

Thus, acquiescence to one's circumstances is reimagined as actively manning the walls of the soul, contributing to their structural integrity through persevering in this attitude. Indeed, the metaphorical substance of the wall often links the sage to values esteemed by elite society at large. Ramparts of bravery and *virtus* associate the wise man with ideals of military valour, and through this to exemplary manliness (*virtus* < *vir* 'man'). Likewise, even the celebration of the citadel's rational building material associates the wise man's renunciatory attitude with a stance aligned with the elite male values of masculinity, command and control, while the exclusion of emotions such as fear and desire dissociates the philosophical adept from states of mind often associated by Romans with immoderate feminine behaviour.²¹⁶ With his inner citadel successfully defended, the wise man's perseverance in his moral purpose also illustrates other key values such as his endurance and self-sufficiency in the face of temptations to relapse.

²¹⁵ Bartsch (2009) 203-4, (2015) 193.

²¹⁶ Cf. Williams (2010) 145-48.

Yet, the repeated contrasts between the strength of physical and spiritual fortifications in Seneca and Epictetus render the comparison of these two lifestyles agonistic. In each juxtaposition, the inevitable failure of the physical fortress and the lasting security of its moral counterpart serve to demonstrate that retreating to one's moral convictions not only approximates military heroism but surpasses it, for it is precisely when physical fortifications fail that a stoutly defended inner citadel emerges intact. The wise man's impregnable spiritual fortifications signal his superior claim to valour, for his unshakeable inner resolve can wrest a moral victory from the most calamitous events that would deny the soldier any hope of society's veneration for his efforts. The ideal venue for displaying heroism and valour, this metaphor suggests, is not the battlefield but our soul, as it battles to maintain its resolve in the face of trying circumstances.

Endowed with these widely esteemed virtues, the spiritual citadel thus positions the moral asceticism advocated by Seneca and others as a new, superior means to achieve traditional cultural objectives, while the failure of its physical counterpart implies that such values are less accessible through customary approaches, above all through military service by the elite, as this metaphor suggests. Indeed, the spiritual citadel's impregnability in the face of a catastrophic loss of security such as bodily harm, the loss of loved ones, or the forfeiture of one's social and political standing highlights how elite readers can still enact these traditional values in precisely the circumstances that would prevent meeting cultural objectives such as recognition for *virtus* or *imperium* by the familiar means.

This image of persevering in one's moral ideals as 'holding the fort' thus portrays the moral outsider as non-confrontational, yet uncompromising in his ideals vis-à-vis the rest of society.

On the one hand, the siege of the fortress reframes the philosophical adept's rejection of commonly held values as an internal battle that is not waged directly with society and its leaders who cherish the rejected values. Instead, the inner conflict takes place between the wise man's moral disposition and the countervailing emotions that seek to take control of his mind, sentiments that would leave us deeply invested in the fortune of people and things that have no relation to our moral well-being. Furthermore, defining the wise man's victory as enduring the siege of these false value-judgements illustrates the modest, defensive nature of his goals: he is not out to forcibly convert society to his views, a futile enterprise, at any rate, for the enemy that besieges his soul is invincible in its own territory. Thus, the wise man merely seeks to adhere to his own convictions. He is no threat to social order.

On the other hand, this image also highlights the sage's unbending resolve to follow his conscience and the precepts that inform it. While the wise man does not seek to change the society that he lives in, the siege that he endures upon his resolve represents his self-imposed estrangement from the world as fiercely and frequently contested. Although the conflict is framed as an internal one, as we have seen, alienating political circumstances were one potential cause of the false value-judgements that can upset the moral disposition. In such circumstances where the siege of the inner citadel reflects political pressures, the repeated emphasis on the impregnable nature of the wise man's spiritual stronghold highlights that no amount of violent force from an autocrat can change the sage's moral convictions. The sage will face down the attacks of a bad emperor with the calm consistency of moral purpose displayed by Socrates and Cato, figures so often celebrated by Seneca.

The attenuated nonconformism that this metaphor symbolizes thus aptly reflects the moderate stance that men like Seneca took, a middle path that sought to carve out a secure space on the margins of a society that they were morally estranged from (or represented themselves as being so), without being misinterpreted as political subversives, an outcome that several times over the early imperial period led to philosophers being exiled and executed. The image of retreat to one's psychic citadel thus presents rejecting the values of common society as something heroic that is fiercely and repeatedly contested, yet as something that is nevertheless not fundamentally subversive - it is an individual matter.

In its role as an alternative, largely solitary pathway to meeting such cultural imperatives as those examined in this section, spiritual withdrawal and the morally ascetic lifestyle it champions would have had a certain appeal during the early imperial period. By picturing the ideal Roman man as self-conditioned rather than socially determined, the central node of a select intellectual community, spiritual withdrawal may have been appealing to those who lacked confidence in their contemporary social communities, an issue during the early imperial period, which provides further evidence of a cultural shift that saw some elites increasingly derive a sense of identity and self-worth from following their internal convictions rather than from social forms of validation accorded by their community.²¹⁷

During the early imperial period, the emperor and his allies increasingly monopolized political power and certain forms of social distinction, and partly as a consequence, cultural pursuits take on an increasing importance for aristocratic identity during this era, including the composition of

²¹⁷ On this issue in relation to Seneca, see Liebeschuetz (1979) 109, 111-13, Williams (2003) 8, Bartsch (2006) 216.

literature, or as this chapter illustrates, philosophy and moral self-improvement.²¹⁸ Likewise, our imperial Stoic authors champion military valour through the metaphor of retreat to one's inner fortress in a period when the consolidation of imperial control over military commands and the imperial monopoly over the honours conferred for military successes made it increasingly difficult for elites to achieve the sort of success in a military career that would socially distinguish them from their peers or from their ancestors.²¹⁹ While it is clear that during the imperial period, the upper classes kept serving in the military and in public life and continued to value the prestige that a successful career in these fields could bring, our literary sources attest that there was an awareness among some that circumstances had changed, and that the traditional aristocratic career-paths now offered a reduced opportunity for fulfilling elite cultural imperatives such as displaying the independent leadership among one's peers that would obtain the notice and respect of other members of the nobility.

The evidence examined in this chapter cannot support the conclusion that imagery of withdrawal into the self is always or often a self-conscious reaction to these restricted opportunities in the public life of imperial Rome. However, picturing the restriction of one's moral priorities as a spiritual withdrawal allows Roman authors to suggest that many widely held elite values are still accessible through adopting an inner disposition that rejects many common cultural priorities (e.g. material possessions, social standing), even as these elite values were becoming less accessible in their traditional venues. In this way, the image of spiritual withdrawal renders a

²¹⁸ See note 162. This shift to self-validation extends to the literary sphere, where Stoicizing poet Persius employs a metaphor of a turn to interiority to instruct his interlocutor to reject popular taste as a standard for assessing one's literary production, counselling "do not seek (i.e. evaluation) outside yourself" (1.7 *nec te quaesiveris extra*) in words which can also be read as "do not seek yourself from the outside" (Keane (2012) 83). According to both readings, Persius' interlocutor is to look within himself for the standard of poetic value.

²¹⁹ See Talbert (1984) 362-64, 425-30, Campbell (1984) 348-62, and Roller (2001) 99-102, 107-8.

non-conformist moral stance appealing to imperial Roman readers in value-language that they will understand.²²⁰

8. Conclusion

As this chapter illustrates, the image of psychic withdrawal into the self expresses an individual's efforts to harmonize his thoughts and actions with his moral commitments and to reject attachments to the outside world that will hinder this goal. By picturing this moral behaviour as a withdrawal into a refuge inside the body, this image draws attention to the solitary, self-driven nature of moral progress, to the private scope of this moral attainment, and to the unremitting temptations to relapse that the Stoic faces even after initial success in this endeavour.

Pictured within its early imperial setting, this metaphor addresses an assortment of unhappy emotions whose causes range from the mundane to the pointedly political, many of which lead to the urge to physically distance oneself from the (perceived) source of the ennui. In so doing, this leitmotif of withdrawal into the self reveals a variety of potential motivations for physical retreat, several of which reflect aristocratic frustrations with a political system that they no longer controlled and unease at the coercive power that the emperor wielded.

The solution, our imperial Stoic moralists argue, is to abandon such frustrations entirely by focusing on one's moral objectives, and thereby to become invulnerable, as it were, to life's daily disappointments as well as to a political system that was less responsive and sometimes hostile to the needs of Rome's non-imperial elites. In so doing, these authors offer a partial critique of physical withdrawal. It is not without its uses: a corrupt and sclerotic government or a hostile emperor justify socially and physically uprooting ourselves so that we can contribute more

²²⁰ Cf. Roller (2001) 106-8.

effectively to the well-being of our fellow men by some other means. Yet, physical retirement could be uniquely dangerous for Stoics, and even when it was not, it was wholly ineffective on its own to remedy danger or dissatisfaction. From a Stoic perspective, the metaphor of spiritual retreat illustrates that physical retirement can only bring relief when it is accompanied by a parallel spiritual withdrawal.

In consequence, since spiritual withdrawal is the linchpin to any solution for inner tumult, physical retirement is not typically necessary to achieve inner tranquillity. Given that physical retirement is often either not necessary or not advisable, this metaphor helps Seneca and others put forward the moral asceticism that spiritual withdrawal expresses as a worthy alternative to physical retirement, for it can help aristocrats cope with their unsettling vulnerability to the superior power of the emperor and his allies. Indeed, evocative wording in these accounts of spiritual retreat suggests that elites can also reach certain traditional cultural objectives through the solitary practice of moral self-mastery, particularly when the customary venues for reaching these goals were perceived to be less accessible.

In its political application then, withdrawal into the self licenses an unobtrusive form of quietism that manages the alienation that committed adherents feel from the world around them, channelling it into less perceptible practices of self-care that avoid unwelcome attention and that simultaneously grant them the opportunity to see themselves as elite Roman men while doing so. As a strategy that seeks to reimagine one's moral, and implicitly, one's social identity free from social and political constraints, and as a remedy that so often addresses various forms of alienation from one's social and political communities, the imagery of withdrawal into the self

reflects a lack of confidence in and fidelity to elite Roman society of the empire, and a concomitant drive among a few of its members to seek an individual solution to meeting their needs.

CHAPTER 3: THE EPICUREAN SECLUSION OF POLLIVS FELIX AT SURRENTVM (STATIVS, SILVAE 2.2)

....*celsa tu mentis ab arce
despicis errantes humanae gaudia rides*²²¹

"From the lofty citadel of your mind,
you look down with disdain upon those wandering in error and you laugh at human joys"
(Statius, *Silvae* 2.2.131-32).

Introduction

The second poem in the second book of Statius' *Silvae* is devoted to praise of Pollius Felix and his maritime villa near Surrentum on the Punta della Carcarella, above the Marina di Puolo, where Pollius was comfortably retired from public life (see figs. 1-2, 5).²²² The poem uses a visit by Statius to Pollius' estate in 90 as a vehicle to celebrate Pollius for his material wealth and intellectual attainments, his mastery of Epicurean philosophy in particular.²²³ In the poem, Statius recounts that he has just finished attending (and possibly competing at) Greek-style games originally established in Naples by Augustus that included poetic contests. Eager to head to Rome, Statius nonetheless takes a welcome detour by sailing south from Naples across the eponymous Bay to his friend's coastal estate near Surrentum. The poem describes Statius' approach to Pollius' harbour (1-12) and the littoral part of the estate (13-29), before following an immense portico (30-35) up the coastal cliffs to Pollius' residence above, where Statius focuses on the luxurious topmost room, picturing the solitary Pollius serenely gazing out northwards over the water and the coastal landscape along the northern part of the Bay (63-97). Throughout the poem, the metonymic relationship between the landscape and Pollius gradually grows more and more explicit, culminating in the image of the villa owner gazing down from his window upon

²²¹ Unless otherwise noted, the text of the *Silvae* follows Courtney's (1992) edition.

²²² On the location of Pollius' villa at Surrentum, see also D'Arms (2003) 209-10.

²²³ See esp. *Silv.* 2.2.113, where Pollius is said to "turn over the counsels that the Gargettian author (i.e. Epicurus) gives" (*volvit monitus quos dat Gargettius auctor*). While scholars disagree over whether this describes Pollius' study, translation or composition of something related to Epicurean philosophy, this verse explicitly highlights the

mankind as it sails aimlessly on the turbulent swells of human life (127-32, cf. 138-42). The poem then shifts to praising Pollius' wife and their harmonious relationship (147-155, 143-45), ending with a prediction of their future fame (145-46).

This chapter investigates the significance of Pollius' physical and psychic seclusion on his Surrentine estate in *Silvae* 2.2 from the landscape beyond his villa.²²⁴ Pollius' isolation on his estate subtends the poem's celebration of him as an eclectic, Roman Epicurean who has foresworn participation in local politics. In its broader early imperial context, Pollius' seclusion exemplifies the increased value placed upon personal relationships and activities endemic to private life during a period when it had become more difficult to meet certain traditional cultural imperatives such as demonstrating one's autonomy or leadership in public spaces and social contexts, due to the domination of the emperor and his coterie.

presence of Epicurean philosophy as an intellectual influence on Pollius. For Pollius' Epicureanism, undiminished by signs of philosophical eclecticism (note 391 below), see Zeiner (2005) 186-88, with further references.

²²⁴ On the isolation of Pollius' villa in *Silv.* 2.2, see the brief comments of Spencer (2010) 112, pace Newlands (2012) 155.



Figure 1: The Puteolanus Sinus/Crater, the modern Bay of Naples (after Barrington Atlas 44 E4-F4)

This chapter examines Pollius' physical and metaphorical seclusion in the poem, and the detached moral and political attitudes that this isolated spatial stance conveys. The poet portrays his Epicurean friend's detachment not merely through descriptions of his maritime estate and its physical environs but also by means of the spatialized philosophical metaphors and the numerous literary and mythical journeys that Statius' allusive representation of the landscape evokes. Within this overdetermined symbolic environment, Pollius' seclusion is expressed through both horizontal and vertical separation, articulated most clearly through the harbour and the uppermost room of his villa, respectively, the two spaces that most clearly convey the villa-owner's detachment from the open sea and from much of the terrestrial landscape that lies to the north, including Rome, though it is not explicitly mentioned in the poem.

Statius portrays Pollius as physically and psychically secluded in order to favorably characterize his retired friend's alternative lifestyle of luxury and cultural pursuits in distinction from the restless striving of Roman society at large, and in doing so, to invest Pollius' devotion to his personal life with a heightened sense of cultural value that rivals and surpasses illustrious deeds achieved on a national stage. By using Epicurean imagery of calm seas and harbour as a refuge from rough seas, Statius expresses Pollius' spiritual tranquillity (*ἀταραξία*) in distinction from the spiritual turbulence and restless exertions of the philosophically untutored masses, while his numerous allusions to a variety of mostly epic sea journeys highlight Pollius' rejection of the spiritual turbulence and restless endeavour that drive ambitious behavior on a national stage. These allusions help characterize Pollius' retirement to his estate as a symbol of his rejection of national imperatives while simultaneously investing this renunciatory stance with an equivalent cultural value from Pollius' own point of view.

In turn, Statius likens the uppermost room in Pollius' villa and his mental disposition when there to a lofty citadel, an image that conveys his friend's calm yet guarded stance toward the outside world. At the same time, this physical and metaphorical bastion expresses Pollius' high-minded detachment from and sage superiority over the unenlightened multitude, as he gazes down at them from above. The material and verbal embellishment of Pollius' lofty, isolated position reinforces this portrait, while simultaneously lending it depth, investing the Epicurean villa-owner with the characteristics of a strong ruler yet, hinting that the sumptuous security of his seclusion depends upon the goodwill of the emperor.

1. From Sea to Harbour: Epicurean Imagery

1.1 Stormy Seas and Turbulent Desire

Throughout *Silvae* 2.2, Statius draws a distinction between turbulent weather on the open sea and a discrete sphere of tranquillity surrounding Pollius' estate, where the winds and waves grow calm, a pattern of imagery that emphasizes Pollius' separation from the wider world beyond his estate. Far off from the Surrentine villa, the sea is rough. Its waves, Statius writes, break over the outcroppings that frame Pollius' harbour (*Silv.* 2.2.14 *curvas perrumpunt aequora rupes*). Within the sheltered haven, a statue of storm-taming Neptune (*Silv.* 2.2.21) "opposes the savage billows billows" (25 *saevis fluctibus obstat*). Despite the villa's overall tranquillity, the sea's roar is still audible from some rooms (*Silv.* 2.2.50), and Pollius' vineyard is splashed by a nearby wave (104). Off in the distance, there are rapid blasts of wind and noisy seas (*Silv.* 2.2.118-19).

At times, Statius characterizes the inclement weather using terms that also evoke frenzied, passionate human behaviour, associating the forbidding landscape beyond Pollius' estate with such a turbulent approach toward life.²²⁵ As the ocean approaches the villa, the poet writes, it sets aside its frenzy (*Silv.* 2.2.26 *furorem*). The "deranged south winds" (*Silv.* 2.2.27 *insani...austri*) now blow more mildly,²²⁶ stormy winter weather loses its headlong daring, and the water lacks upheaval (28 *praeceps minus audet hiems, nulloque tumultu*), a description that emphasizes the calm around Pollius' harbour by its contrast with the stormy sea further off, whose turbulent nature is signalled with terms equally applicable to reckless human behaviour.

Later in the poem, Statius' praise of Pollius' retirement to his villa from local politics employs figurative language of stormy weather to describe the untutored multitude who lack Pollius'

²²⁵ On Statius' use of ethical language in this poem's description of the landscape, see van Dam (1984) 210-11, Newlands (2002) 165, 169, (2011a) 127-29. See also pg. 132-33 below.

²²⁶ As Newlands (2011a) 128, notes, *austri* ('south winds') bring storms.

Epicurean enlightenment, thus drawing a link between the squalls in the bay and the turbulent nature of unphilosophical lives. Pollius (*Silv.* 2.2.123-24), is unmoved by the allure of public office, popular acclaim, legislation or military service. For this reason, his final day will not find him "in the doubtful maelstrom of affairs" (*Silv.* 2.2.127-28 *dubio...in turbine rerum*).

The poet's phrasing here characterizes service in public life as a veritable whirlpool, a comparably treacherous and unpredictable endeavour that Pollius has no desire to navigate. In light of this characterization, readers may identify civic connotations in other descriptions of the sea in this poem, a reading facilitated by the fact that the sea in Latin literature often served as a metaphorical domain for political endeavours.²²⁷ Statius pointedly situates himself and readers on this same choppy sea of fluctuating desires: "we members of a base throng, ever ready to serve fleeting goods and to desire, we are scattered on the waves of chance" (*Silv.* 2.2.129-31 *nos, vilis turba, caducis deservire bonis semperque optare parati, spargimur in casus*). Here too, the devotion of the poet and his readers to the fickle priorities of everyday life is likened to an aimless journey over a stormy sea.²²⁸ Through Statius' figurative language, the tempests out on the Bay of Naples acquire a moral dimension.

As the passage continues, Pollius gazes down upon this literal and figurative sea from his villa and his mind's eye, observing "men going astray and human joys" (*Silv.* 2.2.132 *errantes humanaque gaudia*), phrasing that likens his view of men sailing on the Bay to individuals on the sea of life who have lost their bearings, driven to and fro by their turbulent desires. As many of

²²⁷ For the political imagery of the sea in Latin literature, see Huxley (1952), Blaiklock (1959), Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 179-82, and Bonjour (1984).

²²⁸ Cf. Newlands (2011a) 152.

Status' readers have noted, the poet's description of Pollius' view here recalls the beginning of the second book of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (2.1-13), when the Epicurean sage looks down from Wisdom's citadel upon less enlightened men caught in the billows of unregulated desire for unstable possessions such as wealth, power, and the acclaim of their peers.²²⁹ While the similarity between the two views will be discussed at greater length in section three of this chapter, it bears mentioning here that such an intertextual echo underscores the moral dimension of Pollius' view of the landscape and lends further emphasis to the association in this passage of Status' poem between the stormy sea and individuals who are driven by fear and desire to advance within society.

Other parts of the landscape far off from Pollius' estate also separate the villa owner from the inner turmoil of those who value public life. Shifting for a moment away from description of the sea, Status recalls (*Silv.* 2.2.133-37) a period in Pollius' youth when he was prominent in the public life of both Puteoli and Naples, a life choice that Pollius now considers an error in doing what was right (137 *rectique errore*).²³⁰ Mention of the two cities immediately after Status' description of the sea of life (*Silv.* 2.2.127-32) further blends Pollius' view of the literal and figurative seas, the more so since Puteoli and Naples would have been (barely) visible in the distance from Pollius' villa on the other side of the quasi-metaphorical Bay of Naples.²³¹ Mention of Puteoli and Naples in this part of the poem, in other words, adds further moral topography to

²²⁹ Lucretius' account, however, contains no mention of any harbour, a well established image in Epicureanism for spiritual tranquillity, as we shall see. Like Status here, Phld. *Rhet.* fr. 13 (*PHerc.* 463) and Luc. *Bis Acc.* 21 combine the Epicurean image of the harbour with that of a citadel or comparable eminence.

²³⁰ Courtney (1992) 44, emends M's *plectri* to *recti*.

²³¹ See pg. 171.

the scene.²³² Much as the tumultuous sea evokes the turbulent emotions of men who errantly seek advancement in society (*Silv.* 2.2.132 *errantes*), Pollius' distant view of the two Campanian cities across the bay reminds him of his youth when he too went 'off course' (137 *errore*).²³³

Now, however, Pollius is as physically distant from his former life in politics as he is from those men who are still engaged in this pursuit. "Others are buffeted on that sea" (*Silv.* 2.2.139 *illo alii rursus iactantur in alto*), while Pollius' ship has reached safe harbour (140-41), where it should stay: "Never send your retired craft back out into our storms" (*Silv.* 2.2.141-42 *nec umquam emeritam in nostras puppem demitte procellas*). While Pollius' position on land expresses his choice to refrain from competitive self-promotion within the community, the poet's depiction of himself and his readers out on this same sea expresses not only their lack of adherence to Pollius' Epicureanism but also their continued ambitions for prominence within Roman society.

As he crafts this portrait, Statius draws on the long-standing Epicurean tradition of imagery of the sea's turbulence and danger to evoke the metaphor of disruption that subtends the Epicurean concept of bodily and spiritual distress.²³⁴ In this, Statius is influenced most directly by the preface of the second book of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, as we have seen above. Epicurean ethics prioritizes ἀταραξία 'spiritual tranquillity', a term that literally connotes a lack of

²³² Naples, however, has a very different significance at *Silv.* 2.2.84, which is discussed later in this section as well as in section 3.2.1 of this chapter.

²³³ Statius maps a similar moral contrast onto Pollius' distance from his villa named Limon, located across the Bay of Naples at Pausilypon (ILS 5798). Much as the choppy sea expresses unhealthy desires in this poem, Limon is "anxious" (*Silv.* 2.2.81 *angitur*), belying the tranquility of its toponym (Pausilypon as παύω 'to stop' λυπή 'pain') due to the absence of the placid Pollius, whom it sees across the bay in his Surrentine villa.

²³⁴ Athenaeus 12.67 (Us. fr. 413) notes how Epicurus repeatedly employs storm-imagery (καταιγισμούς). For further examples of this imagery in relation to Epicurean ideas, e.g. Epicur. *Men.* 128, Lucil. fr. 626 (Marx), Cic. *Tusc.* 5.6.16 (Us. fr. 425); Lucr. 2.1-13, 5.8-12, Phld. *Anth. Pal.* 10.21, Plut. *Mor.* 101b (Us. fr. 520), 126b-c (cf. Usener (1977) 150), 653f (Us. fr. 61) 1090a-b (Us. fr. 68, 413), Diog. Laert. 10.137 (Us. fr. 452), Porph. *Marc.* 31 (p. 209, 21 = Us. fr. 457). See also Fowler (2002) 31-32, with references to pertinent scholarship.

disturbance.²³⁵ For Epicureans, this spiritual condition is the experience of katastematic pleasure, a tranquil state in which one's bodily and spiritual desires are satisfied, not through satiety but through the absence of bodily and especially spiritual distress.²³⁶

Reaching and maintaining this latter state requires limiting one's desires and thereby removing all fear. By restricting their desires to what is necessary for material subsistence, Epicureans acquire what they need for relief from bodily discomfort, a key condition for spiritual tranquillity. Furthermore, and most important for the present discussion, by limiting his desires to the bare necessities, the Epicurean eliminates all aspiration for inessentials such as wealth, power, fame, or a long life. They are not necessary for relieving bodily discomfort and are also difficult to acquire and maintain possession of, and thus desire for acquiring them and fear of losing them causes needless spiritual tumult. It is the turbulent desire and fear for such inessentials that buffets the unphilosophical men whom Pollius sees sailing to and fro on the sea.²³⁷

In combination with the image of the harbour, examined in the following subsection, the symbolism of men struggling on the turbulent sea in *Silvae* 2.2 evokes the sea voyage as a symbol for man's journey through physical and particularly through moral life.²³⁸ In this

²³⁵ For ἀταραξία, see Warren (2002) 3-5.

²³⁶ See LS 1.102-157, for the key primary sources on Epicurean ethics, and LS 2.488-90 and O'Keefe (2010) 193-95 for references to contemporary scholarship on this topic.

²³⁷ While at first sight Statius' celebration of Pollius' material wealth in *Silv.* 2.2 might seem to suggest that his Epicurean friend also values at least some such inessentials, Statius writes (*Silv.* 2.2.119-27) that Pollius' true wealth is derived from his philosophical attainments, which allow him to keep his material prosperity in perspective as an ancillary ornament of his wisdom. At the same time, Statius' celebration of the material wealth of the villa and the riches within serve as a tangle symbol of Pollius's intangible philosophical attainment. See Zeiner (2005) 187-88.

²³⁸ For these metaphors in *Silv.* 2.2, see Nisbet (1978) 2; more generally, see Fowler (2002) 58-61. On the Stoic journeys of life and moral progress in relation to self-seclusion, see chapter 2, sections 1 and 3.

metaphor, adverse wind and waves represent obstacles to the soul's progress, in particular, as we have seen, passionate desire for inconstant and unnecessary things valued by society. By using the stormy sea of the Bay of Naples and marine metaphors to describe this attitude, Statius expresses how vulnerable this unphilosophical disposition makes men to external circumstances. Just as wind and waves, fickle desires drive such unfortunate men off course, depriving them of stability in their lives.²³⁹ In consequence, they pursue one unnecessary ambition after another without making progress towards what ought to be their primary objective, achieving inner peace, an error akin to sailing about on a stormy sea rather than seeking safe harbour.²⁴⁰

1.2 Tranquil Harbour and Spiritual Calm

Pollius' maritime villa lies at the edge of this quasi-metaphorical Bay of Naples, yet access to the villa is limited to a single harbour, which gives the estate a secluded air. Statius describes how the rocky coastline gives way in front of the mansion to form a natural harbour. "A single tract of shore," (*Silv.* 2.2.15-16 *unum litus*) he writes, recedes inland between "looming crags" (16 *scopulis pendentibus*, cf. 14 *curvas...rupes*), breaking the lofty cliffs that run along the shoreline (15 *montique intervenit*). Pollius' small harbour is distinguished from an otherwise inhospitable coastline of soaring cliffs that run along the water's edge. In Statius' description, the harbour's solitary presence on the otherwise rocky, mountainous coast marks it as the unique point of safety from the stormy sea and the sole means of accessing Pollius' estate.²⁴¹

²³⁹ As Putnam (forthcoming) observes, Statius employs *figura etymologica* in this passage (see also the following note) to illustrate the connection between the common man's enslavement to desire for fleeting goods (*Silv.* 2.2.129-30 *caducis...bonis*) and his errant course on the seas of fortune (131 *spargimur in casus*). On the metaphor of wandering as error in Greek and Latin, see Short (2013).

²⁴⁰ It is natural that in such a maelstrom (*Silv.* 2.2.127 *turbine*) of fluctuating desires, men form a disorderly throng (129 *turba*); they have no stable associations with each other.

²⁴¹ Pace van Dam (1984) 203. N.b. how both Suetonius (*Tib.* 40.1 *uno parvoque litore*) and Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.67.2) associate Tiberius' fondness for solitude on Capri with the island's possession of a single harbour; Suetonius' wording is (coincidentally) similar. For Tiberius on Capri, see chapter 5.4.

Statius' emphasis upon the villa's seclusion in his poem becomes clearer when it is compared with the physical coastline where Pollius' villa was located.²⁴² Statius' description of the small harbour near Pollius' villa has led scholars to identify the inlet with the contemporary Marina di Puolo (fig. 2), the only suitable landing place in its vicinity, which in turn has led scholars to identify Pollius' country house with the remains of a villa on the nearby Punta della Calcarella. This site is flanked by adjacent promontories to the east (Punta di Sorrento) and west (Capo di Massa), both of which contain traces of villa sites. On the Punta di Sorrento there was a villa which was occupied until at least the mid-first century CE. This villa had both an outer and a protected harbour approximately 1 km away from what Statius alleges is the sole landing-place in its vicinity, granted that this villa's harbours are much smaller in their dimensions than the Marina di Puolo, a proper bay.²⁴³ This nearby villa even appears to have had decorative statuary on three islets in its outer harbour that would have been visible to ships sailing along this stretch of coast, further belying Statius' portrait of the forsaken coast around Pollius' villa.²⁴⁴ Statius' omission of the nearby residences in his description of the coastline surrounding Pollius' estate in *Silv.* 2.2 helps create a sense within the poem that Pollius and his estate are the only residence in their vicinity, which heightens the poet's contrast between the villa-bound Pollius and the untutored masses out on the turbulent swells of the Bay of Naples.²⁴⁵

²⁴² Cf. Bergmann (1991) 51-52.

²⁴³ See Filsner et al. (2017) 79-82. Given the currently incomplete state of the villa's excavation, it remains unclear whether the villa was still in use in the final decade of the first century CE. Architectural activity at the villa is attested into the mid-first century CE (Filsner et al. (2017) 74, 92-93, 95).

²⁴⁴ On the statuary of the villa on the Capo di Sorrento, see Filsner et al. (2017) 81-82, 87-90.

²⁴⁵ Pliny creates a similar sense of seclusion at his Laurentine villa (*Ep.* 2.17), downplaying the presence of the numerous seaside mansions that crowded the shore in the vicinity of his estate (Gibson and Morello (2012) 231-33).



Figure 2: Detail of the Surrentine coast. The approximate areas of archaeological evidence for villas are shaded (after Kreuz (2016) 433)

Within this bay, Pollius' harbour is preternaturally serene, in marked contrast with the maelstrom out on the bay. The harbour itself is "curved into a calm recess" (*Silv.* 2.2.13 *placido lunata recessu*) under the supervision of Neptune (20-21, 24-25), who keeps the breakers at bay, as noted above. As a result, Statius writes that "the sea's repose is astonishing" (*Silv.* 2.2.26 *mira quies pelagi*) here, for the stormy weather subsides as it enters the harbour.²⁴⁶ Much as with his metonymic description of the stormy weather out on the bay, Statius describes the calm seas in ethical language that reflects the character of its principal occupant Pollius.²⁴⁷ When they enter the harbour, the deranged south winds blow "with greater clemency" (*Silv.* 2.2.27 *clementius*),

²⁴⁶ Later, Statius describes the view across "prostrate Nereus" (*Silv.* 2.2.74-75 *iacentem Nerea*), another reference to calm seas (Newlands (2011a) 140).

while "modest pools lie prostrate, imitating the character of their master" (29 *stagna modesta iacent dominique imitantia mores*). Sheltered from the storms of fear and desire outside, the tranquil weather inside Pollius' harbour takes on a distinctly ethical character, relaying Pollius' inner serenity and the self-restraint and leniency towards others that this disposition engenders.

Statius' emphasis on the preternaturally calm quality of Pollius' harbour becomes clearer when it is compared with the conditions at the Marina di Puolo, where the harbour was located.²⁴⁸ Even though this bay has the general appearance of the crescent shape mentioned in the poem, to the northwest it lies exposed to incoming waves, unshielded by any line of cliffs. The bay is thus not so calm as Statius says.

Conversely, the inner disposition of Pollius and his wife Polla likens them to the tranquil weather in their harbour.²⁴⁹ Pollius is first introduced in the poem as *placidus* (*Silv.* 2.2.9 'calm'), much as his harbour (13 *placido...recessu*), and his quiescent character (71-72 *animum virtute quieta compositus*) matches the surprising quiet (26 *mira quies*) of the sea by his estate.²⁵⁰ Pollius' wife Polla is also present on the estate, Pollius' only human companion at the villa in the poem aside from Statius during his temporary visit. Her presence is downplayed, however, and is largely relegated to the beginning and end of the poem (*Silv.* 2.2.10, 147-55).²⁵¹ Like her husband, Polla

²⁴⁷ See note 225 above.

²⁴⁸ Cf. Krüger (1998) 191.

²⁴⁹ On the metonymy between the estate and its owners, which extends beyond shared calm, see van Dam (1984) 191, 201, 209-10, Newlands (2011a) 125, 128.

²⁵⁰ As we shall see in a moment, Pollius' figurative boat has entered "calm quiet" (*Silv.* 2.2.140 *placidamque quietem*). Opening the preface of his third book of *Silvae*, Statius addresses Pollius as "most worthy of this quiet (*hac...quiete*) that you cling to so faithfully" (*Silv.* 3 *pr.* 2).

²⁵¹ Pollius is also mentioned obliquely with Polla when Statius refers to "both masters" of the estate (*Silv.* 2.2.107 *dominis ambobus*). On Pollius' solitude in relation to Polla, see also sections 2.2.2 and 3.1 of this chapter.

too reflects the tranquility of their estate, for she exhibits *temperies* (*Silv.* 2.2.154) in her use of wealth, a term that refers here to her moderate spending habits, yet which often describes a temperate climate.²⁵²

Not only does the maritime landscape of his estate imitate his spiritual serenity, but later in the poem, Statius makes clear that Pollius' tranquillity actually *causes* the landscape to become calm, inverting the commonplace that a tranquil location fosters intellectual activity.²⁵³ When Pollius engages in a variety of intellectual pursuits at his country house (*Silv.* 2.2.112-15), including some form of Epicurean activity (Statius' wording is imprecise) as well as writing epic, elegiac, and iambic verse, Statius writes (18-19) that the inclement weather around his estate subsides. Pollius' philosophical activity operates in harmony with his literary pursuits to subdue the maritime landscape, transforming it into a physical facsimile of his spiritual tranquillity.²⁵⁴

It is important to note, however, that this sphere of physical-cum-spiritual tranquillity is limited to the confines of Pollius' maritime estate.²⁵⁵ While nature is transformed as it broaches the limits of his villa property, sea and wind continue to rage in the distance. Comparison here with Statius' poems on the emperor Domitian is instructive. In poems such as *Silvae* 1.1 on the emperor's equestrian statue in the Roman Forum, or *Silvae* 4.2, on Domitian's Palatine residence, the poet's totalizing rhetoric makes clear that the emperor's spiritual impact on the landscape has no

²⁵² van Dam (1984) 278, Newlands (2011a) 156. Polla is *placida* 'calm' at *Silv.* 3.1.179.

²⁵³ Cf. Zeiner (2005) 181-82. Conversely, Pollius' absence from his villa at Limon leads to its anxiety (*Silv.* 2.2.81-82).

²⁵⁴ While Epicureanism traditionally viewed poetry as a secondary pursuit, Pollius' varied intellectual activity reflects an eclectic Roman approach to practising Epicureanism, surely influenced in this respect by the example of Lucretius, among others. For further discussion, see section 1.3 below.

²⁵⁵ In *Silv.* 2.2, Pollius' control of the landscape extends to his terrestrial estate, which he masters in a quasi-martial conquest (esp. 52-59), an image that relays his spiritual self-mastery (Newlands (2002) 157-58).

limit.²⁵⁶ There is no spatial boundary in these poems that restricts the emperor's power; indeed, Statius' poem on Domitian's construction of the Via Domitiana between Sinuessa and Puteoli emphasizes (*Silv.* 4.3, esp. 20-26) how the emperor's construction has brought Naples and the cultural pursuits that it represents closer to Rome and the emperor's power. In light of this comparison to Statius' poems on Domitian, the contrast in *Silvae* 2.2 between the calm sea in Pollius harbour and the raging wind and waves in the distance illustrates not only Pollius' philosophical detachment from society, but also the limited effect that he has on that society as a philosophical outsider. Even though he subdues nature on his estate and calms the elements along the coastline, his private pursuits effect a personal change. He does not seek to change others, this imagery suggests, nor could he do so.

Statius' emphasis on the calm at Pollius' harbour participates in the Epicurean tradition of using imagery of calm seas - particularly at harbour - to express the metaphor of tranquillity that underlies the Epicurean concept of ἀταραξία, here applied to Pollius.²⁵⁷ This pleasurable state, we recall, involves limiting one's desires to the necessities of life and setting aside turbulent ambitions for socially valued inessentials such as wealth, power, or fame, and at times, this imagery of calm waters and the harbour is explicitly associated with rejecting the values of the community.²⁵⁸ Indeed, the images of tranquil weather and calm harbour aptly express

²⁵⁶ Kirichenko (2017) 184-85. See further discussion of Statius' poems on Domitian in chapter 5.3.

²⁵⁷ For this metaphor in *Silv.* 2.2, see e.g. Nisbet (1978) 1, van Dam (1984) 209-10. For citations of this metaphor in Epicurean authors, see Usener's (1977) Epicurean glossary on marine terms such as γαλήνη 'calm sea' and λιμὴν 'harbour'. See Fowler (2002) 31-32, for scholarly references.

²⁵⁸ Such imagery has a comparable significance at Plut. *Mor.* 1098d, Luc. *Bis. Acc.* 21, Phld. *Rhet.* 4 fr. 13 (*PHerc.* 463); on this final passage, see Longo Auricchio (2004).

detachment from desire and fear of a political nature, given the harbour's use as a symbol of retirement from public life,²⁵⁹ long associated with the sea, as we have seen above.

Similarly, in *Silvae* 2.2, the tranquil nature of Pollius' harbour illustrates his spiritual detachment from such commonly esteemed yet morally disruptive objectives, and from those other individuals who still foster such spiritual turbulence within themselves. Statius praises Pollius for his decision to stay off the sea and to remain within his harbour immediately after lauding his friend's decision to retire from public life in Puteoli and Naples (*Silv.* 2.2.133-42). His description of the harbour's "calm quiet" (140 *placidamque quietem*) includes the term *placidus*, an adjective reminiscent of Epicurean ἀταραξία in his poetry that he attaches to several individuals - Pollius included - who no longer participate in public life.²⁶⁰ Pollius' position in harbour thus highlights his separation from these others whose political priorities offer no spiritual satisfaction.²⁶¹

At the same time, Pollius' position at harbour simultaneously expresses his completion of the journey of wisdom.²⁶² As a place of secure anchorage for boats and disembarkation, the harbour marks the end of the boat's journey at sea and thus serves as a natural symbol for a temporary pause or the conclusion to the undertaking that the journey represents, such as spiritual

²⁵⁹ Bonner (1941) 53-54.

²⁶⁰ Newlands (2011a) 105. See Pitcher (1990) 91-94 for the varied use that Statius makes of *placidus* and *quies*, including their philosophical connotations.

²⁶¹ As Newlands (2011a) 154, observes, Statius' allusive description of Pollius' quiescent harbour (*Silv.* 2.2.140 *securus portus placidamque quietem*) evokes the *secura quies* of death (*DRN* 3.211, 3.939) and of the agricultural life in distinction from the city (*Geo.* 2.467) in Lucretius and Vergil respectively, echoes that underscore Pollius' detachment in his harbour.

²⁶² For this imagery in *Silvae* 2.2, see van Dam (1984) 274, Newlands (2011a) 154; generally, see Bonner (1941). For metaphors of the Stoic's moral journey to a place of solitude, see chapter 2.3.

tranquillity in the case of Epicurean philosophy. We have already seen the metaphor of the sea voyage used in this poem in Statius' depiction of the morally misguided men whose lack of progress towards any nautical destination illustrates their aimless attitude towards life.

In light of this metaphorical imagery, Statius' description of how Pollius' ship has entered and now stays at calm harbour casts Pollius' inner tranquillity as the culmination of his own spiritual journey. During his youth, Pollius went off-course (*Silv.* 2.2.137 *errore*) on the same figurative sea of political ambitions, yet he eventually gained his bearings, quitting public life. This is why Statius urges Pollius not to venture back out upon the sea (*Silv.* 2.2.141-42) and in another passage (107-11) counsels the Surrentine estate, here personified, not to be outdone by Pollius' other properties elsewhere, lest Pollius transfer his tranquillity there.²⁶³ Practically speaking, there is no reason why Pollius should not continue to move between his various properties, yet given the harbour's function as the conclusion of Pollius' spiritual journey, his continued residence there reflects the stability of this spiritual accomplishment.

By framing Pollius' moral journey as a voyage over the sea that culminates in reaching harbour at his Surrentine villa, Statius associates his friend's spiritual development with mankind's fraught relationship with the sea. According to this metaphor, Pollius' prior life in local politics is characterized as an unnecessary hazard spurred by desire, much like venturing out onto the sea, an act that was often seen in moralizing passages of Latin literature as hazardous, unnatural, even impious, and which was frequently associated with a desire for profit.²⁶⁴ Yet for those, like

²⁶³ Cf. Zeiner (2005) 188.

²⁶⁴ On the proverbial immorality of sea-faring, e.g. *Lucr.* 5.1004-10, *Verg. Ecl.* 4.31-32, *Hor. Carm.* 1.3.9-24, *Stat. Silv.* 3.2.61-77. On its association with greed, e.g. *Hor. Carm.* 1.1.13-18, *Tib.* 1.3.39-40, 1.9.9-10, 2.3.39-40, *Prop.* 3.7.37. Cf. Smith (1913) 246-47 and Konstan (2008) 34-35.

Pollius, who venture into public life regardless of the consequences, picturing withdrawal from this endeavour and its attendant fears and desires as coming in to harbour represents this retreat as natural and inevitable, for every successful sea voyage must return man back to his natural domain on land and the harbour facilitates this. By describing Pollius' harbour in *Silvae* 2.2 as a symbol of Epicurean tranquillity, Statius suggests that it was only natural for Pollius to terminate his political career and conclude his moral journey by devoting himself to Epicurean philosophy.

1.3. Sirens and Surrentum

In addition to the Epicurean imagery discussed above, Statius also characterizes Pollius through his secluded estate using a dense network of topographical allusions to places and journeys found in prior poetry, as we shall see in the following section. In the first line of *Silvae* 2.2, Statius links these two seemingly antithetical influences on his landscape descriptions by associating Pollius and his estate with Sirens.²⁶⁵ At the same time, by likening his Epicurean friend to a Siren, Statius pays a learned compliment to Pollius, characterizing his socially anomalous lifestyle as a harmonious fusion of poetry and Epicurean philosophy that exerts a tantalizing allure capable of sidetracking others from their own voyages, both literal and metaphorical. As readers have long noted, when Statius locates Pollius' villa near "walls known by the name of the Sirens" (*Silv.* 2.2.1 *notos Sirenum nomine muros*) at the beginning of his poem, he obliquely refers to the estate's proximity to Surrentum, designated by a folk etymology as the home of the Sirens.²⁶⁶ Yet upon rereading the poem, when the Epicurean quality of the landscape has become clear, the Sirens' presence in *Silvae* 2.2 acquires further significance.

²⁶⁵ Cf. André (1996) 914, briefly notes the poetic and philosophical significance of the Sirens in *Silv.* 2.2. On Epicureanism's attitude to poetry, see discussion below.

²⁶⁶ E.g. Poliziano (1978) 438, makes this association in his late 15th century commentary, citing Plin. *NH.* 3.62 "Surrentum with the promontory of Minerva, once the abode of the Sirens" (*Surrentum cum promunturio Minervae*,

Given Statius' characterization of Pollius in this poem as an eclectic Epicurean, the Sirens' proximity to his estate evokes their frequent role in Epicurean writing as symbols of the lure of traditional liberal education, including poetry, an association that may draw further attention to the eclectic fusion of literary pursuits and Epicurean philosophy on Pollius' estate (cf. *Silv.* 2.2.112-15).²⁶⁷ The presence of Sirens on an Epicurean estate may recall Epicurus' oft-repeated dictum when he advises his pupil Pythocles in a letter "hoist your sail, my good man, and flee all education" (Us. fr. 163 παιδείαν δὲ πᾶσαν, μακάριε, φεύγε τὰκατίδιον ἀράμενος). In this Epicurean maxim, the young student of philosophy is an Odysseus-like sailor on the sea of life, voyaging towards enlightenment.²⁶⁸ The Siren-song from shore stands for the lure of liberal education, a comparison that suggests that it offers some pleasure but also a very real danger if it is overindulged in. Epicurus' instruction that Pythocles should quickly sail away from these Sirens of secular erudition implies that the student-sailor should keep a healthy distance from them so as to avoid going off course on his moral voyage towards the wisdom contained by Epicurean philosophy.²⁶⁹ At the same time, however, Epicurus' instruction is not to flee all secular learning, poetry and the like, but to enjoy its charms during one's leisure-time, much as Odysseus listens to the Sirens' songs from a distance in controlled circumstances that prevent

Sirenum quondam sede). This is connected to the tradition that placed the home of the Sirens on islands near by Surrentum (Str. 1.2.12, 5.4.8, Ov. *Met.* 14.88)

²⁶⁷ The coexistence of poetry and Epicurean philosophy in *Silv.* 2.2 (and in *Catalepton* 5, discussed below) corresponds to an increasingly permissive attitude towards poetry within Epicureanism of the late Republic, on which, see Asmis (1996) 30-33.

²⁶⁸ Other Epicurean variations on this dictum make its Odyssean associations clearer, referring to the sailor plugging his ears with wax so as not to hear the Sirens' song, an analogy for the young man's efforts to avoid being overpowered by the lure of a traditional liberal education. See Plut. *Mor.* 15d and Dio Chrys. 12.36-37. For the Epicurean Siren-metaphor see also Plut. *Mor.* 662b-d, 1094d (Us. fr. 164), Heraclit. *Alleg. Homer.* 4.2 (Us. fr. 229), and Quint. *IO* 12.2.24 (Us. fr. 163). As Marshall (2009) notes, Statius also draws on the Epicurean appropriation of imagery from the *Odyssey* in his other villa poem, *Silv.* 1.3.

²⁶⁹ Cf. Asmis (1996) 24.

him from overindulging in them.²⁷⁰ Epicurus demonstrates this measured use of liberal studies through this very metaphor, for he uses imagery from a well-known episode in the *Odyssey* to make a larger point about real education, namely philosophy.²⁷¹

"Vergil's" *Catalepton* 5 is the only poem to respond directly to Epicurus' well-known injunction with its Sirenian imagery, a poem that Statius responds to in *Silv.* 2.2, as we shall see.²⁷² In the brief composition, the young "Vergil" bids adieu to poetry, rhetoric and his companions in these pursuits (*Catal.* 5.1-7, 11), much as Epicurus had instructed the young Pythocles to leave behind the Siren-like charms of liberal education. Just as Epicurus urged his friend to seek philosophy instead, "Vergil" declares his newfound devotion to the Epicurean philosopher Siron, located in Naples, possibly nearby Pausilypon, where Pollius would later own a villa.²⁷³ Whatever its precise location, in a later poem in the same collection (*Catal.* 8) Vergil declares that he has acquired Siron's villa.²⁷⁴

Yet "Vergil" ironically exploits the Epicurean discourse on Sirens discussed above by declaring in his poem, "we set sail for the harbours of the blessed, seeking out the learned speech of great Siro," (*Catal.* 5.8-9 *ad beatos uela mittimus portus magni petentes docta dicta Sironis*), a

²⁷⁰ In Homer's influential account (*Od.* 12.39-54, 158-200), Odysseus has his men tie him to the mast of his ship and orders them not to free him or listen to any orders to release him while the Sirens' songs are audible, plugging his men's ears with wax so that they will not be entranced.

²⁷¹ Sider (1996) 39.

²⁷² On *Catalepton* 5, see Clay (2004). Vergil's authorship of the *Catalepton* has long been subject to scholarly debate. For the purposes of the present argument, however, it only matters that Statius likely considered the poems genuine, as is argued below.

²⁷³ On Pollius' villa at Pausilypon, see note 233 above.

²⁷⁴ Siron's location at Naples is certain (D'Arms (2003) 217-18); Vergil's declaration that by seeking Siron's estate "we will free our life from all care" (*Catal.* 5.10 *uitamque ab omni uindicabimus cura*) may evoke Pausilypon ('cessation of care') (Clay (2004) 29, 35n18), on whose meaning, see note 233.

statement that inverts Epicurus' instructions to avoid the Sirens. Instead "Vergil" declares that he seeks out the Sirenically named Siron, whose blessed harbour evokes the calm haven of Epicurean ἀταραξία examined above in relation to Pollius' estate, a paradox that suggests that by turning to Siron's exposition of Epicurean philosophy on the Bay of Naples, "Vergil" is paying heed to a superior Epicurean Siren-song.²⁷⁵ Nonetheless, "Vergil" moderates Epicurus' opposition to liberal education, ending his poem with the qualification that the Latin Muses should visit him, "but modestly and not too often" (*Catal.* 5.14), a position that is elegantly underscored by the fact that he has conveyed these sentiments in a poem. "Vergil" thus portrays the philosopher Siron as an Epicurean Siren presiding over a harbour with philosophical symbolism positioned on the Bay of Naples before ending his poem with an affirmation that he still cherishes a modest form of poetry aligned with his Epicurean convictions.

In a poem suffused with both Epicurean and Vergilian language, Statius further develops the sentiments and imagery of *Catalepton* 5, a poem that he likely considered to be the work of his great Augustan model.²⁷⁶ Where "Vergil" sought out the Siren-song of Epicureanism in *Catalepton* 5 and invited the Muses of poetry to visit him only on rare occasions, the Epicurean Pollius embraces the Siren of Vergil's poetry without qualification in an image that simultaneously marks his aversion to ambitious endeavours on a national scale. Pollius' visual connection with Naples' Siren-like nature supports the poetic, especially Vergilian connotations of his own estate's Siren qualities. Secluded in the highest chamber of his villa, Pollius has a

²⁷⁵ Other authors also characterize Epicurean doctrine as its own form of Siren song (Phld. *De adul.* 2.6-7, Diog. Laert. 10.9), perhaps even Epicurus himself (Clay (2004) 30-31).

²⁷⁶ Clay (2004) 32-33, briefly notes this. Statius explicitly venerates Vergil (*Th.* 12.816-17, *Silv.* 4.4.52-55, 5.3.63) and considered the *Culex* to be an authentic work of Vergil (*Silv.* 1 *pr.* 7, 2.7.74), which suggests that he also may have considered as genuine the *Catalepton*, another set of poems associated with Vergil; Statius' contemporary Quintilian (*IO* 8.3.27-29) treats *Catalepton* 2 as authentic.

direct line of sight to "Parthenope" (*Silv.* 2.2.84), a reference to Naples drawn from the name of a Siren whose body washed ashore and was subsequently buried at the future site of the city.²⁷⁷ The term *Parthenope* first appears in Latin in the final lines of Vergil's *Georgics* when the Augustan poet identifies Parthenope (*Geo.* 4.564) as the city that nourished him as he engaged in leisured intellectual pursuits while Augustus pursued imperial conquest on the eastern frontier.²⁷⁸ This particular Siren links Pollius and his Surrentine estate to Naples in its function as a locus of Vergilian cultural enterprises in pointed juxtaposition to imperial exploits.

In another scene already examined above (*Silv.* 2.2.112-20), Statius fully combines the Siren qualities of both poetry and Epicurean philosophy. Pollius, Statius writes, composes both a work containing Epicurean precepts and several different genres of poetry, whose combined effect calms the howling wind and turbulent waves, whereupon the Siren flies from its crags towards Pollius' "better songs" (*Silv.* 2.2.116-17), a compliment that likens Pollius to a Siren of both poetry and philosophy. Much as the Sirens connected to Pollius' estate in *Silvae* 2.2 represent a mixture of Epicureanism and poetry, especially that of Vergil, Statius suggests that his friend has successfully fused the best of the liberal arts with Epicurean learning. That the recluse Pollius and his villa Sirenically tempt others to stray from their own personal voyages is implied by the poem's allusions to poetic journeys.

2. *From Sea to Harbour: Long Voyages*

Alongside the Epicurean imagery examined in the last section, Statius also uses his own journeys to and from Pollius' estate, and a series of long voyages allusively drawn from earlier Latin

²⁷⁷ Statius mentions Vergil and the Siren Parthenope in close proximity at *Silv.* 4.4.51-55. For further references to this story, see Newlands (2011a) 142. See pg. 182-83 for another allusion to Vergil in this same line of Statius.

²⁷⁸ Newlands (2011a) 142.

poetry, to further characterize the detachment of Pollius and his villa from the outside world, thereby lending greater depth and nuance to his portrait of Pollius' heterodox lifestyle. When viewed in aggregate, these voyages lend additional emphasis to the idea that the Epicurean Pollius has detached himself from the turbulent emotions associated with public life and national endeavour in particular. At the same time, they invest Pollius' retreat to private life on his estate with a heightened sense of cultural value, equivalent in importance to imperial enterprise from Pollius' point of view.

2.1. Statius' Journeys

At the beginning of his poem, Statius juxtaposes his journey to Pollius' villa with an account of Statius' own non-attendance at games closely associated with the imperial house, a contrast that casts his friend's estate as an antipode to Domitian's court. At the beginning of *Silvae* 2.2, Statius is at Naples, watching or perhaps participating in the Augustalia, games originally founded by Augustus.²⁷⁹ After the contest ends, Statius accepts Pollius and Polla's invitation and heads across the bay to their estate while the individuals who had participated in the Augustalia travel to the Actian games (*Silv.* 2.2.8 *ad Ambracias conversa gymnade frondes*), an event with an even stronger connection with the imperial regime.²⁸⁰ Held in Nicopolis on the western coast of Greece, the Actian games were founded by Augustus in 27 BCE in commemoration of his victory over Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra at Actium four years earlier. Such a journey takes the competitors over the Ionian sea to participate in games that commemorate a critical moment in the foundation of the principate. Statius' decision not to accompany these men to poetic

²⁷⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 1.15.2, Dio Cass. 55.10.9. See Swan (2004) 101-3, with further references.

²⁸⁰ On these latter games, see references at Horsfall (2006) 224.

contests closely associated with the imperial house suggests that his journey to Pollius' villa takes him to a cultural domain that is detached in particular from an imperial agenda.

Statius' political characterization of the Ionian Sea in a later poem supports this line of interpretation. Towards the end of *Silvae* 4.4, Statius relates his recent poetic activity to his friend Vitorius Marcellus. His epic *Thebaid*, Statius writes, has come to harbour (*Silv.* 4.4.88-89) and he has now embarked on writing the *Achilleid*. Nonetheless, he is doubtfully contemplating a panegyric epic about Domitian, picturing the perils of such a politicized work as a voyage onto the stormy Ionian sea: "Troy I attempt and great Achilles, yet the bow-bearing Father summons me elsewhere and shows me the Ausonian leader's greater arms...is my ship, familiar with smaller billows, not yet to be entrusted to the dangers of the Ionian sea?" (*Silv.* 4.4.94-96, 99-100). The competitors of the Augustalia mentioned in *Silvae* 2.2 who are now attending the Actian games must traverse this same body of water, though Statius only mentions their destination explicitly, not the sea that they must cross to get there. The political significance of this journey across the Ionian sea, explicit in the metaphor in *Silvae* 4.4, is latent in Statius' brief reference to the athletes' journey to the Actian games in *Silvae* 2.2.²⁸¹

At the same time, Statius' refusal to linger in the afterglow of the games at Naples suggests that his journey to Pollius' villa will distance him from an indolent form of leisure. Much as he declines to follow the contestants from Naples to games that will heap further glory on the regime, Statius writes that he does not tarry in the "sluggish repose" (*Silv.* 2.2.7 *pigra quies*) that

²⁸¹ Many readers have made a similar interpretation of this same body of water in Horace's poem on Vergil's sea-voyage to Greece (*Carm.* 1.3), though Horace calls it the Adriatic (15). According to this reading, the navigational hazards that Vergil faces in crossing this sea comment upon the risks inherent in his new national epic, the *Aeneid*.

has settled over the racecourse since the contest ended. The ethical connotations of this expression become clearer in retrospect when Statius repeats the phrase in the following poem (*Silv.* 2.3.66), as he compliments Atedius Melior for using his leisure time in a responsible manner. At Pollius' villa, by contrast, Statius will encounter an "amazing" and "tranquil" calm (2.2.26 *mira quies pelagi*, 2.2.140 *placidamque quietem*).²⁸² Statius' departure from Naples and failure to visit the Actian games thus characterize his friend's estate as a place of repose distinct from empire that should not be misunderstood as a symbol of indolence.

Though he had no inclination to remain in Naples or to journey to Greece, Statius relates that visiting his friend's villa required deferring his desire to travel to Rome, expressing this in allusive language that implies that he is also deferring his desire to undertake larger and more ambitious themes in his poetry. Before relating his visit to Pollius in detail, the poet recalls that he was "eager now to turn my steps where Appia, queen of long highways is tread along her familiar route" (*Silv.* 2.2.11-12 *flectere iam cupidum gressus qua limite noto Appia longarum teritur regina viarum*), a circumlocution that emphasizes the great distance between Rome and Naples, and by implication, between Rome and Pollius' villa as well. Statius' description of the Via Appia here also calls to mind the famous Callimachean metaphor (*Aet.* 1.25-28 Harder) in which such a wide, well-used public road represents a long poem with epic subject matter.²⁸³ Statius himself employs a nautical version of the metaphor of the epic poem as long journey at

This part of the gulf between Italy and the Balkans could be called the Ionian or the Adriatic (Beaumont (1936) 203-4, Parrott (2013) 76).

²⁸² Statius also contrasts *pigra quies* with imperial power in his poem on Domitian's Saturnalia, when "sluggish repose flees" (*Silv.* 1.6.91 *fugit pigra Quies*) the emperor's artificial illumination of the arena, a symbol of his power (see ch. 5.3). In his poem on the recovery of Rutilius Gallicus from an illness, the similar-sounding "treacherous repose and sluggish forgetfulness of life" (*Silv.* 1.4.57 *insidiosa quies et pigra oblivio vitae*) prevent Gallicus from fulfilling his duties to the emperor. On the use of *quies* in Statius, see note 260 above.

²⁸³ Newlands (2011a) 124-25.

the close of his *Thebaid*, when he characterizes the poem's narrative as a lengthy sea voyage (*Th.* 12.809).²⁸⁴ We may thus interpret Statius' yearning in *Silvae* 2.2 to make the lengthy journey to Rome as a symbol of his desire to undertake larger, more ambitious themes in his poetry, an intellectual's version of the turbulent aspirations for position and prestige that buffet men out on the sea of life.²⁸⁵

In turn, according to such a reading, Statius' diversion to Pollius' villa near Surrentum suspends these desires but does not abate them. Further allusions in this phrase and in the poem as a whole support this interpretation.

2.2 Statius' Visit to Pollius' Villa as an Epic Detour

Statius' wording in this passage (*Silv.* 2.2.11-12, quoted above) also recalls two key moments in the *Aeneid* where Trojan heroes must take an unexpected detour, allusions which cumulatively reinforce our sense that Pollius and his villa stand apart from imperial ambitions. At the same time, they simultaneously lay the groundwork for this poem's message that Pollius' commitment to his personal life constitutes its own form of heroism. First, the twelfth line of Statius' poem recalls a pivotal moment in Vergil's tale of the Trojan lovers Euryalus and Nisus, when a group of Latin soldiers spies Euryalus' helmet as he and Nisus steal away from the Latin camp, after making a great slaughter there: "when at a distance (the detachment of Latin horsemen) sees these two men turning away by a pathway to the left" (*Aen.* 9.372 *cum procul hos laeueo flectentis*

²⁸⁴ It is also possible to apply Statius' use of the journey metaphor at the close of his epic to the twelve years required for its composition (*Th.* 12.811-12).

²⁸⁵ For the journey from Naples to Rome conceived as a sea-voyage in *Silv.* 2.2, see discussion below. Elsewhere in the *Silvae* (esp. 3.5 and 4.3), Statius' journeys overland between Rome and Naples evoke the poet's oscillation between ambitious and otiose themes within his poetry. See Newlands (2002) 285-86, (2009) 396, Martelli (2009) 157-58, and McCarter (2012) 458, 462, 465-68. Horace ends an account of his travels down the Via Appia and the Via Minucia from Rome to Brundisium by drawing an explicit parallel between completion of the long narrative and the long journey (*Serm.* 1.5.104).

limite cernunt). This is the only other passage in classical Latin to employ the collocation of *flect-* and *limes*.

By evoking this pivotal moment in Vergil's tale of Euryalus and Nisus, Statius likens his intended trip to Rome to the heroic journey to Pallanteum that Euryalus and Nisus have planned in order to tell Aeneas that the Trojans are under siege and to bring him back to their camp. Given the suggestively metapoetic nature of Statius' journey, outlined above, Statius' persistent ambition to write heroic epic is thus likened to the valiant yet futile endeavour recorded in this episode of Vergil's epic poem. Yet through this verbal echo, Statius' diversion to Pollius' estate is compared to the flight of the two Trojan heroes into the nearby forest after the Latin troops catch sight of them, which draws a parallel between Statius' visit to his friend's villa and the doomed flight of the two heroes, who are eventually captured and killed.

Though Statius' poem contains no hint of the violent death that awaits Vergil's heroes, this suggestive parallel characterizes Statius' detour from his own ambitious journey as an act of faithful amity comparable to the self-sacrifice that Nisus displays by doubling back in a doomed attempt to rescue Euryalus when he is captured by the Italians. At the same time, this epic echo hints that such personal fidelity represents an equivalent form of valour equally worthy of social esteem. Even though their original mission is thwarted and the two men soon die at the hands of their enemies, the valiant loyalty and affection that Euryalus and Nisus display towards one another nevertheless assures them an undying fame that, in Vergil's words (*Aen.* 9.446-49), will last as long as Rome and her empire. Statius' brief allusion thus contains the suggestion that temporarily setting aside his ambition to travel to Rome need not deprive him of the glory that he

seeks through this enterprising journey. Indeed, by comparing his friendship with Pollius to the affectionate bond of two heroes whose fame will be coterminous with the Roman state, Statius' verbal echo invests the two men's personal relationship with a heightened significance equivalent to the greatest achievements in Roman history. Detouring to Pollius' estate and to a lifestyle dominated by personal rather than civic objectives does not entail any loss of prestige.

Statius' account of diverting from his trip to Rome on the via Appia "queen of long highways" (*Silv.* 2.2.12 *longarum...regina viarum*) also draws an allusive parallel between his detour and Aeneas' unintended sojourn at Carthage as well as the impediment to Rome's imperial destiny that this delay entails, a parallel that recurs elsewhere in the poem. Statius' readers will be drawn by the similarity of wording to the final words of Aeneas' story to Queen Dido, recounting how, after his father Anchises died at Drepanum in western Sicily, he had set sail, eventually reaching the Libyan coast: "This was my final toil, this the turning point in my long journeys, after departing from here on an errant course a god brought me to your shores" (*Aen.* 3.714-15 *hic labor extremus, longarum haec meta uiarum, hinc me digressum uestris deus appulit oris*).²⁸⁶

Through these words, Aeneas brings his Carthaginian audience and Vergil's readers full circle back to the first narrative scene of the *Aeneid*, where the Trojans are driven by the storm to land on the Libyan coast. With the following three lines, Vergil resumes the main narrative last seen at the start of book two, taking readers back to Dido's palace in Carthage as he brings book three to a close. In Vergil's narrative, Aeneas has come from Troy and thus far has made somewhat

²⁸⁶ *Longarum viarum* appears only once elsewhere in Latin literature in the genitive plural besides these two passages (Val. Flacc. 7.26), while an echo of Vergil's *digressum* is audible in Statius' *gressum*. The collocation *longa via* is not as rare in other cases and in the singular. Readers who recall the end of *Aeneid* 3 here may also remember that the second word of *Aeneid* 4 - just four lines away - is *regina*.

steady progress towards his fated destination in Italy. As Aeneas says in the words quoted above, Anchises' death marks a turning point in his long journey.²⁸⁷ Though Aeneas wished to head directly for Italy, upon leaving Drepanum, he was caught in the storm raised by Juno and Aeolus and found safety on Libyan shores. That is to say, Aeneas ends his story by explaining his arrival in Carthage as a detour in his journey towards his fated role as the founder of Rome and its empire.²⁸⁸ At the same time, Anchises' death is also the turning point in the narrative of the *Aeneid*, and Aeneas' detour to Carthage is a digression from the constraints of 'proper' heroic epic.²⁸⁹ Through its amorous theme, *Aeneid* 4 forms a narrative interlude that ends when Aeneas takes to the seas again to seek his future home in Italy.

The parallel wording between the two passages encourages readers to see in Statius' travels a latter-day reflection of Aeneas' transmarine voyage from Troy to Rome, investing the poet's future journey to the capital with a similar sense of national importance.²⁹⁰ Likewise, Statius' allusion to Aeneas' journey here maps the physical distance as well as the sense of opposition between Vergil's Rome and Carthage onto the space between Rome and Naples in Statius' poem, and by implication, onto that between Rome and Pollius' estate as well. Through this intertextual comparison, Statius' Rome appears increasingly distant, separated by a figurative sea from

²⁸⁷ Such an interpretation is available when line 714 is read in reference to Aeneas. It is also possible to read them as a comment on Anchises' death: this was also the end-point of Anchises' long voyages.

²⁸⁸ In Aeneas' case, Rome does not exist yet, but his destination is to establish a home for the Trojans in Italy, which will ultimately lead to Rome's foundation. In this sense, readers understand that Rome is Aeneas' destination, even if it does not yet exist.

²⁸⁹ For a metapoetic reading of the end of *Aeneid* 3, see Gasti (2010).

²⁹⁰ For Statius in the guise of Aeneas, see *Silv.* 4.2.1-2, and 5.3 *passim* with Taisne (1996) 220. For this theme in *Silv.* 2.2 and 3.1, not including the present allusion, see Hinds (2001) 252-54, Newlands (2011a) 125, 132-33, and subsequent discussion in this chapter.

Naples and from Pollius' villa.²⁹¹ At the same time, Statius' allusion invests these antipodal spaces with the sense of imperial destiny and delay that these Vergilian locales represent.²⁹²

Consequently, from Statius' point of view, the poet's visit to Pollius appears as a Carthage-like detour. That is, for Statius, Pollius' estate constitutes an inviting locale that should not be confused with a permanent destination.²⁹³ For both Vergilian hero and latter-day poet, the ultimate goal is Rome. Much as Aeneas' arrival in Libya marks an unanticipated detour from his imperial mission in Italy and a thematic digression in the poem, Statius' diversion to Pollius' estate requires him to set aside temporarily his yearning for Rome, and the ambitious forms of writing associated with the 'long voyages' contained within the Via Appia. Given that Statius has twice alluded to the *Aeneid* in lines 11-12 of this poem, his detour to Pollius' estate may suggest that he temporarily sets aside his ambition, in particular, to write poetry of the scope and renown of Vergil's most famous poem.²⁹⁴ For Pollius, by contrast, this allusion offers the first of several hints in this poem that he is a Dido-like figure, a permanent denizen of a Carthage-esque heterotopia that is physically detached and ideologically alienated from Rome and from those who seek it out.²⁹⁵

²⁹¹ Cf. *Silv.* 4.3 (esp. 39, 56-60), where Statius likens the journey overland between the Bay of Naples and Rome to a sea voyage or to a journey via bridge over an ocean.

²⁹² This parallel between Naples and Carthage is aided by the fact that the meaning of each toponym in Greek and Punic, respectively, is 'New Town'. In turn, Pollius and his estate in this poem share a special connection with Naples (*Silv.* 2.2.84, 97, 136). Livy fr. 6 W-M and Cato *Orig.* fr. 37.4 provide early attestation for Roman awareness of this etymology of Carthage. For further sources and discussion, see O'Hara (2017) 123-24.

²⁹³ For tension in discerning whether a stopping place on one's moral journey is temporary or permanent, cf. Hor. *Epi.* 1.11.7-16, Sen. *Ot.* 7.4, Epictet. *Diss.* 2.23.36-41.

²⁹⁴ Statius also structures his *Thebaid* in 12 books. In the epilogue of his epic (*Th.* 12.816-17), he pictures both works on a path.

²⁹⁵ For Vergil's Carthage as a heterotopia, see Giusti (2017).

Statius' description elsewhere in the poem of the bay outside Pollius' villa as an ocean particularly associated with audacious, national endeavour supports this reading. Despite the modestly sized gulf adjacent to the villa, Statius gives readers the sense that it overlooks a sea-sized body of water. Employing a wide variety of evocative terms, Statius repeatedly describes the waterscape abutting Pollius' villa with terms for the open sea, cultivating the impression that the estate is separated from the northern coast of the Bay of Naples and from Rome beyond it by a vast quantity of water.²⁹⁶ For instance, as the poem begins, the villa is said to overlook the "Dicarchean deep" (3 *Dicarcheum profundum*), associating the bay near Puteoli with oceanic depths, while Statius locates the villa itself near the temple of "Tyrrhene Minerva" (2 *Tyrrhenae...Minervae*), using an epithet that associates the temple and Pollius' villa thereby with the Tyrrhene sea, lying off the west coast of Italy.²⁹⁷

Statius' allusive language associates this turbulent body of water and the fears and desires that it represents with bold enterprises of national significance. Near the end of the poem in his figurative description of the stormy sea of life (*Silv.* 2.2.139-42), as we recall, Statius praises Pollius for having brought his spiritual ship to anchor in the calm haven of Epicurean philosophy symbolized by his harbour at the Marina di Puolo. "By contrast," the poet writes, "others are buffeted upon that deep," (*Silv.* 2.2.139 *illo alii rursus iactantur in alto*), a phrase that echoes the

²⁹⁶ See also *aequora* 'seas' (*Silv.* 2.2.14, 48); *pontus* 'sea, open sea' (49, 84, 98); *mare* 'sea' (74, 118); *Nereus* the seagod, metonymy for the sea (74) *pelagus* 'open sea' (50, 119); *salum* 'turbulent or open sea' (23).

²⁹⁷ Statius' decision to triangulate the location of Pollius' villa by this temple is also remarkable, for the temple was more unambiguously oriented toward the open sea in its position approximately six kilometres southwest of the villa on the western tip of the Sorrentine peninsula, where it served as a landmark for sailors entering the bay of Naples. For this temple's proximity to and lofty views over the Tyrrhene sea, see *Silv.* 3.2.24, 5.3.166, *Sen. Ep.* 77.2. Cf. van Dam (1984) 195, and Newlands (2011a) 122.

third line of the *Aeneid*, when Vergil describes Aeneas as "that man, much buffeted on sea and land" (*multum ille et terris iactatus et alto*).²⁹⁸

Such an echo here associates the Bay of Naples with Vergil's transmission of Rome's national foundation myth, suggesting that these others on the sea of life yearn to achieve something of national significance. In turn, the Bay's stormy quality in *Silvae* 2.2 and in this passage in particular may evoke the allegorical sea-storm quelled by Neptune a little later in *Aeneid* 1, the sea-god who is compared (*Aen.* 1.148-56) to a statesman who defuses the rage of an unruly crowd. Indeed, Neptune is present in Statius' poem (*Silv.* 2.2.21-25), calming the savage waves as they billow towards his temple on Pollius' shore. Statius recalls Neptune's statesman-like role in the *Aeneid*, characterizing him as a *moderator* (*Silv.* 2.2.21 'governor'), a term with political connotations, while stating that his domain is the stormy sea (ibid. *tumidae...undae*), further evidence for Statius' readers that a similar sort of political storm rages beyond the confines of Pollius' estate.²⁹⁹

For Statius, included among those on the stormy sea, this allusive, Vergilian language offers support for the connotations addressed above that he longs to write ambitious poetry that will achieve widespread renown at Rome. From his perspective, visiting Pollius will furnish only a temporary respite from this desire. By contrast, Pollius' separation from this allusive image of the sea illustrates not only his freedom from the spiritual *Sturm und Drang* that afflicts the rest of

²⁹⁸ Statius reconfigures the deictic *ille*, used by Vergil to refer to the still unnamed Aeneas, linking it to *alto* ('that deep'), hinting to readers that they have already encountered this expressive sea in an earlier author. This description of Aeneas re-echoes throughout the *Aeneid* (e.g. *Aen.* 4.13-14, 6.693).

²⁹⁹ On *moderator* as a political term, see TLL 8.0.1210.22-40. Cf. Newlands (2011a) 127. Statius' description of Neptune holding back the waves is also tied to an allusion to Lucan's image of Caesar on the tranquil Ionian sea in

society but his independence in particular from the ambitions for large-scale achievements that will be significant to Roman society as a whole, such as those accomplished by Aeneas and valued by those who admire him.³⁰⁰ As we shall see, Pollius' ambitions are more inwardly focused.

Yet Neptune plays a markedly different role on Pollius' shore. Where Vergil's sea-god calms the storm that Juno and Aeolus have unleashed in a manner that evokes a statesman quelling a civil disturbance, Statius' Neptune and Pollius alike are limited to calming the stormy sea in the vicinity around the latter's estate. The storm continues to rage in the distance. In light of the political subtext to Statius' allusive descriptions of the sea in this poem, Pollius' philosophical detachment from society applies to the world of politics in particular. While Pollius does not share the restless ambition that drives others onto the turbulent sea of politics, neither he nor his avatar Neptune seeks to impose his lifestyle on the body politic or claim sovereignty over it.³⁰¹ Pollius is alone in his rejection of imperial ambition.

pursuit of Pompey (*Silv.* 2.2.25-26, 29; *BC* 5.442-43, pg. 154-55 below), further evidence that the calm that Neptune causes in *Silv.* 2.2 has political connotations.

³⁰⁰ Likewise, as Putnam (forthcoming) observes, by telling of how Pollius has succeeded in bringing his spiritual "ship unbattered" (*Silv.* 2.2.141 *non quassa rates*) to Epicurean harbour, Statius simultaneously evokes Aeneas' "battered ships" (*Aen.* 4.53 *quassatae rates*) delaying him in Carthage and the "battered ships" (*Carm.* 1.1.17-18 *ratibus quassas*) of Horace's acquisitive trader who quickly repairs his damaged vessel to continue his maritime business. Like the Carthage-bound Aeneas, Pollius is not out on the seas of imperial adventure, nor is he prey to ambition for profit, commercial or otherwise, associated with the sea in Horace's first ode. Later in the poem, Statius describes how Pollius' villa receives sunlight from dawn to dusk, when the reflection of the building "swims in the glassy sea" (*Silv.* 2.2.49 *vitreoque natant...ponto*). As Putnam (forthcoming) notes, this description of the sea recalls the beginning of *Carm.* 4.2, where Horace decries the ambition of rivalling Pindar's grand style, comparing it to flying on waxen wings like Daedalus, a folly sure to plunge the imprudent man in the "glassy sea" (*Carm.* 4.2.3 *vitreo...ponto*). Safely ensconced in his philosophically-inflected intellectual pursuits ashore in his villa, Pollius is safe from the rash ambition to pursue audacious forms of intellectual achievement such as those which Statius values.

³⁰¹ The harmless swells that froth around Neptune's temple (*Silv.* 2.2.23 *spumant templa salo*) lend this interpretation further depth, recalling the swells frothing (*Aen.* 2.209 *fit sonitus spumante salo*) around the Vergilian serpents who swiftly wend their way through the placid sea to Troy's coast, where they attack and kill Neptune's priest Laocoon and his sons before taking shelter in a citadel of Minerva (*Aen.* 2.226 *Tritonidis arcem*), a portent of Troy's impending doom. This latter passage is the only instance in prior Latin where *spumare* is modified by *salum* (Stat.

By alluding to the Trojans' landfall in Carthage while praising Pollius' political quietism later in *Silvae* 2.2, Statius once again associates Pollius' separation from the sea with his apolitical stance. In this instance, however, the spatial associations of Pollius' social detachment remain in the allusive background. Late in the poem, as outlined in the last section, Statius introduces his image of Pollius' detachment from the stormy sea of human desires by praising his lack of concern for the favour of the crowd or for civil or military office, an expressive juxtaposition that suggests that these are among the principal desires that Pollius' distance from the sea embodies.

At the end of this introductory passage, Statius sums up Pollius' lack of concern for community life in Epicurean terms, writing "you master both hope and fear" (*Silv.* 2.2.125 *spemque metumque domas*), a phrase that also draws an allusive parallel between Pollius' political quietism and the roiling emotions of Vergil's Trojan sailors recently landed in Libya, "uncertain amidst both hope and fear" (*Aen.* 1.218 *spemque metumque inter dubii*) as they worry about the fate of their missing comrades scattered and perhaps drowned by the storm.³⁰² As an accomplished Epicurean, Pollius lacks the concern that wracks Aeneas' men, whose fates are still linked to the sea and to others who may still be caught in its swells or submerged below them. Pollius has mastered his own emotions and he is not troubled by the fates of others who have not done so. By allusively contrasting Pollius' indifference to civic pursuits to the Trojans' emotional attachment to their friends possibly lost at sea, Statius' wording here suggests that his allusions in *Silvae* 2.2 to sea voyages in the *Aeneid* have a political significance. By staying far from the sea

repeats this collocation at *Ach.* 2.16). Statius' Neptune has removed the danger from these swells, protecting Pollius from the sea and harmful social attachments that it embodies. Statius similarly disarms the following line's description of the serpents' eyes, suffused with blood and fire (*Aen.* 2.210 *oculos suffecti sanguine et igni*), when he describes his wonder at Pollius' villa (*Silv.* 2.2.42-43 *vix...suffecere oculi*).

and mastering his priorities, Pollius abstains from the hope and fear that trouble those who cherish ambitions of national significance.

The poet's description of the calm seas in Pollius' harbour supports this interpretation, allusively distancing the Epicurean villa owner from the turmoil of imperial ambitions in particular. As he describes the "amazing calm of the sea" (*Silv.* 2.2.26-27 *mira quies pelagi*) along the coast near Pollius' harbour where "modest pools lie prostrate" (29 *stagna modesta iacent*), Statius evokes Lucan's account of "brutal calm of the sea, and pools of prostrate water, idle from the sadness of the deep" (5.442-43 *saeva quies pelagi, maestoque ignaua profundo stagna iacentis aquae*) when Caesar rashly ventures out onto the Ionian sea from Brundisium during wintertime in pursuit of Pompey and his fleet, only to encounter a grim, foreboding calm that temporarily idles his ships in the middle of the sea.³⁰³

While the sea at Pollius' harbour shares the calm of Lucan's Ionian sea, the contrast between these two descriptions of the tranquil sea illustrates the safety that Pollius derives from his apolitical stance. For Lucan, the sea's calm suggests the absence of any divine protection, rendering the stationary Caesar dangerously exposed to both his enemies and the threat of famine (5.443-44, 446-50), while the sea's menacing tranquillity (*saeva quies*) portends the storm that engulfs Caesar later in the same book, embodying the chaos of civil war.³⁰⁴ By contrast, the sea's marvelous calm around Pollius' estate imitates the villa owner, signalling his safety from the political storms in the distance, while in the same scene, Neptune helps to keep the waves'

³⁰² Cf. van Dam (1984) 268, Newlands (2011a) 151.

³⁰³ Myers (2000) 118.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Haskins (1887) 173.

savagery at bay (*Silv.* 2.2.25-26 *saevis fluctibus obstat, mira quies pelagi*, cf. *Luc.* 5.442 *saeua quies pelagi*). Where the calm Ionian seas that detain Caesar embody a temporary obstacle to his destructive imperial ambitions, the same tranquillity at Pollius' harbour expresses his deeply felt aversion to the tumult of public life.

2.2.1. Pollius' Villa as Vergil's Carthage

Just as the stormy seas off Pollius' villa evoke Aeneas' voyages, and the allegorical sea-storm of *Aeneid* 1 in particular, images of landfall at Pollius' estate contain further recollections of Aeneas' voyages, particularly his sojourn at Carthage. For outsiders like Statius, these Vergilian echoes characterize Pollius' estate as a charming rest-stop capable of waylaying them on their spiritual voyages. By contrast, from Pollius' perspective, they frame his secluded seaside villa as the final destination for his moral journey, equivalent in personal value to Rome's imperial destiny.

Alongside his allusive description of the Appian Way, Statius' description of his visit to Pollius' estate as a pleasant *mora* 'delay' (*Silv.* 2.2.13) draws on the language of Aeneas' detour to Carthage in the *Aeneid*.³⁰⁵ In Vergil's epic poem, the Trojan hero's desire for Dido leads him to delay his yearning to fulfill his destined role in leading the Trojans to Italy, where they will eventually found Rome, a thematic tension that the Augustan poet artfully expresses throughout his work with the anagrams *amor*, *mora*, and *Roma*.³⁰⁶ Statius' detour at his friend's estate reflects a similar tension between these same forces. Here too, Statius' evident personal affection for Pollius leads him to defer (*Silv.* 2.2.13 *morae*) his desire (11 *cupidum*) to fulfill the heroic,

³⁰⁵ Newlands (2011a) 125, parallels this passage with Anna's advice to Dido to "link together causes for delaying" Aeneas (*Aen.* 4.51 *causasque innecte morandi*).

³⁰⁶ Reed (2016).

national objectives associated with his future journey to Rome.³⁰⁷ By characterizing Pollius' estate as a *mora*, the anagrammatic antipode of Rome, Statius characterizes Pollius as a Dido-like figure whose objectives are antithetical to those of the imperial centre.

Statius lends this characterization further depth in his account of his approach to Pollius' harbour, which echoes Vergil's description of the haven on the Libyan coast where the Trojans find refuge from the allegorical sea-storm and from where Aeneas will shortly venture to nearby Carthage and meet queen Dido.³⁰⁸ Statius also adopts the same situation and point of view as that of Aeneas and his men as they approach the Libyan coast.³⁰⁹ Like Vergil, Statius describes the inlet from the point of view of a traveller as he draws closer to shore, gradually shifting his focus from the harbour to the surrounding landscape.

Beginning his poem with *est...villa* (*Silv.* 2.2.1-3), Statius adapts the *est locus* tag for introducing an ecphrasis that Vergil uses to introduce his description of the Libyan harbour (*Aen.* 1.159).³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ Statius' use of the adjective *cupidum* to describe his yearning for Rome loosely hints at the City's anagram *amor*.

³⁰⁸ On Statius' allusion to Vergil's Carthaginian harbour at *Silv.* 2.2.1-4, 13-16, see van Dam (1984) 201-3, Myers (2000) 118, Newlands (2002) 165-66, 196-97, (2011a) 125-26. Putnam (forthcoming) identifies further allusions to Vergil's Carthage in Statius' description of Pollius' terrestrial estate. However, scholars have not yet noted Statius' allusion (*Silv.* 2.2.12) to Aeneas' 'long journeys' (*Aen.* 3.714-15), discussed above, nor how the reader's perception of Pollius' estate (*Silv.* 2.2.55 *nemora ardua cernis*) echoes Mercury's view of the African landscape as he heads to Carthage (*Aen.* 4.246 *latera ardua cernit*), phrasing otherwise unparalleled in Latin. Further echoes of Vergil's Carthaginian episode are present in Statius' second poem on Pollius' estate (*Silv.* 3.1). Statius compares (3.1.73-77) the rainstorm that drives him and Pollius into Hercules' temple on his friend's coastline to the rainstorm that drives Aeneas and Dido into the same cave, where they consummate their relationship (*Aen.* 4.160-72). Later, once Hercules' temple is reconstructed, Pollius' artisans marvel at the work," (*Silv.* 3.1.135 *artifices mirantur opus*) recalling Aeneas' marvel at the craftsmanship of Dido's temple to Juno (*Aen.* 1.455-56 *artificumque manus inter se operumque laborem miratur*). These three underlined words only appear in these two passages in Latin and once elsewhere.

³⁰⁹ Horsfall (1985), esp. 200-1 on harbours, argues that Roman authors describe topography primarily according to literary and rhetorical criteria, with less attention to verism. Thus, one literary landscape evokes another, not by its fidelity to the real-world landscape of the place alluded to, but through verbal similarities to another author's description of the place alluded to.

³¹⁰ For references to the ecphrastic *est locus* motif, see van Dam (1984) 194. As Putnam (forthcoming) notes, these words also evoke the demise of the Trojan Misenus amidst the rocks at what would later be called Misenum after

The two harbours share certain similarities: "On this side and that, cliffs" (*Silv.* 2.2.14, *Aen.* 1.162 *hinc atque hinc...rupes*) and "looming crags" (*Silv.* 2.2.16, *Aen.* 1.167 *scopulis pendentibus*) jut out into the sea, framing each cove and shielding them from incoming waves.³¹¹ Inside each sheltered space, nymphs and fresh water are present (*Silv.* 2.2.19-20, *Aen.* 1.168-69).³¹² Most important for the present discussion is the fact that within the crags lies a secluded harbour (*Silv.* 2.2.13 *recessu*, *Aen.* 1.159 *secessu*)³¹³, whose mention introduces each poet's subsequent description. In each case, the harbour embodies a physical and spiritual refuge for its occupants from the turbulent sea and from the heroic, imperial enterprises located on its swells.³¹⁴

Echoes of Dido and Carthage in Statius' poem emphasize the physical isolation of Pollius' estate from Rome and the rest of the outside world and the nonconformist behavior of Pollius that this distance conveys. Vergil's Libyan harbour is set back from the sea, affording the Trojan men a secluded refuge from its stormy weather, which carries echoes of a political allegory, as we have seen above. Indeed, the Trojans' approach to and departure from Dido's kingdom more generally

foolishly challenging the sea-god Triton to musical contest (*Aen.* 6.173-74 *est, inter saxa, Silv.* 2.2.1-2 *est inter...saxaque*). Much as with the Sirens mentioned in the same opening lines of Statius' poem, this Vergilian echo characterizes Pollius' villa as a site that may attach unpleasant consequences to pleasing eloquence. Misenus and his eponymous cape are mentioned explicitly at *Silv.* 2.2.77.

³¹¹ The phrases *hinc atque hinc* and *scopulis pendentibus* occupy the same metrical sedes in each poet's verse.

³¹² Statius' desire to echo Vergil's description here leads him to elide certain features of Pollius' harbour (fig. 2). While the eastern promontory (Punta della Calcarella) that flanks the Marina di Puolo has a steep descent to the sea, the harbour's western headland (Capo di Massa) only consists of low foothills. Likewise, as noted on pg. 132 of this chapter, the bay was exposed to incoming waves from the northwest, rendering it less calm than Statius claims. See Krüger (1998) 176, 191.

³¹³ In light of these allusions to Dido and Carthage, Statius' description of Pollius' harbour as half-moon-shaped (14 *lunata*) may evoke Vergil's comparison of Dido to the moon (*Aen.* 6.450-54).

³¹⁴ Two early fifth-century CE descriptions of monastic withdrawal (Sulp. Sev. *Mart.* 10.4, Eucher. *De Contempt. Mund.* 75) from the world also draw on this same Vergilian image of the Libyan harbour, retrospectively providing further support for the notion that Statius' allusions to this passage produce a similar effect on the reader. On these allusions, see Borca (2000) 180, 188n17 and 191n37, with further references.

is accompanied by a pair of storms at the start of *Aeneid* 1 and 5, that emphasizes the separation of Dido's domain from the outside world.³¹⁵

Allusions to Trojan landfall in Vergil's Libya during Statius' description of Pollius' estate emphasize its comparable separation from the outside world. Further, they support interpretations of the images of the choppy sea far off from his villa as a symbol of his abstention from public affairs due to his Epicurean convictions. At the same time, these echoes emphasize the limited access that Statius enjoys to the remote estate. Much as Aeneas places Rome's future foundation in jeopardy by his lengthy sojourn in Carthage, Statius can visit this heterotopia for only a brief time without risking his desire to speak to a national audience through his poetry. To stay in this secluded locale permanently, as Pollius does, is to fore swear such ambitions in perpetuity.

In turn, the social 'othering' of Vergil's Dido and Carthage supported by their physical isolation further characterizes Pollius as someone positioned outside of and in some respects estranged from civic life at Rome.³¹⁶ Vergil's Carthage is a counter-site to Rome, an attractive yet warped mirror image of the City as feminine and oriental, hinting at future hostilities. While Pollius' stance towards civic life and the imperial court appears quietist rather than oppositional, picturing his estate as a second Carthage characterizes it as a rival empire that fosters a different

³¹⁵ Cf. Giusti (2017) 147. Statius portrays of a nereid climbing the cliffs of Pollius' estate (*Silv.* 2.2.101 *conscendit scopulos*) in words that recall how Aeneas climbs a cliff on the desolate Libyan coast (*Aen.* 1.180 *scopulum...conscendit*), a parallel first identified by Putnam (forthcoming). At this point in Vergil's narrative, Aeneas does not know where he is, and his vantage point atop the cliff reveals only the empty sea and a landscape populated by wild animals, emphasizing his isolation. Statius' momentary echo of this scene once again emphasizes the correspondingly remote location of Pollius and his villa.

³¹⁶ Vergil believed that Carthage opposed Rome geographically, an apt spatial metaphor for the mutual hostility of these two powers. See Korenjak (2004).

set of values and behaviors. It is a personal empire of socially detached Epicurean self-mastery.³¹⁷ Likewise, picturing Pollius as Dido-like emphasizes his affectionate, yet conflicted relationship with Statius and through him with the poet's Roman readership. Much as Dido's love for Aeneas does not ultimately overturn her commitment to remaining in Carthage - even in death -, Pollius' genuine affection for his friend does not compromise his devotion to his personal moral and intellectual goals. As a Dido figure, Pollius appears as a sympathetic individual whom Roman readers are unlikely to fully identify with.³¹⁸

2.2.2. Pollius' Villa as Vergil's *Castrum Minervae*

Statius' simultaneous allusion to another moment of Trojan landfall in the *Aeneid* offers readers Pollius' perspective on his distance from the sea of civic ambitions, investing his detachment from political priorities and his devotion to intellectual pursuits with the importance that others accord to Rome's imperial destiny. This second allusion to landfall in the *Aeneid* (*Aen.* 3.530-43, cf. 3.508-11) recalls the Trojans' first sight of Italy at *Castrum Minervae* on the south-eastern 'heel' of Italy (figs. 3-4). After sailing across the Ionian Sea in the pre-dawn hours, the Trojans catch sight of Italy just as day breaks. Upon sailing closer to shore, the Trojans see the harbour of *Castrum Minervae*, whereupon Aeneas spies four white horses grazing in the distance, which Anchises construes as a portent of war that offers hope of eventual peace. Then after prayers to Minerva and offerings to Juno, the Trojans quickly sail southward toward Tarentum.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ On Pollius' estate in *Silv.* 2.2 as a miniature state, cf. van Dam (1984) 213, 216, 221; Krüger (1998) 27, Newlands (2002) 174-91, 270-71 & (2011a) 131, 143.

³¹⁸ Cf. the misogynistic speaker's consternation in Juv. *Sat.* 6.435 when female readers do not condemn Dido. Statius' characterization of Pollius as Dido-like may reflect echoes of Vergil's portrait of the Carthaginian queen as a flawed practitioner of Epicureanism; cf. Dyson (1996).

While Statius' portrait of his Epicurean friend is sympathetic, identifying such a subtext in his allusions to Dido here might support a traditional Roman view of Pollius as having a pleasant though ultimately foreign lifestyle.

³¹⁹ The Trojans do not appear to come ashore. Vergil's language is not precise on this issue (Horsfall (2006) 382).

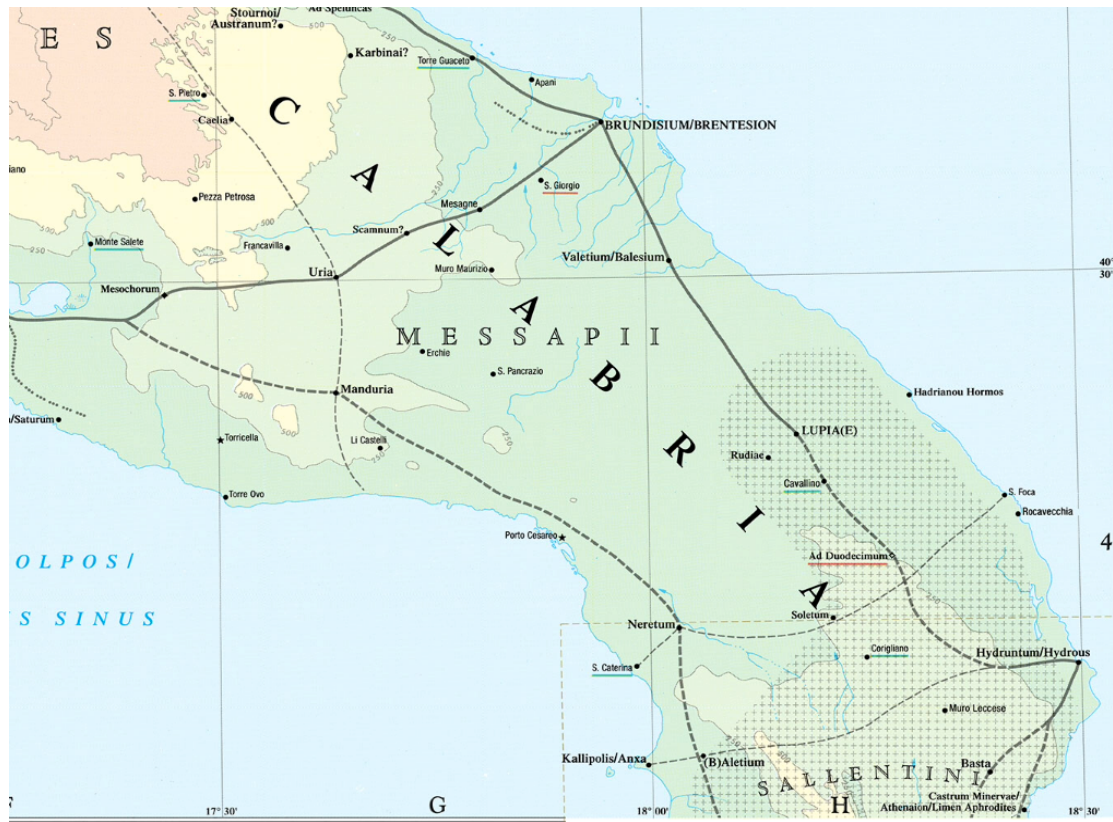


Figure 3: Castrum Minervae, modern Castro, Apulia (after Barrington Atlas 45 H4)



Figure 4: Castrum Minervae, modern Castro, Apulia (after Barrington Atlas 45 Inset)

Similarities of wording and imagery between Pollius' harbour and Vergil's description of Castrum Minervae encourage Statius' readers to recall the Trojans' first sight of Italy in the *Aeneid*. Just as in Vergil's description of the Libyan harbour and Statius' portrait of Pollius' estate, at Castrum Minervae the Augustan poet once again describes a harbour from the maritime traveller's perspective as the Trojans come off the open seas and approach the shore. Further, each bay is surrounded by lofty outcroppings surmounted by a temple of Minerva (*Aen.* 3.531, *Silv.* 2.2.2).³²⁰ In Vergil's account, Minerva's temple looms over the harbour of Castrum Minervae from a nearby height described as an *arx*. This is an evocative term for readers of Statius' poem, whose lofty Surrentine temple of Minerva anticipates the later image of Pollius ensconced in his lofty mental citadel (*Silv.* 2.2.131), a pose that echoes in turn the Lucretian sage's lofty temple of wisdom (*Lucr.* 2.8). Statius' poem thus closely links Minerva as well as physical and spiritual citadels and temples and thus may evoke for its readers this Vergilian image of Minerva's temple on a citadel.

Pollius' harbour also resembles the harbour of Castrum Minervae in several other respects. Craggs loom high above the shore of each inlet (*Aen.* 3.536 *scopuli...litore*, *Silv.* 2.2.16 *litus...scopulis*). From these crags, two wall-like arms sweep down toward the sea (*Silv.* 2.2.1 *Est inter notos Sirenum nomine muros* *Aen.* 3.531 *gemino demittunt bracchio muro*), curving together so that a sheltered harbour is created within (*Silv.* 2.2.14 *curvae...rupes* *Aen.* 3.533 *portus...curvatus in arcum*).

³²⁰ In Vergil, the temple of Minerva is the first feature of the landscape once the harbour becomes visible, in Statius, it is the second element used to identify the location of Pollius' estate.

Similarities between Pollius' harbour and the inlet at Vergil's Castrum Minervae are not accounted for by topoi of harbour descriptions that date back to Homer.³²¹ Nor are they explained by similarities between Vergil's descriptions of Castrum Minervae and the Libyan harbour in *Aeneid* 1, whose presence in Statius' poem is amply attested.³²² Aside from the modest verbal parallels and the superficially similar layout of the harbours, Castrum Minervae and Pollius' inlet are linked by the presence of a lofty temple of Minerva, as we have seen, and the absence of an island at the harbour's mouth, a prominent feature of the Libyan harbour in *Aeneid* 1.

The two harbours, Vergilian and Statian, also contain a common defensive posture and echoes of the former harbour thus reinforce this quality in the latter.³²³ As the Trojans approach Castrum Minervae, Vergil describes its harbour in terms that liken it to a stronghold, an initial sign of the conflict that Aeneas and his men will find in Italy. The temple of Minerva, we have seen, is poised on an *arx*, a term that evokes the image of a defensive structure. When the Trojans subsequently 'whirl' (*Aen.* 3.532 *torquent*) their ships towards shore, they see that the harbour has the shape of a 'bow' (533 *arcum*) and that 'tower-like crags' (536 *turriti scopuli*) frame the harbour with 'twin walls' (535 *gemino...muro*), while the temple "retreats" (536 *refugit*) just as if it feared an act of aggression.³²⁴

³²¹ On topoi of harbour descriptions, see Menander Rhetor 351.21-352.5 and Horsfall (1985) 200-1.

³²² Horsfall (2006) 375-76, characterizes the description of Castrum Minervae as an 'early sketch' of the more detailed portrait of the Libyan harbour.

³²³ On this quality in Vergil's Castrum Minervae, see Putnam (1995) 59-60, Paschalis (1997) 135; in Pollius' harbour in *Silv.* 2.2, see Krüger (1998) 77, Newlands (2002) 179-180, 183, (2011a) 133-34.

³²⁴ Anchises subsequently (*Aen.* 3.537-43) develops this motif when he interprets horses on a nearby field as an omen of war, discussed below.

Pollius' villa has a similarly guarded posture toward the outside world, reflecting his determination to keep his distance from the political ambitions of others after he has conquered these same desires within himself. During a flashback to the villa's construction, Statius likens Pollius' transformation of the estate's landscape to a conquest of physical nature, relaying the villa-owner's conquest of his own prior natural tendencies: "here conquered nature...yields to its cultivator...its owner has subdued it, and the soil rejoices, following his lead as he shapes the cliffs, taking them by storm. (*Silv.* 2.2.52-53, 56-67 *hic victa (i.e. natura) colenti cessit...domuit possessor, et illum formantem rupes expugnantemque secuta gaudet humus*).³²⁵

Once the villa's construction is complete, it assumes the role of a military outpost.³²⁶ At the beginning of his poem, Statius describes the clifftop villa as a *speculatrix* 'sentinel' (*Silv.* 2.2.3) of the nearby sea, thus likening the residence to a military scout who surveils his foe from afar, an association reinforced by Statius' repeated use of the word *praetoria* (*Silv.* 2.2.49, 82) to describe the villa, a term originally used of military headquarters and first applied to villas in the Flavian period.³²⁷ Pollius' conquest of his estate and his construction of a fortress-like residence on its grounds in this poem thus model his spiritual victory over his earlier failings and his wary attitude towards those others who still harbour ambitions of status and prestige on a national stage. Allusion to the defensive harbour at Vergil's *Castrum Minervae* reinforces this subtext for Statius' readers.

³²⁵ Cf. *Silv.* 2.2.52-59 as a whole.

³²⁶ Some early Roman villas were built on elevated locations for strategic military purposes (*Sen. Ep.* 51.11).

³²⁷ Newlands (2011a) 133-34, TLL 10.2.1073.59-1074.14.

Statius' attention to the extended episode of the Trojan crossing from western Greece to Castrum Minervae provides further support for the importance of this harbour for Pollius' estate. Statius reconfigures Vergil's description of twilight the evening before the Trojans cross the Ionian Sea to Italy as he describes dusk at Pollius' villa: "Meanwhile the sun falls and the mountains are shaded in darkness...sleep bathes our weary limbs" (*Aen.* 3.508, 511 *sol ruit interea et montes umbrantur opaci...fessos sopor inrigat artus*); "when the day is weary and the dark mountain's shadow falls upon the sea and the palace swims in its glassy water" (*Silv.* 2.2.48-49 *cum iam fessa dies et in aequora montis opaci umbra cadit vitreoque natant praetoria ponto*).³²⁸

The connection between Pollius' *nomen gentilicium* and the Trojans' vision of horses grazing near the harbour of Castrum Minervae associates this allusion with Pollius in particular. As Mulligan argues, Pollius' name evokes πῶλος 'foal' or πωλίον, its diminutive, terms that are often used by Greek poets for 'horse' more generally.³²⁹ Πῶλος is sometimes used figuratively to describe a young person, and it occasionally appears as a proper name in Greek.³³⁰ Consequently, the use of this term in Greek already facilitates seeing horse and man in terms of

³²⁸ Besides these two passages, *mons*, *umbra/umbrare* and *opacus* appear together only once elsewhere in classical Latin. The day's exhaustion in Statius echoes the Trojans' exhaustion in Vergil. Statius' description of the mountain's falling shadow (*cadit*) adumbrates Vergil's use of *ruit* to describe the sun's setting. Statius' attention to this Vergilian scene also appears in *Silv.* 1.6. When he introduces nightfall at the Emperor's Saturnalia with the words, "Scarcely was dark night approaching upon the world" (1.6.85 *Vixdum caerulea nox subibat orbem*), Statius adapts Vergil's description of the midnight hour when Palinurus assesses the weather, whereupon the Trojans get up to sail to Castrum Minervae before dawn: "Night driven by the Hours was not yet approaching the mid-point of her course" (*Aen.* 3.512 *neqdum orbem medium Nox Horis acta subibat*). The collocation of *nox*, *subibat* and *orbem* appears nowhere else in classical Latin.

³²⁹ Mulligan (2012) 576. On the latter point, see LSJ s.v. πῶλος. Polla's similar *gentilicium* also evokes these equine terms. Mulligan (*ibid.*) notes that the difference in vowel quantity and the gemination of consonants do not impede wordplay here. Laguna (1992) 163, 389, and Newlands (2012) 155, connect Pollius' name to πολλίων 'more'. For Statius' fondness for onomastic wordplay in the *Silvae*, see Nisbet (1978) 8, van Dam (1984) 207-8, Mulligan (2012). Within *Silvae* 2.2, Statius repeatedly puns on Pollius' cognomen *felix* (2.2.23, 107, 122, 151).

³³⁰ LSJ s.v. πῶλος. Πῶλος is attested eight times in the Hellenistic period or earlier as a Greek personal name. (LGPN s.v. Πῶλος). Greek speakers were able to put the equestrian connotations of this name to use. Aristotle cites (*Rhet.* 1400b21) the 5th cent. BCE rhetorician Polus as an example of how to make rhetorical use of someone's

each other. Although Pollius' name is not etymologically related to πῶλος, as Mulligan states, "the wordplay practiced by Classical poets need not have any connection to what modern linguists would consider legitimate etymology or natural word-formation".³³¹ Rather, it is the significance of a potential connection made through wordplay that influences whether or not an author evokes such associations, and whether a reader identifies it.

The importance of Vergil's four grazing horses for Statius' portrait of Pollius creates significance and meaning that encourages readers to associate Pollius' name with πῶλος. After gaining a view of the harbour at Castrum Minervae, Aeneas spies four white horses grazing in the distance, which his father Anchises interprets as an omen. The horses, he says emphatically, and the land they graze portend war, "but all the same, the same beasts are accustomed one day to take up the car and bear reins in harmony beneath the yoke: there is also hope of peace" (*Aen.* 3.540-43 *sed tamen idem olim curru succedere sueti quadripedes et frena iugo concordia ferre: spes et pacis' ait.*). Anchises' interpretation of the horses foreshadows the Trojans' future battles in the *Aeneid*, and the hope for peace that lies beyond the poem's end. It also hints at a similar narrative for Roman history, a series of wars capped by the *pax Augusta*.³³² The term *concordia* that conveys this schema of peace-through-war is distinctive. Though it is a neuter accusative adjective modifying *frena*, it has the same form as the abstract noun *concordia*, which never appears in Vergil's oeuvre. Only here does the word-form *concordia* appear in his poetry.³³³

name, recalling a witticism that associated Polus' coltish name with his "skittishness and frisking from one subject to another" (Freese (1926) 323).

³³¹ Mulligan (2012) 573 and n.90.

³³² Putnam (1995) 60.

Concordia plays a key role in Statius' portrait of Pollius. In the final moments of *Silvae* 2.2, Statius praises the marital concord that Pollius enjoys with his wife Polla, celebrating their domestic harmony as the embodiment of the pivotal Epicurean idea of friendship³³⁴ while their concordant *amor* stands in implicit, anagrammatical opposition to Rome's values: "no other minds has Concord taught...(your) holy love preserves the laws of chaste friendship" (*Silv.* 2.2.155, 144-45 *non alias docuit Concordia mentes....sanctusque pudicae servat amicitiae leges amor*).³³⁵ Although Pollius is detached from the outside world in this poem, he is thus not precisely alone, even in the context of Statius' poem. Yet the spiritual harmony that Pollius enjoys with his wife suggests that they function as a spiritual unit, preserving Pollius' sense of seclusion from external reality

Pollius' association with Vergil's concordant horses suggests that he has similar personal attributes. Just as the equine associations of his name enable readers to identify him with the horses serenely grazing at Castrum Minervae, so the future imperial concord that the grazing animals portend lends additional emphasis to the spiritual concord that Pollius enjoys with his wife. By allusively relocating these symbols of Rome's imperial destiny to Pollius' personal experience, Statius invests his friend's philosophical retirement and renunciation of public life with a heightened sense of cultural value. Pollius' detachment from civic society and his devotion to his personal moral goals and to his relationship with his wife, in other words, acquire the significance of Rome's national foundation myth, while those who foster ambitions for

³³³ The adjective *concors* is also rare, appearing only twice elsewhere in Vergil's poetry (*Ecl.* 4.47, *Aen.* 6.827), both times in a political context.

³³⁴ van Dam (1984) 279-80.

³³⁵ The transmitted text of the poem ends with line 155 but Courtney and others have transposed lines 143-46 to the end, positing a lacuna between lines 155 and 143. While the order of the text here is vexed, the basic meaning of the words quoted above is not disputed.

achievements on a national stage are relegated to the treacherous sea that extends from Pollius' villa.³³⁶ In turn, as a figure associated with horses, Pollius embodies an apolitical facsimile of the emperor, who is introduced in the first poem of the *Silvae* in the form of an enormous equestrian statue, a parallel that characterizes the horse-like Pollius as monarch of a villa-cum-empire devoted to personal relationships and intellectual pursuits, detached from the obligations and ambitions of outside society.³³⁷

Echoes of Vergil's Castrum Minervae in *Silvae* 2.2 offer readers a second perspective on Pollius' secluded estate. By allusively characterizing his friend's villa as a latter-day Carthage, we recall, Statius portrays the estate as an alluring rest-stop capable of distracting travelers from their spiritual journeys. Viewing the villa as a second Castrum Minervae, by contrast, favourably casts it as permanent destination for Pollius, in this respect, a complement to the Epicurean harbour imagery examined in the previous section.

In Vergil's description of the harbour at Castrum Minervae, the Trojans see Italy, their final destination. In his account of Trojan landfall at Castrum Minervae, both harbour and prophetic

³³⁶ Irrespective of allusion to this scene in the *Aeneid*, Statius' emphasis on Pollius' *concordia* with his wife set him in parallel with the emperor, for marital *concordia* was a virtue of the imperial family (Newlands (2011a) 156, citing LIMC 5.1.479-98), while as Lobur (2008) writes, the concept more broadly was an important part of imperial ideology. For another topographical allusion in *Silv.* 2.2 that associates Pollius and his villa with the emperor's *concordia*, see section 3.2 of this chapter.

³³⁷ On this latter point, see note 317 above. Similar phrasing sets Pollius and the equestrian Domitian in parallel. Pollius' nearby Surrentum is known by the name of the Sirens (*Silv.* 2.2.1 *notos...nomine*), much as Domitian's horse surpasses the name of the Trojan horse, known since time immemorial (1.1.8 *notum per saecula nomen*). Pollius' eyes scarcely suffice to take in Pollius' splendid villa (2.2.43 *suffecere oculi vix*) much as the ground scarcely suffices to sustain Domitian's weighty horse (1.1.56 *vix sola sufficiunt*). For another parallel between Pollius and the Domitian of *Silv.* 1.1, see section 3.2, pg. 172. The following poem in the *Silvae* (*Silv.* 2.3) provides an illustrative parallel for how Statius employs horse-imagery to allusively compare an apolitical friend to the emperor. Statius opens his poem on Atedius Melior's plane tree noting how the tree "stands...embracing" (*Silv.* 2.3.1-2 *Stat...complexa*), a nearby pond with wording that recalls the beginning of the *Silvae* where Domitian's equestrian statue "stands embracing the Latin forum" (*Silv.* 1.1.2 *stat Latium complexa forum*).

horses draw the Trojans' attention to Italy, not simply to the cove they enter. Italy, of course, is where the Trojans are going, and with the sailors' thrice-repeated cry of *Italia* upon sighting land (*Aen.* 3.523-24), the Augustan poet emphasizes that the Trojans' approach to land here constitutes their first glimpse of their future home, even if they must leave this particular harbour.³³⁸ Anchises' prophetic interpretation of the horses deepens this premonition, for the horses foreshadow the conflict and resolution that lie in store for the Trojans and their Roman descendants as they found a nation in Italy. By his onomastic association with these predictive animals, Pollius acquires another close link to the landscape of his secluded estate. Like the horses, he occupies the destination of his journey and his future home, not simply a rest-stop.

3. Pollius' Distant, Lofty View

3.1. The Solitary Estate

The general absence of human activity on Pollius' estate in *Silv.* 2.2 helps clarify the solitary Pollius' detachment from other men.³³⁹ Statius and Polla, we have seen, are present in the poem, but their appearance does not obtrude upon Pollius' solitude. Statius emphasizes that his presence there is only temporary and he is much less conspicuous than during his visit to the Surrentine estate recorded in *Silvae* 3.1 (esp. 65-88), Statius' other poem on his friend's estate there, a work less concerned with Pollius' heterodox lifestyle and which thus makes no effort to portray the villa owner as secluded.

Likewise, Polla is not prominent in *Silvae* 2.2. Along with her husband, she extends her invitation to Statius to visit at the poem's beginning (*Silv.* 2.2.10), whereafter she does not appear

³³⁸ *Italia* is Vergil's first term for Aeneas' future home at *Aen.* 1.2.

³³⁹ Newlands (2002) 157n14, contrasts this the estate's relative solitude with the more populated representations of villa landscapes in wall paintings.

until the final, textually vexed section of the poem (147-55, 143-46), where she is mentioned, first alone and then with her husband, but is not located anywhere specifically in the villa's landscape, a significant decision on the poet's part given the poem's concentration on vivid spatial description. Absent too are Pollius' daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren, all mentioned elsewhere in Statius' poetry,³⁴⁰ some on the Surrentine estate along with Polla and various athletes in *Silvae* 3.1 (44-47, 87, 143-58). While certain divinities are present on the estate in *Silvae* 2.2 (18-25, 75, 100-6, 116-20), they do not share Pollius' company. The closest that any of them comes to interacting with him is when the Siren and Minerva are enchanted by the sound of his poetry and the Siren flies closer to listen (*Silv.* 2.2.116-20).

Further, there is also no mention of any labour force or neighbouring inhabitants on the estate in *Silv.* 2.2. Pollius' villa in all likelihood possessed a complement of slave or hired free labourers in order to carry out agricultural cultivation (e.g. the fields and vineyard mentioned at *Silv.* 2.2.4-5, 98-106), as well as to maintain the villa and attend upon its owners.³⁴¹ Indeed, in *Silvae* 3.1, workmen assist Hercules in reconstructing his seaside temple at the estate's harbour (118-19, 134-35) while servants accompany Pollius and Polla (77, 86-87). Likewise, villas such as that owned by Pollius typically maintained social and economic connections to neighbouring towns, which could include receiving guests, hosting local markets, and so on.³⁴² Pollius' villa reveals no such connections to its vicinity.

³⁴⁰ *Silv.* 3.1.46-47, 87, 143, 175-79, 4 *pr.* 1. 20-23, 4.8.

³⁴¹ Riggsby (2003) 175, and Myers (2005) 119, identify a similar tendency in the two longest villa letters (*Ep.* 2.17, 5.6) of Statius' contemporary Pliny. Fitzgerald (1996) 389-96, 411-13, discusses the propensity of certain Latin authors to elide the presence of sub-elite rural labour from their representations of the countryside.

³⁴² For the connectivity of villas to neighbouring towns, see Marzano (2007) 176-98, who discusses this issue in central Italy.

Stattius' description of the villa itself in *Silvae* 2.2 reinforces this portrait of Pollius' solitude. The only space on the estate described in this poem that implies social behaviour is the seaside baths, which are physically and metaphorically separate from and inferior to Pollius' position in a private room within his clifftop villa. Likewise, Pollius is described as altering the estate's landscape and building his villa alone (*Silv.* 2.2.52-59), unlike the collaborative effort to rebuild the seaside temple to Hercules just noted in *Silvae* 3.1. This solitary building activity in the former poem helps clarify the deeper significance of this scene. Much as he masters the unruly wilderness of his estate as he constructs his marvellous villa, so he alone conquers the primitive defects of his psyche and builds a splendid bastion of Epicurean doctrine in their place. The general absence, then, of human or divine company for Pollius on his estate places his metonymic relationship with his villa in greater relief and thereby helps clarify the poem's contrast between his distinctive focus on personal and intellectual pursuits at his villa and the ambitious social life that others pursue on the sea in the distance.

3.2. *Pollius' Vertical Distance*

Alongside its generally solitary quality, Pollius' estate separates him from the outside world through its loftiness, or in other words, its vertical distance.³⁴³ As we have seen in the previous two sections, Stattius uses evocative imagery of the sea and harbour drawn from Epicurean philosophy and epic poetry to offer contrasting views on the horizontal distance between the villa-bound Pollius and the outside world, alternately characterizing Pollius' estate as a final escape or a temporary refuge from ambitions of a national scale. Yet all the same, the villa is located at the edge of the bay and a voyage across it would have been a matter of hours rather

³⁴³ On Pollius' loftiness in *Silv.* 2.2, see esp. Zeiner (2005) 180-81, 184-86. For Stoic metaphors of vertical separation from others, see pgs. 60-61.

than days,³⁴⁴ inconvenient facts for Statius' purposes that he surmounts in part by characterizing the bay of Naples as an ocean and through drawing a contrast between the harbour's calm and stormy weather out on the bay. Statius' emphasis on the loftiness of Pollius and his villa complements his efforts to accentuate their distance from the bay when they are no great distance from it in horizontal terms.

At the same time, however, much as he manipulates his representation of the villa to emphasize its solitude and horizontal distance from others, Statius exaggerates the villa's elevation and resulting view. The villa stood only about 130 feet above the sea (Tiberius' primary residence on nearby Capri had an elevation of over 1000 feet) and its view of the northern coast of the Bay of Naples wholly lacked the lofty downward angle that Statius ascribes to it. Indeed, when gazing at sites across the bay, the view was no different from that from the beach below and some of the places along the north coast of the Bay described in the views from Pollius' villa would have been scarcely visible.³⁴⁵ As he reconfigures these less promising realia of Pollius' estate, Statius' emphasis on Pollius' elevation not only helps to illustrate his friend's physical and social separation from others but also draws on vertical metaphors of superiority to characterize him as unsurpassed in status and wisdom.

An immense portico affords a pleasant ascent to the heights of Pollius' clifftop villa, relaying the pleasurable quality of Pollius' upward journey to his detached state of wisdom.³⁴⁶ Before, Statius writes, where the path was dusty, wild and disagreeable, "it is now a pleasure to go" (*Silv.* 2.2.32

³⁴⁴ See ch. 5 note 705.

³⁴⁵ See Krüger (1998) 194, 196.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Krüger (1998) 75, 86n129.

nunc ire voluptas). Pollius had to fight to conquer his nature in order to reach enlightenment (*Silv.* 2.2.56-60) much as he defeated the wilderness of his property before installing his villa there, yet nature's willing acquiescence to its conqueror (58-59) and the pleasurable nature of the portico's journey illustrates that this spiritual ascent is not the harsh slog to wisdom promised to Stoics.³⁴⁷

At the same time, Statius' allusive description of the portico celebrates Pollius' material wealth while simultaneously comparing his conquest and pacification of the allegorical landscape to the martial valour and marital concord of the imperial house. As Pollius' portico rises towards the villa above, it conquers the harsh rocks on a lengthy ridge (*Silv.* 2.2.31 *longoque domat saxa aspera dorso*) in wording that recalls how Domitian conquers the Dacians through lengthy war in the first poem of the *Silvae* (1.1.81 *longo Marte domas*), lending Pollius' spiritual ascent a mark of imperial grandeur.³⁴⁸

Further, as Statius' commentators have noted, when he calls the portico "a city-sized construction" (*Silv.* 2.2.31 *urbis opus*), the poet employs a phrase that appears only twice in earlier Latin literature, including *Fasti* 6.641, when Ovid uses the same words to characterize Vedius Pollio's enormous Esquiline mansion, which Augustus tore down and replaced with the Porticus Livia, though Statian scholars have not yet noted that this portico contained an altar to the *concordia* of Augustus and Livia, another imperial model for the concord of Pollius and his

³⁴⁷ See chapter 2, esp. sections 3-5.

³⁴⁸ These two words appear in the same line of poetry only once elsewhere in Latin literature. For further parallels between Pollius in *Silv.* 2.2 and the equestrian statue of Domitian in *Silv.* 1.1, see note 337 of this chapter.

wife in *Silvae* 2.2 (155).³⁴⁹ As Newlands writes, Statius' language in this passage simultaneously endows Pollius' portico with the prestige of Livia's portico and the grandeur of Vedius Pollius' luxurious mansion while avoiding the moral opprobrium attached to this latter structure.³⁵⁰ Statius' emphasis on *concordia* and his allusions to imperial concord in the *Aeneid* discussed in the last section extend this point. Pollius' villa has married the best of both structures: it contains the surpassing luxury and size of Pollio's mansion yet it also embodies the harmony of Rome's first imperial couple and implicitly partakes of their prestige.³⁵¹ Statius thus frames his Epicurean friend's inner self-mastery and ascent to an enlightened yet isolated state of wisdom and marital harmony as materially blessed yet also as a private, pleasurable facsimile of the emperor's marital and martial virtues.³⁵²

At the same time, by explicitly comparing the portico to the covered path that ascends from "Ino's (temple of) Bacchus" (*Silv.* 2.2.35 *ab Inoo...Lyaeo*)³⁵³ to "the lofty summit of Bacchus' Corinth" (34-35 *Ephyres Baccheidos altum culmen*), Statius portrays the portico and the estate as a whole as a lofty, inspiring refuge from politics. Through the reference to Acrocorinth, Statius characterizes his friend's clifftop villa as a lofty site of intellectual activity equal to Pirene, famous for its powers of poetic inspiration, a motif that continues in the following lines (*Silv.*

³⁴⁹ As Richardson (1978) argues, the Aedificium Eumachiae in Pompeii's forum imitated the same Porticus Liviae in Rome with its altar to Concordia, which provides an illustrative Campanian parallel for Statius' (and Pollius') keen interest in and appropriation of the prestige accorded to this imperial virtue, both generally and derived from this structure in particular.

³⁵⁰ Newlands (2011a) 129.

³⁵¹ It is also worth noting that Vedius Pollio owned a villa at Pausilypon inherited - and preserved - by Augustus (D'Arms (2003) 229-30), where Pollius later possessed a villa (*Silv.* 2.2.81-82).

³⁵² See ch. 5.2-3 for Statius' portrait of Domitian as a secluded figure including in *Silv.* 1.1, the poem that he echoes here.

³⁵³ The analogy between the portico and Corinth is even more explicit if one follows e.g. Newlands (2011a) 42, and Shackleton Bailey & Parrott (2015) 104, in adopting Baehrens' emendation of *Lechaeo*, a reference to Lechaeum, Corinth's harbour.

2.2.36-40), when the poet favourably compares a spring at Pollius' villa to a series of mountainous fonts of inspiration in Greece: Mt. Helicon, Pieria, Pirene (again) and Castalia, tended by the "secretive" (38 *arcana*) priestess Phemonoe, whose expressive epithet relays the secluded nature of Pollius' wisdom within his physical and mental *arx* (131).³⁵⁴

Further, by comparing the portico's starting point to Ino's (otherwise unknown Corinthian) temple of Bacchus, Statius draws a parallel between Pollius' estate and Corinth's role as a refuge from internecine strife in his epic *Thebaid*. According to the mythical tradition that Statius follows elsewhere in his poetry, Athamas, the king of Thebes, kills his son Learchus in a mad frenzy whereupon his wife Ino takes their infant son Melicertes and leaps from a cliff into the sea. Melicertes dies in the sea, but Ino washes up in Corinth, where she finds safety.³⁵⁵ For Statius, Ino and Melicertes (also called Leucothea and Palaemon) evoke his epic on Thebes and the frenzied strife that wracks the city's leaders across the generations.³⁵⁶

In consequence, by this glancing recollection of Ino's escape to Corinth, Statius casts Pollius' estate as a comparable refuge from the conflicts of public life. It may portray the estate as a refuge from the imperial court in particular, given the fact that the villa of Ino, Tiberius' principal

³⁵⁴ Martelli (2009) 152, speculates that mention of Pollius' font here may refer to a spring in his garden. As the folk etymologies listed by Maltby (1991) 46-47 attest, Latin speakers at least sometimes associated the sense of secretiveness conveyed by *arcanus* with the physical exclusion found in the words *arx* 'citadel' and *arca* 'coffer'. See also Putnam (forthcoming). As Statius' commentators' also note, his description of the "nimble chorus of Phorcus" (*Silv.* 2.2.19 *levis...Phorci chorus*) echoes the "nimble choruses" of Nymphs in Horace's first ode (*Carm.* 1.1.31 *leves...chori*) that separate the Augustan poet from the commons (32 *secernunt populo*) as his success as a lyric poet elevates him to the stars and divinities in the skies above (29-30, 35-36); the scholiast Porphyrio ad loc. interprets the nymphs' secluding behaviour as a form of elevation.

³⁵⁵ For further references and discussion to Statius' use of this myth, see Newlands (2011a) 107. Statius also refers to mother and son at *Silv.* 2.1.179-80, 3.2.39-40, *Th.* 1.12-14, 1.121-2, 4.59, 4.562-4, 6.10, 7.420-1, 9.30-31, 10.425.

³⁵⁶ In the preface to the *Th.* (1.12-14), Statius lists Athamas' murder of his son and Ino's flight as an example of the internecine strife that has afflicted Thebes since its beginnings. At *Silv.* 3.2, Statius invokes Ino and her son (as

residence, stood only 11 km away on the eastern cliffs of Capri (figs. 1, 5), an enduring symbol of Tiberius' reign throughout the first century CE and the object of building activity and perhaps even use by Domitian.³⁵⁷ Statius' brief mention of Ino in *Corinth* is predicated on her seaward plunge to escape strife within Thebes' ruling house, and thus it may well have evoked this aptly named imperial villa perched nearby on cliffs over 1000 feet above the sea. Through the lens of this two-line simile then, Pollius' portico offers access to a lofty refuge from life in the tumultuous imperial centre, promising instead abundant intellectual inspiration.

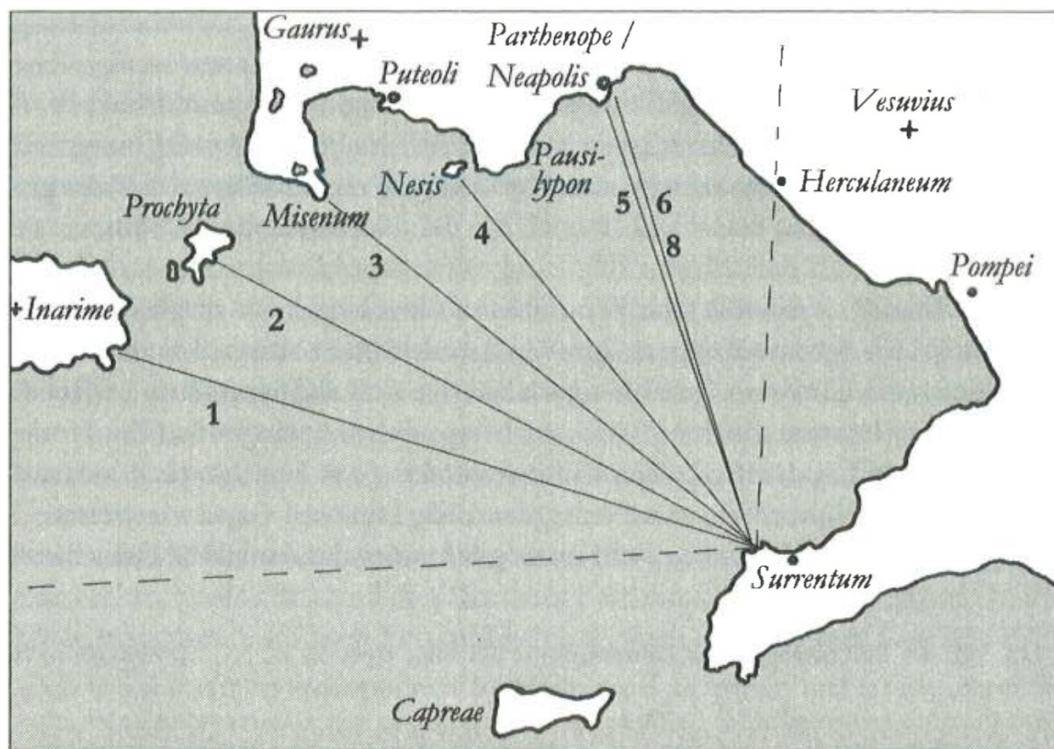


Figure 5. The Bay of Naples with sightlines from the villa of Pollius Felix documented in *Silv.* 2.2 (after Kreuz (2016) 451)

Leucothea and Palaemon) in relation to "your Thebes" (40 *vestras...Thebas*), associating them with both the city and his own similarly named epic.

³⁵⁷ On the imperial history of Capri after Tiberius' reign, see Booms (2010). Tiberius' primary residence on Capri, long called the *villa Iovis* 'villa of Jupiter' in modern scholarship based on Suet. *Tib.* 65.2, was likely called the *villa Inonis* 'villa of Ino'. See Champlin (2014) 225-30. Statius refers to the villa's famous lighthouse at *Silv.* 3.5.101 in close proximity to Pollius (103).

3.2.1. The Lofty Villa and its Distant Views

In turn, Statius repeatedly emphasizes the loftiness of the villa and its surrounding landscape throughout the poem. At the opening of his poem he introduces it as a "lofty villa, sentinel of the Dicarchean deep" (*Silv.* 2.2.3 *celsa Dicarchei speculatrix villa profundī*) drawing an expressive contrast between the villa's height and the ocean's depths. Later he marvels at the villa's thousand "peaks" (*Silv.* 2.2.73 *culmina*). The poem invests the villa's surrounding landscape with a corresponding sense of elevation. Pollius' vineyards are poised "over the high hills" (*Silv.* 2.2.4 *collesque per altos*), while the bluffs that rise up from the sea are repeatedly described as crags (*rupes* 14, 99), projecting rocks (*scopulus* 16, 101, 116, 120), or a mountain (*mons* 15, 48, 59). Zeiner observes, "just as the villa occupies a physically elevated and isolated position above the beach and the water below, the owner inside it both physically and metaphorically occupies an intellectual and philosophical pedestal."³⁵⁸

This repeated emphasis on the villa's elevation culminates midway through the poem in a detailed description of its loftiest room, whose position and character serve to further separate the villa's primary occupant from Roman society, both physically and socially. The room's height and seclusion are the first features mentioned: "one chamber," Statius writes, "one rises far above all the others" (*Silv.* 2.2.83 *una...cunctis procul eminet una diaetis*). The chamber is repeatedly singled out here, separated from the villa's other rooms by its surpassing height, a metaphor for its preeminent importance for Pollius' character. As Statius' commentators note, the adverb *procul* here participates in a figurative reading of the passage. The room, in other words, is 'by

³⁵⁸ Zeiner (2005) 180-81.

far' the most important.³⁵⁹ Yet this figurative sense is still based on the adverb's basic physical meaning 'at a distance', which is also operative here, given the poet's concern with physical description. Indeed, Statius uses *procul* in such a dual sense a few lines earlier (*Silv.* 2.2.81) when he emphasizes the physical and moral distance between Statius' villas at Surrentum and Pausilypon. That is to say, the singular quality of Pollius' most elevated room is expressed through its vertical distance from the rest of his villa.

The nature and composition of Pollius' room reinforce its sense of seclusion and importance for his character. Statius uses a special word for the chamber, *diaeta*, a term used for a room or suite of rooms that afforded their occupants privacy and seclusion from the outside world, even from other parts of the residence.³⁶⁰ At the same time, in Greek, *diaeta* (δίαιτα) can mean 'lifestyle', "which suggests," as Gowers puts it, "that the place where one went to opt out could also be held to be a form of self-expression."³⁶¹ Pollius' retreat to this lofty, isolated room offers readers a detailed view of what makes him distinctively superior to others.

The exotic coloured marbles that adorn this secluded chamber illustrate Pollius' physical and by extension his spiritual wealth, drawn like the stones are, in large part, from the Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean. Yet at the same time, they may also hint at the fact that Pollius' divergent lifestyle of luxury and philosophy ultimately rests on foundations of imperial toleration of this way of life. Statius relays an impressive catalogue of coloured marbles drawn from across the empire that adorn Pollius' private room (*Silv.* 2.2.85-94): present are red granite from Egyptian

³⁵⁹ van Dam (1984) 246, Newlands (2011a) 142.

³⁶⁰ van Dam (1984) 246, Newlands (2002) 183n84, (2011a) 142. See also ch. 5 pg. 298-99 for imperial examples of such secluded suites.

Syene, pavonazetto from Synnas in Phrygia, Laconian green serpentine from Sparta's Mt. Taygetus, Numidian giallo antico, as well as marble from various Greek locales (Thasos, Chios, and Carystos).

As a symbol of great luxury, these exotic coloured marbles offer additional testimony to Pollius' surpassing wealth, yet in this secluded room so closely linked to Pollius' character, this display of material wealth also relays the spiritual riches that he has drawn from his study of philosophy and cultural pursuits as a whole.³⁶² Just as these luxurious stones have been imported in large part from the Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean, Pollius' intellectual foundations rest on Greek culture, not least Epicureanism, a point that Statius subsequently makes explicit when he lauds his friend for his approval of Greek things and sojourns in Greek locales (*Silv.* 2.2.95-96), perhaps a reference to philhellenic Campania as a whole. Yet at the same time, this material ostentation contravenes the Epicurean dictate to "live unnoticed" (*Us.* 551 λάθε βιώσας).³⁶³ By calling attention to both his moral and material wealth, the conspicuous luxury of Pollius' topmost room and the villa as a whole present Pollius' continued ambitions for the recognition of his peers, though he hopes to attain this through his achievements in private life on his estate. Pollius the recluse has foresworn participating in public life yet he still hopes to occupy a position of respect in society, albeit on his own terms.

³⁶¹ Gowers (2010) 71.

³⁶² Cf. the more explicit comparison between Pollius' physical and philosophical wealth at *Silv.* 2.2.121-22. On the link between the room's luxurious ornamentation and Pollius' way of life, see Zeiner (2005) 183, Kirichenko (2017) 8-9.

³⁶³ Newlands (2012) 157. On this Epicurean doctrine, see Roskam (2007).

Imperial use of and control over the marbles mentioned in this passage may relay how Pollius' apolitical lifestyle rests on the foundations of support by the emperor and his court.³⁶⁴ Marble of any type was first used to decorate private dwellings only during the late Republic (Plin. *NH* 36.1.1-3.8) and coloured marbles from the eastern Mediterranean only began to be used extensively in the later first century CE, marking the use of coloured marbles in Pollius' villa as distinctive and rather regal.³⁶⁵ Indeed, Statius recounts a very similar catalogue of marbles decorating Domitian's own palace (*Silv.* 4.2.26-29).³⁶⁶ Further, during the early principate, the emperors gradually acquired control over the quarrying and distribution of many different types of marbles, facilitated by an imperial Marble Bureau (*ratio marmorum*), which exerted a fair degree of centralized control over the marble supply. The marbles in *Silvae* 2.2 bear this out, for, besides Laconian, all of the varieties listed as adorning Pollius' room come from mines known to have been administered by this imperial office.

The presence of these distinctive stones in this lofty, secluded room thus suggestively casts Pollius as a monarch-like figure who rules over his estate. He does this while occupying an elevated vantage point ornamented with symbols drawn from distant locales that evoke the empire's vast expanse and his own ability to exploit Rome's control over these places,

³⁶⁴ For the following discussion of marbles and *Silv.* 2.2, see esp. Gauly (2006) 465-66, and Parrott (2013) 141-43, with further references.

³⁶⁵ On the popularity of coloured marbles at Rome, see Ward-Perkins (1992) 15-16.

³⁶⁶ Present in Pollius' villa but not the palace are Laconian and Thasian, while palace also contains Italian Luna marble. The two locales as described by Statius share five marble types in common. The villa's commanding view, not least that afforded by the topmost room, discussed below, also likens the villa and its owner to Domitian in the *Silvae*, for in this collection the emperor is associated with surpassingly lofty vantage points from his palace (*Silv.* 4.2.30-31) and from his equestrian horse in the Forum (1.1.32-36, 87-88). On these views, see ch. 5.3. Putnam (forthcoming) notes parallels between the landscape of Pollius' estate (*Silv.* 2.2.54-55) and Vergil's portrait of the pre-Roman Palatine (*Aen.* 8.359-60, 362-63), which implicitly characterizes Pollius' villascape as a facsimile of the imperial Palatium. See also Newlands (2011a) 134-35. By twice describing the villa as *praetoria* (*Silv.* 2.2.49, 82), Statius employs a term sometimes used to refer to imperial villas in particular (Millar (1977) 27n32).

particularly the Hellenistic east, whose cultural influence on Pollius is also a subtext here, as we have seen. Yet Pollius' likely acquisition of these exotic stones by favour of the imperial house frames his lofty seclusion and the philhellenic, philosophical lifestyle that he enjoys in this state as a comparable courtesy bestowed by the emperor.³⁶⁷ According to this line of interpretation, much as Domitian grants this wealthy local magnate access to the supply of sumptuous coloured marbles under his control, he also graciously allows Pollius to deprive the state of his services in order to rule over his estate and his personal and spiritual affairs there as Domitian himself does over the empire as a whole. Pollius has separated himself from public life and nation-sized ambitions, yet his private position of luxurious spiritual tranquillity depends upon the emperor's toleration of this uncivic lifestyle.

This chamber's loftiness also affords an impressive view of the northern coast of the Bay of Naples (*Silv.* 2.2.83-85, cf. figs. 5, 6) that highlights the pleasure that he derives from his separation from spiritual tumult, not least that engendered by imperial ambitions. The poet's description of the landscape of Pollius' estate creates an expectation that its lofty view will be

³⁶⁷ Cf. how Pliny lauds Trajan for permitting Silius Italicus to remain in his villa-bound intellectual retirement rather than greeting him on his first arrival to Rome in 99 (*Ep.* 3.7.6-7), as well as for allowing an unidentified prefect of the praetorian guard to quite his office and leave Rome for retirement (*Pan.* 86-87). Kreuz (2016) 470-71n169 is sceptical that Pollius acquired the coloured marbles through the imperial marble bureau and that their presence in his lofty *diaeta* reflects the emperor's favour. Contra Gauly and Parrott (cited above), Kreuz moots the possibility that Pollius obtained the stones from smaller quarries not administered by the imperial marble bureau, from leftover material of lower quality, from reused material, or even by corruption at the imperial quarries. If Kreuz's scepticism is correct, then Pollius imitates the emperor here by his use of coloured marbles but did not receive the marbles through imperial favour. In my view, however, it is unlikely that Statius would celebrate his friend's display of luxurious marbles corruptly obtained from imperial quarries in a poetry collection that sometimes addresses the emperor directly. Pollius would surely not have wanted Domitian to be aware of his possession of these marbles if he had acquired them from the emperor's quarries corruptly. Likewise, Kreuz does not cite any non-imperial quarries for these exotic varieties of marble, and it is unlikely that Pollius would have wished readers of Statius' poem to infer that his marbles were either lower-quality leftovers or second-hand material, whether or not they actually were, since this would not fit with Statius' laudatory portrait of him as a supremely wealthy man. Thus, while Kreuz's arguments cannot be disproven, based on the current evidence, it seems plausible that Pollius acquired his coloured marbles via the imperial marble bureau. At very least, Pollius appears to have lacked either the means to have acquired them from another source or a logical motivation for wishing that Statius' readers conclude that he had done so.

important. Statius, we recall, repeatedly emphasizes the villa's elevation with the term *scopulus* (*Silv.* 2.2.16, 101, 116, 120), a term associated (*Isid. Orig.* 16.3.2, *Serv. Aen.* 1.45) with *speculare*, a verb that describes the act of close observation, often in the context of military reconnaissance, a connotation also raised by our first view of the "lofty sentinel villa" (*Silv.* 2.2.3 *celsa...speculatrix villa*), a subject that we will return to shortly.

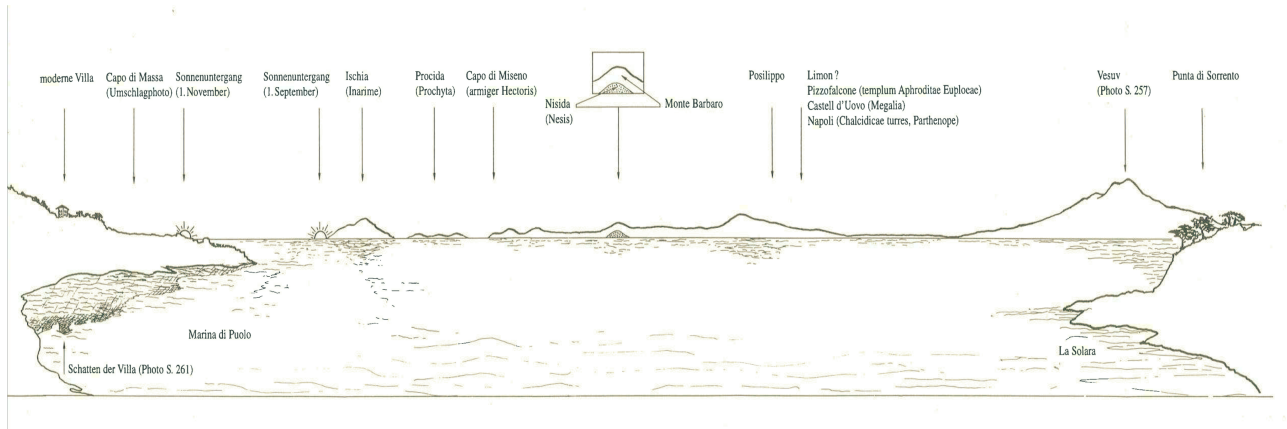


Figure 6: View of the Bay of Naples from the villa of Pollius Felix (Punta della Calcarella)(after Krüger (1998) 263)

The chamber's view fulfils these expectations. Much as they afford a pleasing variety of views, Statius writes (*Silv.* 2.2.73-74), each room in the villa provides the occupant with its own unique pleasure, a reference to the pleasure that the Epicurean Pollius derives from his detachment from the spiritual turbulence located on the seas below.³⁶⁸ The view of the loftiest chamber is unique. After an extended passage (*Silv.* 2.2.72-82) describing the various views that the villa affords, Statius concludes this part of his poem by describing the special vista of the highest room. While the other rooms often offer prospects of locations described in menacing or unhappy terms,³⁶⁹ the

³⁶⁸ Cf. Newlands (2002) 172-73, (2012) 153-54.

³⁶⁹ "...Rugged (*aspera* also means 'harsh') Prochyta...the weapon-bearer of great Hector (Misenus, i.e. Cape Misenus)...Nesia exhales harmful mist...projecting Megalia strikes the curving waves and your Limon is anxious

loftiest chamber "conveys Parthenope to you by a straight pathway over the sea" (*Silv.* 2.2.84-85 *tibi Parthenopen directo limite ponti ingerit*), a phrase that reiterates Pollius' close connection with this room through its use of the pronoun *tibi* to mark his personal interest in the chamber's view. In turn, Pollius' highest room has a special connection with Naples, invoked with its Sirenian title of Parthenope. This moment, we recall, echoes Vergil's use of this toponym as he states his personal connection to Naples in the final lines of the *Georgics* (*Geo.* 4.563-64) as the site of his poetry writing in explicit contrast to Augustus' campaigns of imperial expansion on the eastern frontier. By celebrating the link between the lofty *diaeta* and Naples in this language, Statius links Pollius too with Naples as a locus of cultural pursuits, those of Vergil above all, in distinction from the sphere of imperial enterprise.

A second topographical allusion in this same couplet contributes to this theme. The direct nautical track (*Silv.* 2.2.85 *directo limite ponti*) from Naples to the lofty room recalls the penultimate line of the sixth book of Vergil's epic, when Aeneas emerges from his Underworld preview of Rome's future glories and "conveys himself by a straight pathway to Caieta's port" (*Aen.* 6.900 *Tum se ad Caietae recto fert limite portum*), the first passage in Latin to use *limes* with *rectus* or a compound.³⁷⁰ In this final moment of the first half of the *Aeneid*, the Trojan hero sails north on a straight course from Campania and finally lands on the shores of Latium, marking his arrival at the region where his descendants will one day found Rome.

as its master reclines opposite and from afar it gazes upon the Surrentine mansions" (*Silv.* 2.2.76-82). Statius' learned ideal reader will also recall that Inarime (*Silv.* 2.2.76) is volcanic because Typhoeus was buried beneath the island as a punishment for rebelling against the gods (Verg. *Aen.* 9.715-16).

³⁷⁰ Putnam (forthcoming) identifies this parallel, though his interpretation remains focused on Statius' literary influences in this poem.

In Statius' poem, by contrast, a straight course leads southwards away from imperial adventure. Neapolitan Parthenope, we have seen, travels this direct track to Pollius' lofty, secluded room, carrying with it connotations of an apolitical, intellectual lifestyle defined in opposition to the wider world of empire. In other words, precisely where Vergil's language marks Aeneas' rapid course toward the next stage in Rome's foundation story, Statius reconfigures this phrasing to mark the limits of Pollius' private world.

3.2.2. *Pollius' Lofty Citadel of the Mind*

Later in the poem, Pollius' lofty *diaeta* reappears in psychic form as a "lofty citadel of the mind" (*Silv.* 2.2.131 *celsa...mentis arce*). While this psychic structure has appeared occasionally in the preceding discussion, it remains for us to examine the implications of representing Pollius' spiritual disposition in the spatialized form of a lofty psychic citadel far removed from the storms of life. The adjective *celsa* characterizes Pollius' state of mind as lofty, even godlike, as we shall see. Drawing on vertical metaphors of status and wisdom, this adjective portrays Pollius as detached from and superior to those caught in the sea's swells below, much as his villa looms over the Bay. Indeed, in his initial description of the villa (*Silv.* 2.2.3), Statius describes it as *celsa*, a verbal parallel that links the villa's elevation to the superiority of Pollius' detached moral outlook.

From his lofty vantage point of Epicurean wisdom, Pollius gazes down at human folly on the seas below (*Silv.* 2.2.132), an image that associates the villa owner's enlightened state with his position outside of society. Latin and Greek, we recall from chapter 2, sometimes consider knowledge to be a kind of sight, and Pollius' panoptic view of the semi-figurative Bay of Naples thus illustrates his wide-ranging understanding, in particular, its superiority to the moral outlook

of the men going off course on the seas below. Further, by associating Pollius' totalizing knowledge with his elevated position above society and his panoptic view of it, Statius suggests that Pollius draws his profound understanding of society from his position of lofty detachment from it.

Assuming a totalizing view and acquiring a knowledge of all of life's particulars, this passage suggests, paradoxically entails a self-separation from the world that renders life and those that lead it foreign to Pollius. Those individuals who are immersed in society lack the perspective on their goals and on the destination of their moral journeys that Pollius has acquired by withdrawing from this domain in order to contemplate it. Pollius' lofty, outside view perceives human error for what it is. A life pursued within society and lived according to its customs makes it harder to situate such a life within its broader context, preventing the epiphany that Pollius has drawn, that ambitiously pursuing fame and fortune on a national stage is an endless pursuit that can yield no sure and stable satisfaction. For Pollius, attaining this knowledge is a solitary process not easily shared with others.

Assuming this totalizing view of life also entails a certain loss of sympathy for those whom Pollius has detached himself from, for from his lofty mental citadel, as Statius writes to his friend, "You look down upon those going astray and you laugh at human joys" (*Silv.* 2.2.132 *despicis errantes humanaque gaudia rides.*). Here Pollius' downward gaze articulates his disdainful, condescending attitude towards men who go off course on the sea of life, for the verb *despicere* carries both these senses here. As we have seen, this passage is greatly influenced by the famous proem to the second book of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (Lucr. 2.1-13, cf. 2.9

despicere) when the sage relishes looking down upon men caught in a stormy sea from the safe vantage point of his lofty, fortified temple of Epicurean doctrine.

This passage of Lucretius has long occasioned debate over what precisely the wise man enjoys about this macabre view and whether he (and Lucretius' philosophy) are guilty of solipsism and misanthropy as a result. Given the proem's influence on this scene in Statius' poem, this debate is relevant to understanding Pollius' attitude towards others as well. Lucretius himself attempts to head off those who would interpret his second proem as misanthropic, writing (Lucr. 2.3-4) that the sage does not derive his pleasure from others' suffering, but rather from the sense of security that he gains from looking down at the troubles that others endure due to moral failings that he himself is not susceptible to.³⁷¹ The Epicurean wise man, in other words, does not take pleasure in others' suffering. Rather, his pleasurable sense of his own spiritual serenity is heightened by recognizing the self-defeating attitudes and behaviours related to greed and ambition in others and the troubles they cause, a state of affairs that throws his own inner tranquillity into greater relief. All the same, even if the view of others' suffering is not the source of his pleasure, neither does it impede it. Indeed, their suffering facilitates it, an insight that also applies to Pollius' unsympathetic outlook in *Silvae* 2.2 as well.

The pleasure that Pollius derives from looking down on others suffering below him is similarly detached and individualistic in nature. In fact, Pollius surpasses Lucretius' sage in these qualities by disdainfully laughing at the "human" priorities (*Silv.* 2.2.132 *humana*) of those below him as they go astray, a distancing emotion that trivializes them and their mishaps from his lofty point

³⁷¹ See Konstan's (2008) 29-35 sympathetic interpretation of this scene, with reference to the controversy that it has engendered.

of view, which implicitly occupies a position that is detached from everyday human feelings. While such a lack of compassion for the suffering may seem culpable to modern sensibilities, in classical antiquity pity was generally reserved for those deemed not to be responsible for or deserving of the misfortune that they suffered and Epicurean writers in particular sometimes employed laughter aggressively as they ridiculed their philosophical opponents.³⁷² Such considerations suggest that Pollius condescendingly laughs at men embroiled in the tumult of public life because they are responsible for their own misfortunes.

A glancing allusion to Pollius' laughter in Juvenal's tenth satire adds further force to this point. As he describes Democritus, the proverbially laughing 5th century BCE atomist philosopher and a great influence on Pollius' chosen philosophy of Epicureanism, Juvenal writes that the Greek thinker "laughed at the cares and likewise at the joys of the crowd (*Sat.* 10.51 *ridebat curas nec non et gaudia uolgi*), the only other passage in classical Latin besides Statius' description of Pollius' laughter to employ the words *ridere gaudia*.³⁷³ In this description of Democritus, the Greek philosopher laughs uproariously as a form of censure of the ubiquity of human failings.³⁷⁴ While neither Juvenal nor his character Democritus has exclusive insight into Statius' portrait of Pollius, this verbal parallel suggests that the later Roman satirist saw an essential similarity between the reproachful laughter that Democritus and Pollius directed toward society at large for its moral failings.

³⁷² On the connection between pity and innocence in antiquity, see Konstan (2001) 34-48. On Epicurean use of laughter in invective, see Halliwell (2008) 358-59.

³⁷³ Courtney (1980) 403, identifies this parallel.

³⁷⁴ On Democritus' laughter in this passage, see Halliwell (2008) 369. On the long tradition of Democritus as the laughing philosopher, see Halliwell (2008) 343-72.

Pollius' Epicurean pleasure is thus highly individualistic, at least as far as Statius' portrait shows. Much as Lucretius' sage, Pollius is untroubled by the suffering of others, indeed he evinces a degree of scorn as looks down on their misfortune, deriving personal pleasure from his own comparative spiritual tranquillity. Like Juvenal's Democritus, he is provoked to disdainful laughter by this sorry sight, for these individuals have caused their own misfortunes and thus merit no pity. Just as the tranquil weather bounded within his estate fails to calm the turbulence of the sea further out on the bay, Pollius' condescending amusement at the plight of those out on this quasi-figurative sea reflects the personal nature of his spiritual commitments, for he merely laughs at others' folly without making any effort to show them a better course. In the face of the spiritual chaos and tumult found within society, Pollius is alone in his spiritual serenity.

Pollius' detached position of lofty scorn for others resembles the celestial detachment of death. Echoes of this sense are already present at the poem's beginning when Statius writes that in Pollius' vineyards, "grape has no envy of Falernian winepresses (*Silv.* 2.2.5 *prelis non invidet uva Falernis*), recalling Horace's praise of his estate at Tarentum, where the nearby Aulon valley "has no envy of Falernian grapes" (*Carm.* 2.6.19-20 *minimum Falernis invidet uvis*).³⁷⁵ By evoking this passage of the Augustan lyric poet, Statius praises Pollius' estate by comparing it to Horace's idealized, Epicurean portrait of his lush property at Tarentum, and to a lesser extent, to his favoured estate at Tibur mentioned earlier in the same poem.

Identifying this parallel reveals further similarities. Like Horace, Pollius is retiring to a fertile estate in temperate, Hellenistic southern Italy, where lofty citadels promise physical and spiritual

³⁷⁵ On this allusion, see esp. Newlands (2002) 160-62, who does not mention death as a common theme.

security (Hor. *Carm.* 2.6.21-22 *beatae...arces*). In each case, a friend joins the retiree, though only temporarily in Pollius' case, as we have seen. In light of these similarities, Horace's contemplation of dying on his Tarentine estate at the poem's close (*Carm.* 2.6.22-24) gains added force for Statius' readers. Much as his Surrentine estate shares the ambience of *otium* and friendship found at Horace's Tarentum, this brief parallel suggests that Pollius too is in the autumn of life,³⁷⁶ and that his villa-bound retirement offers a preliminary sort of separation from life that will be fulfilled when he dies. Pollius' seclusion on his estate marks his readiness for death.

This sense of the villa's otherworldliness recurs as the poem continues. As Statius exults over the splendour contained within Pollius' villa he exclaims that his eyes can scarcely take in the "long procession of sights", "scarcely", he continues "did my steps hold out while I am led through things one by one, what a mass of things!" (*Silv.* 2.2.42-44 *ordine longo....vix, dum per singula ducor, suffecere gradus. quae rerum turba!*) The poet's careful wording here recalls the opening and closing words describing Anchises' Underworld account to Aeneas of the glorious future descendants of Rome.³⁷⁷ Once the Sibyl and his son reach Elysium, the poet writes, Anchises leads them into the "noisy mass" (*Aen.* 6.753 *turbamque sonantem*) of future Romans, yet to be born, then brings the two up to higher ground from where he can review them all in their "long procession" (754 *longo ordine*) and point them out to his guests as they come. This he does, moving from the earliest Italian kings to Augustus' would-be heir Marcellus, whereupon the poet concludes the passage, relating how "Anchises led his son through things one by one" (*Aen.* 6.888 *Anchises natum per singula duxit*). By describing the long procession of things in Pollius'

³⁷⁶ Pollius seems to have been an older man, as he had several grandchildren (see pgs. 168-69 above).

³⁷⁷ On this allusion, see esp. Hinds (2001) 252.

villa and his own passage through the house in language that recalls Vergil's wording at the beginning and end of Anchises' catalogue of future Roman heroes, Statius extravagantly suggests that Pollius' villa contains a splendid array of marvels of comparable significance. Pollius' personal property matches Roman history in its importance.

Further, and most importantly for the present discussion, these riches within Pollius' villa are likened to an inspiring array of Roman heroes in the Underworld, a parallel that characterizes his estate as another unearthly space set apart from the everyday world and those within it. This parallel, however, between Pollius, his estate and the Underworld associates neither villa-owner nor villa with physical death as a cessation of consciousness. Rather, much as the wisdom of the Stoic sage detaches his soul from his body and from the world around it in a manner similar to such a separation at death, this allusion suggests a somewhat similar analogy.³⁷⁸ Pollius' splendid wealth, both material and moral, separates him and his villa from the life of the community much as death (or pre-life purgatory) secludes the souls of the blessed in Vergil's Elysium.

This subtext becomes more explicit in the poem's culminating image of Pollius in his lofty psychic citadel gazing down on the sea of life. Thanks to his spiritual wealth, Statius writes, Pollius is "detached from the fates" (*Silv.* 2.2.126 *exemptus fatis*). His final day will not find him caught in the maelstrom of affairs, "but ready to go and full of life" (128-29 *sed abire paratum ac plenum vita*), an echo of Lucretius' Nature, who admonishes an individual for his fear of death: "why do you not retire like a guest at a feast, full of life?" (*Lucr.* 3.938 *cur non ut plenus*

³⁷⁸ For the Stoic's sage's death-like self-seclusion, see pgs. 72-73.

vitae conviva recedis...?).³⁷⁹ Pollius is inwardly ready for death and thus hangs back from life, pictured here as the sea and a banquet.

Statius gives this theme its furthest development when he draws on his description of Pollius' disdainful laughter in his psychic citadel to portray the dead poet Lucan laughing down from the heavens, retrospectively lending Pollius a similar sort of otherworldly detachment. In the final poem of *Silvae* book 2, Statius praises Lucan and tells him that his widow summons him, wherever his deceased spirit may be. One of the possibilities is that Lucan's soul has risen up to the heavens, from where "you look down with disdain upon the earth and laugh at tombs" (*Silv.* 2.7.110 *terras despicias et sepulcra rides*), the only other passage in classical Latin that *despicias* and *rides* appear together besides the poet's earlier portrait of Pollius' condescending laughter from his mental bastion (2.2.132 *despicias errantes humanaque gaudia rides*).³⁸⁰ Viewed retrospectively through the lens of this intratextual echo, the Epicurean Pollius looks down from the citadel of his mind upon those who do not share his philosophical enlightenment with the same detachment as the dead poet Lucan, whose carefree spirit laughs scornfully from the heavens at death and human folly. Here too, Pollius' serene detachment resembles Lucan's deceased state not in any medical sense, but rather, in terms of his detachment from bodily concerns and his separation from the cares of everyday human society.

³⁷⁹ The metaphor of death as leaving a feast is widespread, appearing several times in Epicurean sources (Usener fr. 499, Nisbet (1978) 1, van Dam (1984) 269).

³⁸⁰ Further similarities link the two lines. The two verbs appear in the same order; in each case *despicias* takes an accusative plural direct object and *rides* takes a second-declension neuter accusative plural direct object. The parallelism between these two images of lofty detachment may be connected to the possibility that Pollius married Lucan's widow Polla Argentaria after Lucan died. Statius addresses Pollius' wife as 'Polla', calling Lucan's widow 'Polla Argentaria'. Nisbet (1978) first argued for their identity, adducing much other circumstantial evidence; ultimately, his theory is an attractive possibility which nevertheless remains conjecture. In Statius' second poem on Pollius' estate, a personified temple of Juno "looks down upon and silently laughs at" (*Silv.* 3.1.104-5 *despiciet et tacite ridet*) Hercules' shabby temple, prompting the god to plea that Pollius renovate the structure.

Pollius' lofty, otherworldly disposition is also described as a "citadel of the mind" (*Silv.* 2.2.131 *mentis...arce*), a characterization that draws on the poet's portrait of the villa as a military fortress, transferring its guarded yet outwardly observant posture to its owner's inner state. At the same time, this image also suggests that Pollius has withdrawn into the fortress of his soul, a metaphor examined in imperial Stoic authors in the previous chapter.³⁸¹ Picturing Pollius' inner disposition as a psychic citadel reinforces several aspects of his characterization in *Silvae* 2.2 and in this final figurative scene in particular. As lofty structures frequently placed on points of natural elevation, as here, citadels vertically distance their occupants from their surroundings. Such an image here reinforces the reader's sense of Pollius' condescending attitude towards his peers and his sense of moral superiority, a motif that reappears elsewhere in this figural passage when Statius praises his friend as fortunate over and above (*Silv.* 2.2.122 *supra*) the wealth of the east thanks to his wisdom and as "more exalted than any desire" (125 *voto sublimior omni*).³⁸² Yet the citadel's comparative elevation here also combines with its sense of fortification to convey the security that Pollius draws from his Epicurean mindset, which holds fear and desire and those still embroiled in these emotions at a distance.³⁸³ The defensive connotations of Pollius' psychic citadel thus further emphasize his guarded outlook towards the outside world.

³⁸¹ Imagery of retreat into the self appears otherwise wholly absent from Epicureanism except for the present passage of the *Silvae* and Seneca's quotation of Epicurus at letter 25.6 (Us. fr. 209), discussed at ch. 2, pg. 71-72. While scholars such as Usener (1887) 163, Grilli (1953) 51, 154n2, and Rabbow (1954) 94, accept the authenticity of this fragment, Traina (2006a) 18, casts doubt on it, suggesting instead that Seneca has reconfigured Epicurus' original sentiment using his own distinctive imagery of withdrawal into the self.

³⁸² In his youth, Pollius was also an exalted figure in public life at Naples and Puteoli, when he was carried "aloft" (*Silv.* 2.2.134 *celsus*) through the two cities, haughtily proud in what he now realizes was a mistaken life choice (137 *errore superbus*). This reproof nonetheless contains an implicit compliment, for portrays Pollius as superior to others even during this less advisable period of his life.

³⁸³ On the connotations of *arx*, see pg. 63-64.

Pollius' lofty mental citadel also recalls the windblown fortress of the weak king Aeolus in *Aeneid* 1, a dissonant allusion that highlights similarities between the security of Pollius' inner moral self-possession and a strong ruler's steady control over his subjects, qualities that Aeolus manifestly fails to demonstrate. While Statius' description of Pollius' psychic fortress as a *celsa arx* (*Silv.* 2.2.131 *celsa tu mentis ab arce...*) has several parallels in earlier and contemporary Latin literature, I contend that this collocation recalls its first appearance in surviving Latin, in the description of Aeolus' lofty mountain fortress, for, as we have seen, the *Aeneid*, particularly its first book, is at the forefront of Statius' mind as he crafts his image of Pollius' physical and psychic seclusion within his twin citadels.³⁸⁴ Early in *Aeneid* 1, upset that Aeneas is making headway towards his fated landfall in Italy, Juno journeys to Aeolus' kingdom, bidding him release the howling winds from their imprisonment in a cave beneath his lofty citadel so as to delay the Trojan hero's progress. Upon her arrival in Aeolia, the Augustan poet briefly recounts the imprisonment of the winds before describing their warden: "Aeolus sits in his lofty citadel, sceptre in hand, and both softens the winds' passions and tempers their wrath" (*Aen.* 1.56-57 *celsa sedet Aeolus arce sceptrum tenens mollitque animos et temperat iras*).

Vergil's description of Aeolus' lofty fortress invites a twofold allegorical reading.³⁸⁵ On the one hand, the angry winds (*animos...iras*)³⁸⁶ that Aeolus imprisons beneath his mountain citadel call to mind a troubled individual's tempestuous passions, matching and yet clashing with the moral metaphor of the serene Pollius' lofty mental *arx*, thus likening Aeolus to an emotionally

³⁸⁴ *Celsa* and *arx* first appear together at *Aen.* 1.56, then seven times in subsequent authors prior or contemporary to Statius, who also employs this collocation at *Th.* 2.256 and 12.398.

³⁸⁵ See e.g. Cowan (2015).

³⁸⁶ As Servius notes ad loc., Vergil elegantly uses *animi* "passions" to illustrate an intrinsic connection between wind and unruly emotion, for *animi* here call to mind their Greek cognate ἀνεμοί "winds". See Tac. *Agr.* 45.2 and

disturbed person first repressing then ill-advisedly giving vent to his anger. At the same time, this scene and its role in precipitating the allegorical sea-storm that Aeolus unleashes also encourage a political reading.³⁸⁷ Aeolus is repeatedly characterized as a monarch in this passage³⁸⁸ and consequently, the angry winds that he first represses and then releases also direct the reader's mind to the passions of a disorderly mob that an ineffective ruler first constrains and then irresponsibly lets loose when it suits his impetuous personal interests.

Should Statius' readers recall Aeolus' grim mountain fortress in the description of Pollius' lofty mental stronghold, the dissonance between these two elevated bastions helps to highlight Pollius' comparative emotional calm and the firm, regal manner in which he has achieved and subsequently maintained self-mastery.³⁸⁹ Where Aeolus suppresses the resentful (*Aen.* 1.55 *indignantēs*) winds by brute force before he unwisely releases their destructive power, Pollius refutes resentful (*Silv.* 2.2.126 *indignantem*) Fortune and quells the winds around his estate-cum-kingdom through his inner calm rather than simply overpowering them in a manner that fails to resolve the threat that they pose. The discordant parallel that emerges between these two lofty citadels thus evokes the political subtext of both poems, and calls attention once again to Pollius' inner self-mastery, likening this achievement to the conciliating leadership that a strong sovereign exerts over his subjects, drawing on the erratic Aeolus as an allusive foil.³⁹⁰

Ann. 3.15.2 (discussed in ch. 5.2) for images of the spiritual fortresses of Domitian and Tiberius, which similarly keep destructive feelings bottled up inside.

³⁸⁷ Cf. esp. the 'Statesman Metaphor' at *Aen.* 1.148-56, which compares Neptune as he calms the seas to a statesman who defuses the rage of an unruly crowd.

³⁸⁸ *Aen.* 1.52 *rex Aeolus* "king Aeolus", 1.54 *imperio premit* "he represses (i.e. the winds) with his command" 1.57 *sceptra tenens* "sceptre in hand".

³⁸⁹ On Pollius' Surrentine estate in *Silv.* 2.2. as a personal kingdom, see note 317.

³⁹⁰ Such a parallel could be extended further, for Aeolus' kingship is subordinate to Jupiter, while Statius repeatedly likens Domitian to Jupiter in the *Silvae* (1 pr. 18, 1.6.27, 3.4.18, 4.2.11). Just as Aeolus is a weak subordinate king,

The image of Pollius' psychic citadel here and its intimations of inner retreat into the self draw attention to several parallels that his inward journey has with that of the spiritually reclusive Stoic sage, a comparison that also illustrates certain significant differences.³⁹¹ The Stoic's inner journey away from the world, we recall, sometimes involves battling inner flaws into submission, whereupon he secures the resulting state of inner calm (ἀπάθεια 'freedom from suffering') by means of a fortress that he uses to defend himself against the continuing temptation to accord moral value to the outside world. Much like the Stoic sage, the Epicurean Pollius has concluded his spiritual sea voyage by bringing his boat to shore, while his quasi-military conquest of the terrain of his estate expresses his victory over his inner failings. His construction of a fortress-like villa on its grounds and his fortified mindset while retired there illustrate his concern to secure his inner tranquillity (ἀταραξία 'lack of disturbance'). This is not to suggest that these parallels reveal certain Stoic tendencies on Pollius' part. Rather, the parallel images of inward spiritual retreat with their sequence of conflict and tranquil security illustrate certain similarities between Pollius' spiritual journey and that of the spiritually reclusive Stoics examined in the previous chapter. Like these Stoics, Pollius has successfully navigated a solitary journey through life, enduring a variety of struggles before attaining enlightenment, an isolating achievement that separates him from the rest of society, leading him to reject its values.³⁹²

Pollius' spiritual self-mastery endows him with the attributes of a stalwart sovereign who obediently rules beneath Domitian.

³⁹¹ On Stoic aspects of Pollius' portrait in the *Silvae*, not including this image of his psychic fortress, see van Dam (1984) 210-211, Nauta (2002) 318-21, Zeiner (2005) 186-87.

³⁹² The figure of Democritus also connects imperial-era Stoic and Epicurean imagery of retreat into the self. As Grilli (1953) 149-56 notes, Democritus was an important influence upon the Stoic, especially Senecan use of this image of metaphorical retreat. Democritus was also an intellectual ancestor of Epicureanism, and thus, indirectly,

In turn, these parallels with the Stoic inner retreat to psychic security also illustrate certain distinctive characteristics of Pollius' mental fortress. In Stoic images of the psychic citadel, the fortifications are not idle. Fortune and her various allies are constantly on the attack and it is only through the utmost vigilance that the sage maintains his security, illustrating the ever-present possibility of backsliding if the Stoic relaxes his resistance by according moral value to external reality. By contrast, while Statius alludes to Pollius' martial victory over his inner flaws by describing his friend's conquest of the wilderness on his estate, he portrays no real threats to Pollius' fortresses, physical or psychic, illustrating the Epicurean vision of a more relaxed and pleasurable form of enlightenment, though his repeated emphasis on the villa and its owner's surveillance of their surroundings suggests the latter's continued vigilance.

Indeed, we have seen how Statius repeatedly alludes to threatening or violent landscapes while describing the tranquillity that pervades Pollius' estate, a marked effect that calls further attention to the placid quality of Pollius' retreat, implicitly observing how the villa owner's tranquillity intertextually calms the sense of *furor* that animates these model texts.³⁹³ Likewise, Statius describes adverse stormy weather in the poem's present far out on the bay of Naples, yet he only cites its presence to note how it yields to the aura of tranquillity that surrounds Pollius' estate. Secure in his bastion of Epicurean doctrine, Pollius has a guarded attitude toward the outside world, but he faces no threats to his moral attainments comparable to the spiritual siege that the Stoic suffers.

upon Pollius, a connection that Juvenal may imply through his allusion to Pollius' disdainful laughter while describing Democritus' laughter in *Satire* 10, discussed above on pg. 186.

³⁹³ E.g. the sea's turbulence from serpents coming to kill Vergil's Laocoon transforms into the harmless spume foaming around Neptune's temple on Pollius' estate (*Aen.* 2.209, *Silv.* 2.2.26-27); various aspects of Pollius' harbour and the bay beyond recall the allegorical sea-storm in *Aeneid* 1 and Pollius' distance from its frenzy; the brutal calm

The comparatively tranquil nature of Pollius' psychic security in this scene is also related to the fact that Pollius has withdrawn from society physically as well as mentally. Many instances of psychic withdrawal mentioned by imperial-era Stoics coincide with and facilitate the Stoic's continued social and political engagement with the community when such engagement is possible. Physical withdrawal is criticized as ineffective on its own to resolve a spiritual problem. By contrast, Pollius' spiritual retreat to his inner fortress concurs with his retirement from public life to his secluded Surrentine villa. Indeed, Statius emphasizes his friend's retreat from the community in the passage that immediately follows the image of Pollius' mental citadel (*Silv.* 2.2.133-42). In practical terms, the retired Pollius in *Silvae* 2.2 is isolated from temptations to stray from his eclectic conception of Epicurean doctrine, aside from the temporary visit of his heterodox friend Statius, whereas Stoics such as Seneca often envision spiritual retreat as a strategy to continue operating in environments that are not supportive of their moral priorities. While physical retreat for Stoics such as Seneca brings little benefit unless the spirit retreats in parallel (e.g. *Ep.* 104.7), physical seclusion aids Pollius by distancing him from forces that would disrupt his isolated tranquillity. Much like the Stoics, however, Pollius' spiritual tranquillity is necessary for his Surrentine estate to acquire its distinct aura of calm that shields him from the world outside (*Silv.* 2.2.29, 118-20).

4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined how the physical and psychic seclusion of the Epicurean Pollius Felix at his Surrentine estate in *Silvae* 2.2 expresses his detachment from public life and from those who harbour ambitions to achieve status and prestige on a national stage. As section one

of the sea as Lucan's Caesar crosses the Adriatic in pursuit of civil war morphs into the amazing calm in Pollius' harbour (Luc. 5.442-43, *Silv.* 2.2.26-27, 29). See pgs. 111-17, 142-43 for discussion.

illustrates, the turbulent waves out on the Bay of Naples and the water's contrasting calm within Pollius' harbour figuratively juxtapose the fluctuating ambitions that buffet others from the inner tranquillity that Pollius draws from his Epicurean lifestyle. By closely associating Pollius with his calm harbour in distinction from the stormy sea, Statius suggests that Pollius has completed his spiritual journey and thereby separated himself from those misguided individuals whose unending social ambitions leave them disquieted by hope and fear. The limitation of this calm weather to Pollius' estate thus sets the villa-owner apart from the untutored multitude while simultaneously relaying the private nature of his philosophical commitments, for his tranquillity does not touch those outside of his personal orbit.

As section two demonstrates, Statius' account of his journey to his friend's estate and his repeated allusions to a series of epic sea-voyages offer two different views on Pollius and his villa in relation to the outside world. Statius treats Pollius' villa as a charming waystation that must offer him only temporary relief from pursuing his ambitions for literary prominence on a national stage, thus framing Pollius and his estate as an antipode to Rome and its values. For Pollius, by contrast, the secluded estate and his private lifestyle there are the permanent destination of his spiritual journey, equivalent in importance from his own point of view to the arc of Roman history.

The villa proper and the poet's portrait of Pollius in its topmost room in section three extend this portrait, drawing attention to the vertical distance that separates both lofty villa and its otherworldly denizen from their surroundings, expressing the latter's moral superiority to the philosophically uninitiated. As a lone spectator of the sea below, laughing disdainfully at those

going astray, Pollius reveals the personal nature of his inner peace, which is unperturbed by the anguish of others. The fortress-like nature of his solitary villa and of his own inner disposition there calls attention to Pollius' guarded outlook toward the outside world, while the verbal and material adornment of these isolated outposts invests Pollius with the prestige of a strong ruler while simultaneously hinting that Pollius' pose of civic renunciation and regal self-mastery ultimately depends upon Domitian's toleration.

The portrait of Pollius' seclusion in *Silvae* 2.2 thus characterizes his Epicurean retreat from society and its values as a highly individualistic, antisocial life-choice that is nevertheless endowed with a heightened sense of cultural value. Throughout the poem, Pollius acquires distinction through his separation from others. His position on his calm, fortress-like estate far above the stormy sea characterizes his retirement from public life as superior in every way to the life that he has abandoned. Devoted to private life, Pollius has a regal sense of self-mastery and an unassailable inner tranquillity whereas those others who still seek status and prestige in public life are portrayed as slaves to what they value (*Silv.* 2.2.130 *deservire*) and spiritually defenceless against the torments of hope and fear.

Likewise, Statius' allusive portrait of Pollius and his secluded estate invests both villa and denizen with an outsize status and significance.³⁹⁴ In his lofty mental citadel, Pollius resembles a strong sovereign, while various parts of the estate subtly evoke Domitian's palace and Vergilian vistas of Rome's glorious future, implicitly equating Pollius' personal life to these momentous prospects. Even the allusive comparison of Pollius' estate to Dido's Carthage ennobles Pollius for

³⁹⁴ Cf. Newlands (2012) 155-56, on Pollius as a Campanian 'culture hero' at *Silv.* 3.5.102-3.

his maverick lifestyle, contributing to the poem's portrait of his villa as an inverse counterpart to Rome and its values. Statius' portrait of Pollius' seclusion, in other words, 'singles him out', lending him symbolic capital for his private life that favourably distinguishes him from other aspirants to status and prestige.³⁹⁵

Statius' use of seclusion to celebrate Pollius' personal life bears witness to a broader tendency among some members of Rome's upper classes to conclude that public life during the early imperial period no longer offered sufficient opportunities to achieve certain traditional elite male cultural objectives such as recognition among one's peers for leadership and *virtus*.³⁹⁶ This led them to relocate these aspirations to a variety of more restricted, intimate spheres of life where they could picture themselves as independent, powerful leaders, free from the long shadow that the emperor cast over public life during the early empire. In the previous chapter, we have seen how Stoics of the empire employ the secluded moral domain of the self as such a private space where the sage withdraws to his inner reason in the guise of a heroic soldier and commander.

Statius too celebrates Pollius as he occupies the citadel of his mind in the allusive likeness of a strong ruler. Yet in *Silvae* 2.2 this psychic domain is largely superimposed onto the landscape of Pollius' villa, another type of personal space that becomes increasingly important during this same period as a locus for expressing independent elite identity, in part due to its separation from the imperial centre.³⁹⁷ Such an interest in moralizing proxy-discourses both psyche- and villa-

³⁹⁵ The poem's final couplet (*Silv.* 2.2.145-46) supports this reading, wishing Pollius and his wife immortal fame.

³⁹⁶ See esp. ch. 2.6.3. For this issue in relation to Statius' villa-poetry, see Myers (2000) 106-7, (2005) 104-5, with further references.

³⁹⁷ See ch. 1, n.3. On the relation between a villa's distance and its owner's self-promotion, see Bodel (1997) 20, Myers (2005) 110.

based may have been of particular salience during the final years of Domitian's reign when his ruthless suppression of criticism emanating from Rome's upper classes led to a dramatic decline in relations.³⁹⁸

Pollius' modest background may help to explain why Statius uses seclusion to extol Pollius as a heroic philosophical outsider. Statius may give a light treatment to Pollius' background and achievements in public life since they did not provide particularly promising material for praise. While little is known about Pollius' origins, Statius' silence about his friend's ancestry and praise for his wealth and intellectual accomplishments hint at relatively humble origins. Inconclusive scholarly research on this issue posits that Pollius was either the prosperous son of a freedman or at most the descendant of local Campanian nobility. Likewise, as a younger man, Pollius held a prominent position in local politics at Naples and Puteoli (*Silv.* 2.2.133-37, 3.1.91-92), respectable in the region, but less impressive alongside the national profile of some of the other figures who appear in the *Silvae*, and as we have seen, Statius had comparable aims for Pollius. Focus on his status or achievements in regional politics would do little to give Pollius such a stature.

In these circumstances, Statius' focus on Pollius' self-separation from society minimizes his relatively modest background and political accomplishments. Instead, it shifts the reader's attention to Pollius' rejection of public life, a recusatory pose patterned after emperors and their close associates, who sometimes declined public honours that they felt were inappropriate or beneath them. Such behaviour reinforced their own status and simultaneously diminished the

³⁹⁸ See Newlands (2002) 186 and (2011a) 5, with further references. On proxy-discourses, see pgs. 78-79.

authority and influence of the institution that had offered the honour, for declining distinctions accorded by the community was the domain of someone whose power and influence did not require such recognition.³⁹⁹

Socially ambitious sub-elites sometimes sought to ennoble themselves by imitating the pose of powerful equestrians such as Maecenas, who modestly refused official posts with the unstated pretext that they had no need of such positions to maintain their status and influence. Petronius' freedman character Trimalchio, for instance, imagines for himself (*Sat.* 71.12) an elaborate burial monument whose epitaph falsely claims that he too has declined public honours.⁴⁰⁰ Like Trimalchio's bumptious epitaph, Pollius' character in *Silvae* 2.2 seeks social respectability through his lofty withdrawal from public life, a pose that thus likens him to apolitical equestrians and former senators, albeit with much greater success than Trimalchio, for Statius' portrait of his friend is intended as praise rather than parody.⁴⁰¹

Statius' ecphrastic account of Pollius' physical and social withdrawal in *Silvae* 2.2 thus offers multiple perspectives on Pollius' position outside of Roman public life. To those individuals sharing the outlook of Statius' persona who harbour ambitions of social advancement by conventional means, Pollius' lifestyle of private, leisured pursuits represents a welcome break from the emotional turbulence engendered by such a life's unpredictable advances and setbacks,

³⁹⁹ D'Arms (1981) 111n62, Sumi (2011) 89-93. Sumi (89) describes "a veritable ethos of refusal of honours in the Principate".

⁴⁰⁰ Bodel (1989) 226. See also D'Arms (1981) 108-16, and Schmeling (2011) 300-302, who comments on the tone of the epitaph, "Only people of the highest position seem to wish to appear reluctant."

⁴⁰¹ For other status-claims through withdrawal, see Sen. *Ep.* 68.5 and Geue's (2015) 786-87 interpretation of Juvenal's Umbricius (*Sat.* 3) as an imposter who unsuccessfully frames his retreat from Rome to obscurity at Cumae as a principled Cynic withdrawal in an effort to present his social setbacks as a self-ennobling rejection of Rome's corruption.

yet offers no alternative means of attaining distinction. For Pollius and those who share his perspective, by contrast, public life offers no insight into life's most important issues and promises participants little help in achieving social distinction, a point that gains greater force when we consider Pollius' modest social profile. Instead, much as certain Stoics of the same period, Pollius transposes his quest for meaning and distinction to the private moral domains of the self and - unlike the Stoics - of his isolated personal estate. For Pollius then, just as for these Stoics, imperial society is a flawed medium for achieving either of these goals. Rather, as Pollius' character implies, these goals are best pursued on one's own.

CHAPTER 4: SECLUDED ELOQUENCE:
THE (DIS)PLACE(MENT) OF SKILLED SPEECH IN IMPERIAL SOCIETY

"You often ask me, Fabius Iustus, why, when earlier ages flowered (*floruerint*) with the intellects and glory of so many outstanding orators, our age most of all, barren (*deserta*) and bereaved of praise for eloquence, scarcely retains the very name of 'orator'" (Tacitus, *Dialogus* 1.1)⁴⁰²

Introduction

In the first sentence of Tacitus' *Dialogus*, Tacitus relays a question by his addressee Fabius Iustus about the decline of oratory while using a metaphor of fertile and barren space to compare the oratorical eloquence of the past and the present as well as the social recognition that it attained in each era. Oratory of the past, Iustus says, was like a space in full flower (*floruerint*), with respect to the great minds who practised this craft and in terms of the renown that they received for their efforts. By contrast, he continues, the present era is "barren" (*deserta*) of this recognition, a term that evokes an uncultivated wilderness.⁴⁰³ This brief contrast evokes a spatial model whereby the oratory of the past occupies a conceptually privileged space of fertility, associated with civilization and human flourishing, while forensic eloquence of the present day languishes on the margins of that space, an infertile wasteland. While the work's opening question briefly elicits such an image using a commonplace metaphor, for the purposes of the present chapter, it is noteworthy that it momentarily locates one type of eloquence alone at the notional edge of society, while questioning its social role.⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰² Unless otherwise noted, the text of the *Dialogus* follows Winterbottom's (1975) edition.

⁴⁰³ Isidore (*Orig.* 14.8.31) defines wildernesses (*deserta*) as places that are not planted and which are therefore abandoned (*non seruntur et ideo quasi deseruntur*). Cf. Reckford (1974) 66-68, 73, 76-77, van den Berg (2014) 101n8.

⁴⁰⁴ For agricultural metaphors in the *Dialogus*, see Connors (1997) 65-67, Joseph (2014) 136, van den Berg (2014) 142n42, 245.

This chapter investigates the spatial displacement of eloquence in Tacitus' *Dialogus* and in two of Pliny's letters to Tacitus (*Ep.* 1.6 and 9.10) that allude to the latter's treatment of this issue in the *Dialogus* while describing Pliny's own solitary writing practices. Several times in the *Dialogus* the characters Aper and Maternus assert that poets or orators are characterized by a need to displace themselves from everyday society as part of their occupational practice and that this dislocation is a reflection of their place on the margins of Roman society. The very setting of the dialogue mirrors these discussions, for the conversation takes place in the privacy of Maternus' bedroom, where his friends find him writing when they visit his house in an effort to deter him from further antagonizing certain unnamed powerful men whom he has offended.

At times, Tacitus' fictional characters make tendentious claims about seclusion that the dialogue's readers may critically interpret within a broader frame of reference that qualifies and complicates the claims of the individual speakers, thereby arriving at a deeper and more nuanced understanding of this discourse of seclusion and its significance.⁴⁰⁵ In turn, Pliny repeatedly alludes to these tendentious portraits of secluded eloquence as he writes to Tacitus about his own uneven efforts to compose something worthy of lasting fame while ensconced in the solitude of his Tuscan villa and the nearby countryside. The present chapter accordingly examines the nature of the secluded spaces that stage these dislocations of eloquence and seeks to ascertain how they characterize the marginalized social identity of the orator or poet who occupies these spaces.

Tacitus, his characters, and his friend Pliny use the spatial isolation of orators and poets to question the nature of the intellectual's supposed independence from society under the early

⁴⁰⁵ On moving beyond character- and persuasion-based interpretations of the *Dialogus*, see esp. Luce (1993), whose interpretive approach is further developed by van den Berg (2014), 52-97.

empire, questioning whether he can achieve his material and social objectives through his eloquence without succumbing to either society's passive or active opposition or to reliance on external support. Further, the polemical and rather one-sided nature of the speeches in the *Dialogus* encourages active readers to extend this inquiry and to question both the degree to which orators and poets are truly independent of the society around them and how they may continue to relate to a broader audience from a social position that is marginalized in certain respects. The lack of consensus among the claims examined here offers competing perspectives over how best to contextualize the detachment of certain intellectuals from the cultural and political hierarchies of imperial society. For some, this position on society's margins constitutes an empowering form of independence while to others it illustrates a humiliating lack of self-sufficiency caused by a failure to integrate oneself into society's networks of exchange. In either case, this position outside of society is susceptible to being compromised by a variety of interrelated forces ranging from a financially or reputationally ruinous public apathy to the changed political circumstances of the Principate and powerful individuals who exploit these circumstances to harm those who are not protected by social and political alliances.

Nevertheless, from these often conflicting accounts of the seclusion of rhetorically skilled men, there emerge shared concerns over certain key issues that are crucial to how readers interpret this detachment, such as the learned man's relative self-sufficiency and social prominence, what audience he speaks to, if any, and the reason(s) for his estrangement from society. In consequence, by analyzing these dissonant portraits of practitioners of eloquence seeking renown in the face of indifference or antagonism by their peers, active readers can better determine for themselves the proper place for eloquence in imperial society.

1. The Poet's Dystopian Solitude: Marcus Aper's First Speech

The meaning of the poet's isolation is a central theme in the first pair of speeches in the *Dialogus* delivered by Marcus Aper and Curiatius Maternus. At the dramatic date of the *Dialogus* in the mid- to late-70s CE, Aper is a prominent advocate who is training the young Tacitus in forensic oratory when he hears that his friend Maternus' controversial new tragedy has caused widespread gossip in Rome and rumoured offense to certain powerful men.⁴⁰⁶ In consequence, Aper visits Maternus at his house to remonstrate with him for neglecting his responsibilities as an advocate to write poetry that provides no social benefit either to Maternus himself or to his friends and clients, criticism that Aper then expands into a more general argument that poetry lacks the social merits that oratory bestows upon its practitioners. To this end, Aper portrays the poet in several lonely physical spaces that illustrate his failure to integrate himself successfully into the social networks of Roman society and to thereby forge the relationships that would aid him in attaining the self-sufficiency and personal autonomy that Aper prizes.⁴⁰⁷ In contrast to his portrait of the orator, whose preeminence is marked by his position at the centre of whatever location he appears in, the poet's physical marginality and seclusion emblemizes his social isolation.

⁴⁰⁶ On the dramatic date of the *Dialogus*, most likely 74/5 or 77/8 CE, see most recently van den Berg (2014) 31-33.

⁴⁰⁷ Aper thereby draws on the topos of the mad, irritating, or as here, unappreciated poet who is physically shunned: e.g. Hor. *AP* 455-60, 472-76, Mart. *Epig.* 3.44, 3.50.10, cf. Sen. *Ep.* 80.2. Aper's approach to evaluating oratory and poetry largely prioritizes individual concerns over status, self-sufficiency and personal autonomy rather than considering what, if any, role these vocations play in society as a whole. As we shall see, Maternus takes a similar approach to this issue in his first speech. Cf. Champion (1994) 155-58, 160-61, Golberg (1999) 229-30, Shirren (2000) 237-38, Strunk (2010) 251, van den Berg (2014) 128, 131-35. In certain respects, Aper's poet suffers from what Durkheim calls *anomie* (Durkheim (1984 [1893]) 291-309), the experience of "a marginal figure who is poorly integrated into otherwise thick networks of social relations" (Coleman (2014) 484), a condition that Durkheim associates with the modern city. An individual in this state is not necessarily physically isolated from others. Instead, he or she may experience frequent, yet ultimately insubstantial interactions with others.

The first location associated with the poet is his home, a lonely site of never-ending labour. At the beginning of his attack on poetry, Aper argues that poetry provides no social benefits or profit to anyone. Poetry's eloquence makes no difference in the world, nor can it perform useful tasks such as protecting someone from a lawsuit and thereby binding that individual to oneself through their gratitude for the benefaction received. Aper takes the impecunious epic poet Saleius Bassus as a case in point: "Take our friend Saleius...who escorts him from home into town, or calls in on him or accompanies him home?" (*Dial. 9.2 quis Saleium nostrum...deducit aut salutatur aut prosequitur?*). There are no crowds at the poet's house, accompanying him to and from his engagements in town or filling his atrium in the morning to pay his respects, indeed, the rhetorical "who?" suggests that no one at all visits him.

The poet's routine confirms this, for even if someone were to visit him, the poet would be too busy working to see them. Continuing with his example of Bassus, Aper describes his domestic poetry-writing as gruelling, never-ending labour: "all year, every day and through a great part of the nights as well he has hammered out and burned the midnight oil over a single book (*excudit et elucubravit*)" (*Dial. 9.3*). Bassus spends virtually all of his time at home writing, Aper says, implicitly time that he might otherwise have spent elsewhere forging new social connections and tending to old ones.⁴⁰⁸ Indeed, Bassus writes well into the night, which adds a chronological layer to his domestic seclusion, for no one else is likely to be awake at these hours.⁴⁰⁹ This

⁴⁰⁸ Bassus' solitude is enhanced by the omission of those who would likely be present at his house, such as his wife, his slaves, and his friends, from time to time.

⁴⁰⁹ Ker (2004) 219, describes the seclusion of writing at night as "the temporal equivalent of the *cubiculum*".

endless time spent alone at home is consumed in gruelling labour: the poet figuratively hammers out his book, an action that likens his versification to metallurgy.⁴¹⁰

This portrait of the poet's domestic seclusion gains additional poignancy by its contrast with Aper's description of the orator's house earlier in the same speech (*Dial.* 6.1-4). The house of the orator is always crowded with men of the highest rank who are there to seek his help, some with influence extending across the world (*Dial.* 6.3). This description casts the orator's house as a central social space: the action of attending another man's *salutatio* or coming to his house for advice implicitly concedes the superior status of the host, and the fact that the men filling his house are of the highest status and thus likely to be courted by others places the orator and his house at the centre of Roman society.⁴¹¹ Indeed, the global influence of some of his petitioners suggests that the orator indirectly shares in their authority, positioning the orator's *salutatio* at the very centre of the empire and beyond. By contrast, no one visits the poet's home, and so it occupies a conceptually peripheral space in society at Rome, to say nothing of the empire as a whole.

The orator's experience of his social centrality at home also inversely parallels that of the poet. Much as Bassus experiences his isolation consistently across diurnal and annual cycles of time, the orator's house constantly reinforces his central position within Roman society. His residence, Aper says, is "always" (*Dial.* 6.2) crowded with very distinguished guests, and Aper introduces

⁴¹⁰ In his portrayal of the poet's domestic isolation, Aper inverts several poetic tropes, rendering the poet's sequestered state more 'authentic'. The image of the poet toiling away at night evokes the practice of literary *lucubratio* during the empire (Ker (2004)), while comparison of the poet's writing to metal-work suits the frequent comparisons in classical literature of versification to metallurgy (Gudeman (1914) 243, Mayer (2001) 114). As we shall see shortly, Aper's description of the poet's self-exile to the wilderness travesties the traditional poetic retreat to the rural *locus amoenus*.

the advocate's *salutatio* as the first example of his claim that the pleasure of being an advocate is something that lasts "not for a single moment, but nearly every day and nearly every hour" (*Dial.* 6.1).⁴¹² Indeed, Aper repeatedly characterizes the advocate's experience of his *salutatio* as a pleasure (*Dial.* 6.1-3), the inverse of the poet's experience of his domestic versification as a form of manual labour. These sharp contrasts between the domestic experiences of the poet and the orator reinforce our sense that for Aper, the poet's homebound seclusion reflects the difficulty of achieving social distinction through versification. The poet's empty house reflects the failure of his writing to provide any social benefit; instead, his verses require endless solitary labour that prevents him from spending time cultivating social ties.

When his work is ready to be presented to the public, the poet's efforts at drawing an audience are no more successful. Once he has hammered out his single book, the poet must battle public indifference: "he is further compelled to entreat and canvass in order that there might be some who would condescend to listen" (i.e. to his recital)" (*Dial.* 9.3 *rogare ultro et ambire cogatur, ut sint qui dignentur audire*). Instead of encountering an enthusiastic audience who attend of their own accord, the poet must expend great effort and social capital to get anyone to attend. Indeed Aper says that the poet is "compelled" to do this, emphasizing the connection between the poet's inability to draw a crowd and his lack of individual autonomy.

The poet's struggle to surround himself with others once again highlights his failure to bestow any social benefit through his writing that might bind others to him. Aper's use of the verb *ambire* "to canvass" articulates the campaign for social prestige that this process symbolizes.

⁴¹¹ On the superior status of the host, see Riggsby (1997) 41.

⁴¹² Pleasure is a positive value in the *Dialogus* (Champion (1994) 159-60, van den Berg (2014) 142-43).

Drawn from Roman politics, this term often describes the public man's 'going round' as he campaigns for support from all and sundry. Aper's use of this verb here likens the poet to a failed politician who seeks to assemble a constituency who will vote to affirm his social worth by attending his recitation.⁴¹³ Yet for all his efforts, he experiences little success while on the stump: he and his poetry have nothing to offer. The poet persuades some unnamed individuals to attend his recitation, but they are pointedly *not* called his friends.

Even the attendance of those few whom he does persuade inverts the desired outcome of the recitation. From Aper's transactional point of view, the poet's activity should produce some social or material benefit that will motivate people to come to hear his poetry and thereby augment his own social capital. By attending his recital in the hopes of receiving such a benefit, audience members would concede the poet's superior status, much as the distinguished men crowding the orator's threshold do when they seek his services. The recitation, in other words, should occasion social income, not outlay. Yet the inverse takes place. By begging and pleading with people to attend his recitation, the poet must expend what little social capital he has. Those few individuals "who condescend to listen" attend the recital as a favour that they bestow from a position of social superiority since they do not expect to receive anything useful from the recitation. Holding the recital thus leaves the poet obliged to his paltry audience rather than the other way around.

This same undesirable outlay and lack of self-sufficiency are also present in Aper's description of the poet's recitation space, framed now in more commercial terms. Not even the recital is without

⁴¹³ Cf. Bexley (forthcoming).

expense (*Dial.* 9.3), says Aper, characterizing the event as yet another debit in the poet's ledger, socially and commercially speaking. It falls to the poet to procure and furnish the recital space himself: "he borrows the house and constructs the recital hall and rents its benches and distributes programmes" (*Dial.* 9.3 *et domum mutuatur et auditorium exstruit et subsellia conducit et libellos dispergit.*). The site of the recitation itself is another source of toil for the poet, for he must expend time, effort and money to procure a house, construct and furnish a suitable recitation space inside it and provide his guests with programmes. The sentence's polysyndeton emphasizes the accumulation of tasks and its repeated singular verbs focus attention on how the poet does all this work by himself.

The expression *domum mutuatur* "he borrows the house" marks another diminution in the poet's social status, for it indicates that he does not have a suitable space at his own house. The terse phrasing is ambiguous: *mutuari* may suggest that the poet rents the house in exchange for money, as he does the benches, or that he obtains the use of a house from a wealthier acquaintance. If the house belongs to an acquaintance, such a favour only serves to highlight the poet's dependence on such largesse. On the other hand, if this procurement is a commercial transaction, it suggests that the poet is yet more isolated, for it implies that he also lacks wealthier friends who can bestow such favors. Whether the poet's procurement of a house here is a commercial transaction or a favour, Aper does not mention any friend or patron who provides assistance in this or any other part of the process of preparing a proper recital space. Picturing the poet's place of recitation thus highlights his social isolation. He must beg and plead reluctant guests to attend his recitation, then spend time, money and his own physical labour on acquiring a proper venue, doing this all by himself, illustrating his lack of social capital.

Just as with the poet and orator's contrasting domestic scenes, Aper's description of the orator's public profile provides an instructive foil. Whenever the advocate leaves his house and moves about town, he is at the centre of a splendid crowd. Aper enthuses, "Truly now, what a retinue of citizens and what a departure! what a spectacle in public!" (*Dial.* 6.4). When he begins to speak, the orator is the object of devoted attention, something that gives him great joy, a sharp contrast with the poet's lonely labours:

"What reverence (i.e. is there for him) in the law-courts! (*quae in iudiciis veneratio!*) what a supreme delight to stand up and take his position amidst a silent crowd, focused on him alone, for the people (*populum*) to gather together and stream around him, sharing his presence, and for them to receive whatever emotion the orator has clothed himself with!" (*Dial.* 6.4).

The orator delivers his speech surrounded by a rapt crowd, a far cry from the poet's reluctant audience. Their close attention and focused silence mark him as their collective leader, while their appellation as *populus* "the people" suggests that in some sense the Roman people as a collective entity has assembled to hear his speeches and that he thus stands at the centre of the Roman polity as a whole.⁴¹⁴ The poet is as peripheral to his society as the orator is central.

A metaphor comparing the poet's recitation to a failed, premature harvest prepares Aper's listeners for his claim shortly afterwards that poets must ultimately retreat to the wilderness alone.⁴¹⁵ After describing the toil and humiliation involved in arranging the recitation, Aper elides the performance itself and discusses its outcome. Even in the best-case scenario

"within a day or two, just as if it were harvested prematurely while still in blade or budding, all that praise fails to reach any sure or substantial fruit, nor does it obtain a friendship thereby or a clientship or a favour that anyone will remember, but fickle shouts and empty expressions and

⁴¹⁴ The *populus* in Republican legislative assemblies represented the entire Roman people, no matter the number of people present (Williamson (2005) 118).

⁴¹⁵ Cf. Gudeman (1914) 244-45 and Mayer (2001) 115. cf. Otto (1890) §798 (p. 161) on proverbs associated with *herba* and §963 on the 'fruits' of intellectual activity.

fleeting delight." (*Dial.* 9.4 *omnis illa laus intra unum aut alterum diem, velut in herba vel flore praecepta, ad nullam certam et solidam pervenit frugem, nec aut amicitiam inde refert aut clientelam aut mansurum in animo cuiusquam beneficium sed clamorem vagum et voces inanis et gaudium volucre*).

The best possible result for the poet's performance, Aper says, is that the audience will respond positively to the recitation and laud it to their friends, who may spread the praise still further. Yet this process will very quickly come to a stop, much like a plant that is prematurely harvested before it bears any fruit, withering away before its time. The stunted lifespan of the poet's renown thus sharply contrasts with the endless solitary labour required to produce it.⁴¹⁶

According to this simile, the poet's efforts to versify are like a farmer who labours over seeds that he has planted, coaxing them to sprout.⁴¹⁷ The versification itself is not a problem, Aper says earlier in the same passage, much like plants that put forth promising initial growth: "for these verses grow at home (*domi nascuntur*) for Bassus, very fine and pleasant" (*Dial.* 9.3).⁴¹⁸ Yet Aper makes this statement within a concession: although their initial growth is encouraging, the poet must work over them night and day, and arrange the recital himself, which yields a stunted harvest, cut short "while still in blade or budding". This initially promising growth represents the initial social approbation that the recitation brings, insubstantial in itself, yet holding the potential to mature into something more durable and useful. Yet Bassus's verses cannot deliver on their potential and any fame that they might obtain does not come to any fruition. Aper's parallel phrasing reveals what this fruit might have been: a friendship, a patron-client relationship or some other form of lasting social bond secured by a benefaction. Just as the

⁴¹⁶ Aper also describes recitals as extremely rare (*Dial.* 10.2). Aper's emphasis on the ephemeral nature of poetry here inverts the widespread topos of poetry's immortality (Shirren (2000) 237).

⁴¹⁷ The poet's arduous work preparing for his recitation figures as more cultivation activity: among his tiresome tasks, he must 'scatter' or 'sow' programmes (*Dial.* 9.4 *libellos dispergit*).

⁴¹⁸ The phrase *domi nasci* is a proverb (Otto (1890) §574) that is related to the aristocratic ideal of having a home that is self-sufficient.

purpose of agricultural cultivation is its produce, so Aper's use of the metaphor makes clear that he judges poetry by its social yield, that is, the relationships that it allows him to form, with the ultimate purpose of augmenting his autonomy and self-sufficiency.⁴¹⁹

The image of the stunted harvest thus casts the poet's field of verses as socially unfruitful.⁴²⁰ Despite their early growth, the poetic plants ultimately bear no fruit and thereupon presumably wither away. The recital-cum-harvest here presents a spatial schema already familiar from the first sentence of the *Dialogus*, in which Fabius Iustus' question characterizes the present day as 'barren' of social recognition for orators as part of an implicit spatial schema that relegates modern oratory off to a disfavoured and unfertile peripheral space associated with its failure to produce an appreciable social yield. Poetry's stunted harvest in Aper's speech employs the same spatial schema, here reapplied to poetry. Here too, we see a socially unrecognized form of eloquence relegated to the figurative margins of society, inhabiting a barren rural space. Aper subtly uses this spatial schema to reinforce the idea that poets are socially detached from society, consigned to a figurative wasteland.

Shortly after his account of the poet's failed recitation, Aper concretizes this heretofore figurative idea that poets must occupy the wilderness. To complete work of a high quality, he says,

"(poets) must forsake the society of their friends and the pleasantness of the City, they must desert their other responsibilities and as they themselves say, they must withdraw into the groves and thickets, that is, into solitude." (*Dial.* 9.6 *relinquenda conversatio amicorum et iucunditas*

⁴¹⁹ Aper's concern here with the poet's individual autonomy rather than with wealth for its own sake emerges in the following discussion (*Dial.* 9.5), where he acknowledges that the poet Bassus actually received a half million sesterces from Vespasian. Aper concedes that such a gift is very fine, but contends that it is better if men can use their eloquence to achieve financial self-sufficiency, rather than depending on gifts from others.

⁴²⁰ Aper also faintly likens poetry to a plant that yields short-lived growth at *Dial.* 9.2, when he begins his criticism of poetry-writing. Cf. Mayer (2001) 113.

urbis, deserenda cetera officia utque ipsi dicunt, in nemora et lucos, id est in solitudinem secedendum est.)

Once again, Aper casts the process of versification as an unpleasant labour that physically and socially removes the poet from the rest of society. Just as we have seen above, he does so while inverting a poetic stereotype to render the situation ironically 'realistic'. Here, he travesties the poet's retreat to a rural *locus amoenus*, long associated with poetic inspiration.⁴²¹ The poetic commonplace that Aper caricatures here draws on a widespread Roman conception of sacred groves as bounded, numinous tracts of woodland that are separate from, yet nevertheless adjacent to the domain of everyday human society. Such spaces provide a "complementary alterity" to society and its values.⁴²²

In light of these associations, Aper's gloss of *solitudo* "solitude" is a tendentious redefinition of the poetic groves and thickets. While *solitudo* can describe an uninhabited tract of woodland superficially similar to a grove or thicket, the associations of this word in the present context characterize the poet's woodland retreat as uninspiring, unpleasant and lonely, once again calling attention to the poet's social isolation.⁴²³ Drawn from the adjective *solus* 'alone', *solitudo* most literally refers to a state of being alone, and when spatialized, it refers to a place where such a state exists. When applied to a tract of woodland, it implies that this uninhabited condition is its most important attribute. Such a gloss in this passage thus denies the numinous, inspiring nature

⁴²¹ On the long history of woodland poetic inspiration lying behind this phrase, see Gudeman (1914) 248-49. On the *locus amoenus*, see Schönbeck (1962), Newlands (1984), and Hass (1998). On the grove as a *locus amoenus*, see RE 17.2.1819.38ff, 17.2.1840.62ff, Schönbeck (1962) 16, and Troxler-Keller (1964) 81ff.

⁴²² Quote (translated) from Scheid (1993) 20. See Scheid (1993) on Roman conceptions of sacred groves and woodland thickets with special attention to the literary evidence. As Scheid emphasizes, Romans did not have a single, monolithic conception of the nature of such spaces.

⁴²³ Servius (*Aen.* 1.310) distinguishes *nemus* 'grove' and *lucus* 'thicket' from wilderness, defining these first two terms against *silva* 'forest', which he describes as "spread out over a wide area and untended" (*diffusa et inculta*). While Servius' definitions are no less subjective than Aper's, they show how in less rhetorically charged circumstances, groves and thickets could be distinguished from wilderness.

commonly ascribed to the groves and thickets. Instead, it suggests that the poet's retreat actually takes him to an unbounded, empty wilderness that is utterly disconnected from both human and divine society, a type of space that the Romans sometimes found fearful and repugnant.⁴²⁴ By redefining poetry's woodland sanctuary as a *solitudo*, Aper thus asserts that the poet's detachment from society has no redeeming qualities. His withdrawal is not partial or complementary to life in society. Instead, his physical isolation in the forest is total, and reflects his social isolation as well as the ultimately toilsome and unpleasant nature of his profession.

The phrasing of the poet's retreat from Rome bears this out. He seeks to seclude himself, Aper says, in order to complete the product of his labours (*Dial.* 9.6 *elaborare*). His departure requires him to abandon his social ties, both formal (*officia*) and informal (*conversatio amicorum*),⁴²⁵ and it is Rome's pleasantness in particular that he leaves behind (*iucunditas Urbis*). The poet's retreat to solitude thus literalizes what was figurative in the account of his infertile recitation: he occupies a barren, lonely space at society's edge that exemplifies his marginal social prospects.

This dark portrait of the poet's physical and social isolation is at odds with certain elements of the broader dramatic and literary context of Aper's claims. While it would be possible to analyze numerous contextual considerations likely to qualify how readers interpret Aper's tendentious assertions, the remainder of this section addresses two issues that may come to mind when readers reflect upon the spatialized nature of Aper's portrait of the poet. To begin with, the allusive phrasing of Aper's claim that the poet must withdraw from society in order to get his

⁴²⁴ Garrison (1992), Scheid (1993) 17. For *solitudo* in Tacitus' writings as a proverbial place to avoid, see *Ann.* 16.28.3.

⁴²⁵ On Aper's concern with social exchange and personal patronage here, cf. van den Berg (2014) 135-37.

work done is likely to suggest to readers that orators and poets alike must struggle on their own to produce work that is worthy of distinction.

In the process of defending his client Marcus Caelius from charges of unlawful violence, Cicero praises the young man's oratorical skill, noting that such talent can scarcely exist in the debauched libertine that Caelius' accusers have made him out to be. The mental and physical exertion required of the orator leave no room for such dissipation. This is why there have always been so few orators, despite the fact that there are so many inducements to practice oratory, such as money, pleasure, fame, and rank. Becoming a successful orator requires hard work: "the pursuits of enjoyment must be left behind, love-affairs, joking, banqueting, the conversation of one's intimates must be virtually abandoned" (*Cael.* 46 *relinquenda studia delectationis, ludus, iocus, convivium, sermo paene est familiarium deserendus*). Similarities of diction and theme strongly suggest a link between the two passages.⁴²⁶ Both Cicero and Aper describe the social withdrawal that is necessary to create skilled speech for one's profession, though Cicero's focus is limited to oratory and Aper speaks solely about poetry. Yet for Cicero, the orator's isolation is not a sign of the ultimate futility of his profession. While he concedes like Aper that such a social withdrawal is a disagreeable sacrifice, it also signals the orator's commitment to his craft and offers the only route to professional success.

Tacitus' evocation of Cicero here in Aper's speech thus offers a new and broader perspective on how readers are to interpret his claims about the poet's isolation. Both poetic and oratorical eloquence require hard work and a degree of withdrawal from one's social networks in order to

produce skilled speech that is worthy of distinction. Such isolation with its disagreeable toil and social sacrifices is not necessarily a sign of futility, and may indeed be the bitter pill that practitioners of eloquence must swallow in order to achieve professional success with its attendant acclaim within the community.

Second, Aper's depiction of the poet's domestic seclusion and sparsely-attended recitation clash with the dramatic premise of the *Dialogus*, undermining his claims of the poet's marginalization. At the end of his first speech (*Dial.* 10.5-8) Aper himself undercuts the account of the poet's seclusion that he has just created earlier in the same speech. Here, Aper returns to his initial concern with Maternus' decision to abandon advocacy in favour of writing poetry, a shift of focus that prompts readers to compare Aper's earlier, more generalizing comparison of oratory and poetry throughout his first speech to the dramatic premise of the *Dialogus*, a juxtaposition that reveals the tension between these two accounts of the social recognition accorded to poets. Maternus, Aper says, is a first-rate talent and he should not waste his efforts on a less socially significant form of eloquence. Furthermore, he has caused offense for the sake of a literary character rather than for a friend or client, making it harder to excuse any enmity that he has caused through his writing. Indeed, the protagonist of his *Cato* is a compelling figure, with the implication that the controversial utterances of such a character cannot be easily dismissed by claims that he is discreditable.

Aper then anticipates that Maternus may argue in response that the popularity of his poetry justifies such controversy, namely "that this obtains extraordinary applause, that these things are

⁴²⁶ The word forms *relinquendus* and *deserendus* appear together only four times in classical Latin; these two passages are the only places to use them in relation to eloquence. The *Dialogus* mentions Marcus Caelius eight

especially praised in the very recital halls and are subsequently the subject of everyone's conversation" (*Dial.* 10.7 *hinc ingentis rex his adsensus, haec in ipsis auditoriis praecipue laudari et mox omnium sermonibus ferri*). Aper describes here a very different experience of a poetic recitation than the account he gave earlier in his speech. There, he had said that the poet must beg and plead to persuade reluctant guests to attend, and then obtain a suitable house, and construct and furnish his own recital hall with it (*Dial.* 9.3 *auditorium*), all for ephemeral praise that quickly dissipates. Here, Aper acknowledges that Maternus has enjoyed an enthusiastic audience at his recital halls (*auditoriis*) that subsequently communicates its admiration for his work to the world outside. In turn, these comments remind readers of the premise of the *Dialogus*, where "frequent conversation throughout the City" (*Dial.* 2.1 *per Urbem frequens sermo* cf. 10.7 *omnium sermonibus ferri*) concerning Maternus' controversial recitation has prompted his concerned friends to visit him.⁴²⁷

Once readers are drawn to compare the two recitations, Aper's claim that Bassus' recitation will be forgotten "within a day or two" (*Dial.* 9.4 *intra unum aut alterum diem*) may also draw them back to the premise of the *Dialogus*, for the dialogue occurs the "day after" (*Dial.* 2.1 *postero die*) Maternus' controversial recitation, and the City-wide talk about his poetry shows no signs of abating.⁴²⁸ Comparing Aper's claims to the results of Maternus' own recitation suggests that the poet does not necessarily need a network of friends like that obtained through a profession such as advocacy in order to capture widespread acclaim, although the text admittedly says nothing

times; Cicero's presence is ubiquitous. Cf. Gudeman (1914) 248, and Mayer (2001) 116.

⁴²⁷ Likewise, Aper's concern in the same passage over "offend[ing] the ears of more powerful men" (*Dial.* 10.8 *potentiorum aures offendere*) evokes Tacitus' comment in the prologue that Maternus' recitation had "offend[ed] the minds of powerful men" (2.1 *offendisse potentium animos*).

⁴²⁸ At the end of the *Dialogus* (42.1-2), Messalla observes that the characters have spent the entire day in conversation and there is general agreement that the discussion will continue.

about poets obtaining financial security or social ties through their writing, except through the benevolence of the emperor (*Dial.* 9.5, 13.1-3). Moreover, Aper's comments at the end of his speech (*Dial.* 10.5-8) indicate that the poet's lack of conventional social ties remains a vulnerability for him, regardless of the renown he obtains. While Aper acknowledges the popularity of Maternus' recitals, he says that the offense that his poetry causes is more dangerous because it cannot be excused as defending someone. Poetry for Aper is not properly embedded in Rome's networks of social exchange - in the last instance he admits that poets can catch society's attention, but their marginal social position leaves them vulnerable when they offend others, an issue that may gain added significance by the suggestive (though inconclusive) evidence that Maternus dies shortly after the end of the *Dialogus*.⁴²⁹

Reciprocally, the characters' visit to Maternus' house the day after his celebrated recital prompts further reflection upon Aper's claims (*Dial.* 9.2) that no one visits the poet Bassus at home and that his recitation will be forgotten within a day or two. While Maternus' three visitors fall far short of the crowd of noblemen who fill the orator's vestibule in Aper's speech, their conversation suggests that such a multitude of callers is not the only path to fame. Indeed, the fact that the house-visit and the ensuing conversation take place a day after Maternus' recitation is likely to bring to mind two dialogues that are key literary models for the *Dialogus*, Plato's *Symposium* and Cicero's *De Oratore*, for both dialogues similarly take place the day after an

⁴²⁹ Classical dialogues are often set shortly before the death of their protagonists, and reports that Maternus may have offended certain unnamed powerful men (*Dial.* 2.1, 10.7-8) and his ruminations about his death (13.6) have led some to surmise that Maternus will die shortly after the end of the *Dialogus*, on which see Syme (1958) 110-11, Cameron (1967), Murgia (1980) 102, 122, Luce (1993) 24, and Bartsch (1994) 104-6. Dio Cass. 67.12.5 records that Domitian put a sophist named Maternus to death in 91 for declaiming against tyrants. Barnes (1986) and Kragelund (2012) argue that this individual could have been Tacitus' Maternus, and that events in the 70s could have plausibly led to his death in 91.

important event.⁴³⁰ This narrative marker flags the *Dialogus* as the newest prospective member in a venerable tradition of literary dialogues that enjoy long-lasting fame.⁴³¹ Likewise, the extended literary pedigree of the 'day after' dialogue motif may create a second-order echo whereby the one- or two-day notoriety of the poet's recital for Aper recalls the celebrity that Maternus' recitation has attained after the same period of time, and behind this, the long-lasting fame of the classic dialogues that Tacitus creatively responds to. Such a chain of associations supplies additional nuance to our understanding of the poet's ability to obtain social recognition. Not only can poetry and literature more broadly achieve widespread acclaim throughout contemporary society, but they can also achieve posthumous fame, an issue that Aper neglects to address.⁴³²

Productive dissimilarities between Aper's portrayal of the socially and physically isolated poet and the premise of the *Dialogus* thus suggest that the poet's marginalization has more than one form. While some poets might suffer obscurity like Bassus and spend much of their lives in social and physical isolation, others like Maternus might experience too much notoriety yet remain vulnerable to potential opponents due to the unsociable nature of their profession, which fails to secure them useful social ties. Yet, while poets and writers may struggle with issues great and small due to their social inadequacy as isolated individuals, their writing nevertheless offers them the greater prospect of posthumous fame.

⁴³⁰ See Plat. *Symp.* 173a5-7, Cic. *De Or.* 1.24, 1.26-29, with Fraenkel (1957) 136-37n1, Cameron (1967), and Allison (1999) 485-87.

⁴³¹ See pg. 195 for further hints within the *Dialogus* of the future fame of the characters' discussion.

⁴³² On this latter point, see Levene (2004) 163-64.

In his first speech, Aper thus portrays the poet in spaces that are literally and figuratively detached from contemporary Roman society in order to illustrate the poet's failure to establish the meaningful social ties that he needs to achieve distinction among his peers for his autonomy and his self-sufficiency. Aper's portrait of the poet in lonely, peripheral spaces thus illustrates the poet's social inadequacy as a solitary individual who cannot rely on a network of friends as a force-multiplier. Due to his useless profession, he is forced to do everything on his own. Considering Aper's claims within their dramatic and literary context offers a broader perspective. Aper's echo of Cicero suggests that social renunciation and hard work are not necessarily proof of professional failure. Instead, both are necessary for orator and poet alike to succeed professionally and to obtain social and material distinction. On the other hand, correspondences between Aper's portrait of the solitary poet Bassus and the dialogue's account of socially consequential literary activity in recital halls and in Maternus' bedroom illustrate that the reclusive, often solitary nature of poetic production does not necessarily preclude making an impact on society. At the same time, the peril that attends Maternus' literary renown suggests that independent nature of the poet's literary efforts leaves him ill-equipped to cope with threats if his writing causes offense.

2. The Poet's Utopian Seclusion: Curiatius Maternus' First Speech

In his speech in response to Aper, Maternus concedes that the poet is perpetually isolated, yet he seeks to redefine this detachment as proof of the poet's greater autonomy and social recognition. Where Aper had associated these traditional elite cultural objectives with the individual's successful integration into society's networks of exchange and patronage, Maternus claims that the poet can attain these goals by separating himself from these same relationships and by secluding himself within the literary tradition. Accordingly, Maternus offers his own, very

different portrait of the poet's self-seclusion in the aforementioned groves and thickets. To this end, Maternus endows the poet's rural refuge with positive forms of separation from Roman society that simultaneously grant him access to an exalted alternative community of poetry. In this idealized retreat, the poet achieves traditional elite cultural objectives such as fame and self-sufficiency that ultimately bring him prominence in society at large, illustrating Maternus' fantasy that producing poetry that is not socially engaged can still bring poets recognition and prestige in society as a whole while preserving their independence from and moral superiority to that same society.

After beginning his speech with a brief account of his retirement from advocacy, Maternus acknowledges Aper's claim that the poet seeks seclusion in the groves and thickets, yet seeks to reframe this retreat as a positive, empowering form of isolation for the poet. Where Aper had asserted that this poetic paradise was really a solitary wilderness (*solitudo*), Maternus offers *secretum* "seclusion" (*Dial.* 12.1) as his own positive gloss for the groves and thickets. Like *solitudo*, Maternus' gloss *secretum* describes both a state of seclusion from others and a location where this condition is experienced, yet in this context, it lacks the sense of desolate isolation that Aper's term possesses. Instead, as this section argues, it adumbrates three different yet overlapping kinds of positive detachment from everyday Roman society, namely, the sacred nature of the grove, its status as a *locus amoenus* and its situation in past time.

While the term *secretum* does not have explicitly sacred connotations, sacred space is 'set apart' from other space, much as the action of the conceptual metaphor that subtends the meaning of *secretum* (*secernere* 'to separate'), and the Romans accordingly sometimes associated such

separation with sacred space and ritual.⁴³³ Indeed, the only other meaningful co-occurrence of the terms *nemus* and *lucus* with *secretum* in classical Latin bears witness to this, appearing in Tacitus' own *Germania*, written around the same time as the *Dialogus*.⁴³⁴ Writing of the Germans' penchant for worshipping the gods out of doors, Tacitus observes that, "they consecrate thickets and groves (*lucos ac nemora*) and attach the names of the gods to that seclusion (*secretum*) which they see with reverence alone" (*Germ.* 9.3). Here, Tacitus uses the term *secretum* to describe a numinous forest space that is the object of the Germans' religious veneration, in lieu of images or temples.

In the *Dialogus*, Maternus links the seclusion conveyed by *secretum* to a sense of holiness by repeated *s*- alliteration (especially *se*- 'away, aside') that sonically ties it to the more explicit portrayal of the grove's numinous quality in the description that follows:⁴³⁵

"Instead the spirit withdraws to those pure and guiltless places and enjoys those sacred abodes. These are the beginnings of eloquence, this is its inner sanctuary; it was first in this guise and garb that agreeable to mortals, it (i.e. Eloquence) flowed into their chaste hearts, uninfected with any vice; thus they uttered oracles" (*Dial.* 12.1-2 *sed secedit animus in loca pura atque innocentia fruiturque sedibus sacris. haec eloquentiae primordia, haec penetralia; hoc primum habitu cultuque commoda mortalibus in illa casta et nullis contacta vitiis pectora influxit: sic oracula loquebantur.*)

The poet's grove, Maternus says, is a sacred place where Eloquence resides as a benevolent goddess.⁴³⁶ It is like the innermost part of a shrine, thereby maintaining a similar sense of

⁴³³ Latin speakers were conscious of the conceptual metaphor subtending *secretum*, cf. Maltby (1991) 554. Isidore (*Orig.* 6.19.40) etymologically links the secrecy and seclusion of *secretum* to holiness. See Russell (2016) 99n3-5, for a brief summary of scholarship on sacred space in the Roman world.

⁴³⁴ Cf. Gudeman (1914) 264. The only other place these three words occur together is an incidental passage later in the *Germania* (45.7).

⁴³⁵ Mayer (2001) 47, van den Berg (2014) 143. As both scholars note, this alliterative motif is also associated with Maternus and his retirement more broadly (*Dial.* 9.6, 11.4, 12.1, 13.1).

⁴³⁶ On Eloquence as a goddess (Joseph (2014) 136). For poetry's holiness, see also *Dial.* 4.2 and 10.4.

detachment from profane space.⁴³⁷ In this sacred place, Maternus goes on to say (*Dial.* 12.3, 13.1), there is a multitude of *vates*.⁴³⁸ It is fitting that in this location, these primeval poets produce eloquence in the form of oracles (*Dial.* 12.2, 12.4), illustrating the close relationship that they enjoy with the divine. Indeed, elsewhere in his speech Maternus reiterates this. Poets are present at the feasts of the gods (only Apollo is named), receiving great praise and honor from them, and they enjoy positive relations with the demigods and "holy kings" (*Dial.* 12.4) as well, while a little later Maternus prays that the Muses take him off to their rural refuge and their "sacred places" (*Dial.* 13.5 *sacra*).

Insofar as he imagines his own psychic journey to this sacred refuge, discussed further below, it is fitting that Maternus endows his own poetic activity with religious significance. Near the start of his speech (*Dial.* 11.2), he characterizes the beginning of his fame as a poet as divinely sanctioned, using the verb *auspicari*, whose functional sense here of 'to begin' is derived from its basic meaning of taking the auspices, since the auspices were necessary to commence activities that required divine sanction. It is appropriate then, that Maternus likens this divinely sanctioned action that first brought him fame to a retaliation for sacrilege, for he recounts his poetic attack on Nero's acolyte Vatinius for "desecrating the sacred rites of intellectual pursuits" (*Dial.* 11.2 *studiorum....sacra profanantem*). Maternus the poet thus emerges as a defender of literature's sanctity, and a pilgrim worthy of the sacred grove of poetry.

⁴³⁷ In addition to this more explicitly religious language, both the place (*Dial.* 12.1 *loca pura atque innocentia*) and its inhabitants (12.2 *illa casta et nullis contacta vitiis pectora*) are characterized by purity.

⁴³⁸ This was an archaic Latin term that originally meant 'prophet' or 'seer' that was reappropriated during the Augustan period as a synonym for 'poet'. See for example Hardie (1986) 16-22, and O'Hara (1990) 176-84, with references to earlier scholarship. Cf. Aper's derisive use of the term *vates* for Saleius Bassus at *Dial.* 9.3.

The grove's numinous quality also contributes to its role in Maternus' speech as a *locus amoenus*.⁴³⁹ The *locus amoenus* topos broadly refers to a delightful rural locale with features that promote human comfort and pleasure such as shade, flowing water and verdant nature, the antithesis of the *solitudo* that Aper likens the groves and thickets to. Absent are things that would impede this comfort and pleasure, both immediate features such as loud noise and more abstract qualities such as unwelcome social obligations. In this function of offering relief from certain conventions and practices of an external community, the *locus amoenus* can serve as a secluded 'counter-space' that illustrates the non-normative values of an individual who is estranged from society, such as Maternus' portrait of the imperial poet.

Accordingly, Maternus uses the poetic grove as a delightful counter-space where poets can project a social persona that is esteemed in elite society, yet portrayed as impossible to enact in the dystopic City. Maternus' poet enjoys a life of pleasure and tranquillity in the grove, without the need to work hard; he is free from strife and danger. Instead, he occupies a prominent position both within his poetic refuge and thereby within society at large. Pleasure is the first quality that Maternus associates with the groves and thickets, which produces the impression that all of Maternus' other praises of the poet's retreat contribute to this feeling: "in fact, the groves and thickets and the very seclusion that Aper was criticizing, bring me such great pleasure (*tantam...voluptatem*) that..." (*Dial.* 12.1).

A ubiquitous sense of tranquillity and concord accompanies the poet's pleasure in his surroundings. Maternus states that he yearns for the "carefree and quiet retirement of Vergil"

⁴³⁹ On the *locus amoenus* and groves, see note 425.

(*Dial.* 13.1 *securum et quietum Vergilii secessum*), yet in large part, the poet's quietude is defined negatively, in opposition to the turmoil and danger that characterize the advocate's urban life, at home and at work. At home, Aper's exultant description of the throng of noblemen paying a morning call to the advocate transforms in Maternus' account into a noisy clamour that disrupts sleep and impedes writing, symbolizing the steady stream of obligations that impinge on the advocate. One of the foremost pleasures of the grove, Maternus says, is that the poet does not have to try writing while a noisy litigant pounds on his door (*Dial.* 12.1), and safe in this retreat, he prays for himself that "no roar of callers or panting freedman wake me" (*Dial.* 13.5).⁴⁴⁰ Likewise, the advocate struggles to maintain his focus when he must appear in public "amidst the tattered rags and tears of the defendants" (*Dial.* 12.1). He delivers his speeches in the "unhealthy...and slippery Forum" (*Dial.* 13.5 *insanum...et lubricum forum*), casting it as a physically dangerous place to illustrate "the restless and anxious life of orators" with its "struggles and dangers" (*Dial.* 13.1).⁴⁴¹

Maternus also likens orators to blood-thirsty soldiers who wreak destruction on their victims, thus implicitly turning the poetic grove into a refuge from their violence. Maternus' use of this metaphor is part of the leitmotif in the *Dialogus* that likens forensic oratory and the characters' own arguments to battle.⁴⁴² His imagery responds in particular to Aper's laudatory portrait (*Dial.* 5.4-6) of the advocate as an able soldier in his first speech who uses his eloquence as a bulwark

⁴⁴⁰ The differing diurnal rhythms of the poet and the orator also contribute to the contrast between their respectively peaceful and restless lifestyles. The advocate is constrained by a regular schedule that has him woken up by an assiduous freedman and noisy morning callers (*Dial.* 11.3, 12.1, 13.5), while the absence of such fixed engagements endows the poetic grove with a timelessness that augments our sense of its distance from everyday society (cf. Tuan (1977) 122, Foucault (1986) 26, on 'heterochrony').

⁴⁴¹ At *Dial.* 13.5, Maternus prays that the Muses take him "far away from the anxieties and concerns" (*remotum a sollicitudinibus et curis*) of the advocate's lifestyle.

⁴⁴² See Peterson (1893) lxi-lxii, Mayer (2001) 101-2, Gallia (2009) 176, 181, and Joseph (2014) 136-37, 143-44.

to protect his friends and as an offensive weapon to savage his enemies. By contrast, Aper mocks Maternus' decision to retire from advocacy, comparing him to a man who wastes his prodigious talents on athletic and theatrical pursuits, inferior adumbrations of war and oratory, summoning him from his recital halls and theatres "into the Forum and to lawsuits and to real battles!" (*Dial.* 10.5 *in forum et ad causas et ad vera proelia*).

In response to this, Maternus adapts Aper's metaphor to claim that oratory is like battle less for its social utility than for its destructive effects on the advocate's fellow citizens, a tactic that is part of Maternus' strategy of conflating oratory with its delatorial abuses. Contrasting poetry's association with the Golden Age with the modern vogue for oratory, Maternus says, "for the practice of this profitable and blood-thirsty eloquence is recent...and as you were saying, Aper, devised as an offensive weapon" (*Dial.* 12.2). Maternus' allusive language also serves to distinguish the poetic grove from this verbal violence and adds further nuance to the contrast between the City and this refuge. In his phrase introducing the mind's psychic retreat to the groves and thickets, he describes the refuge as "pure and guiltless places" (*Dial.* 12.1 *loca pura atque innocentia*), an expression that may evoke one of the final lines of the seventh book of Lucan's *De Bello Civili*, where the poet deplors how Roman blood shed in civil war has polluted the plains of Pharsalus: "O gods, let it be permitted to hate guilty lands!" (7.869 *o superi, liceat terras odisse nocentes!*).⁴⁴³ Under normal circumstances, Lucan says, such pollution would render the place a wasteland, and men and animals alike would avoid the place. Yet, this has not happened, he continues, since Pharsalus was only the first site of civil bloodshed, which prompts the outburst quoted above.

Such an allusion further characterizes Maternus' grove through its stark contrast with Lucan's Pharsalus. Readers gain a clearer sense of what sort of guilt the poetic grove is free of, namely civic bloodshed. While civil war is not at issue in Maternus' speech, this allusion adds further nuance to the image of oratorical 'bloodshed' examined above. Oratory, this allusion suggests, is a form of verbal warfare on one's fellow citizens, an insinuation that is consistent with Maternus' conflation of oratory with its delatorial abuses. As the site of such verbal warfare, Rome is polluted like Lucan's Pharsalus, and so Maternus follows Lucan's reasoning and seeks to distance himself (psychically) from its pollution. The grove of poetry is not only physically tranquil but also socially and politically quietist, dissociated from the practice of destroying one's fellow citizens.

In addition, to its pleasant, quiet(ist) and numinous nature, a sense of chronological remoteness further distances the poet's grove from contemporary society at Rome.⁴⁴⁴ The grove, Maternus says, constitutes the "origins of eloquence" (*Dial.* 12.2 *eloquentiae primordia*). Eloquence had such a guise when it first entered human hearts during "that fortunate...golden age" (*Dial.* 12.3 *felix illud...aureum saeculum*).⁴⁴⁵ By contrast, as we have seen, Maternus characterizes citified oratory as a comparatively recent phenomenon (*Dial.* 12.2). Thus, where Aper had offered an atemporal account of the poet's retreat from the city into the groves and thickets, Maternus

⁴⁴³ Lauletta (1998) 195-97, identifies this allusion and provides a rudimentary interpretation. He does not note, however, that *purus* occurs three lines down (*BC* 7.872), in the final line of the book, providing additional support and nuance for this allusion, which is discussed later on in this section.

⁴⁴⁴ Farrell (2014) describes the sense of past time evoked by Rome's suburban belt, though many of his conclusions are applicable to Roman conceptions of the countryside more broadly. Indeed, Farrell himself notes (84) that journeys in Latin literature that leave Rome for a variety of destinations often convey a sense of travel back in time.

creates a time-space dichotomy, whereby the poetic grove is situated within the Golden Age and Rome occupies the present moment.⁴⁴⁶

Latin's spatial metaphors of time encourage readers to associate such a remote era with great distance from the present day at Rome.⁴⁴⁷ Latin speakers could conceive of time as a horizontal line on which two distinct points are situated farther from each other in accordance with their chronological distance from each other. In consequence, it would be intuitive for a Latin speaker to conceive of the primordial Golden Age in terms of a location that is a great distance away from the present moment, which Maternus associates with Rome. Conversely, Latin speakers could also conceive of physical distance in terms of the units of time that it would take to travel from one place to another. Thus, a great expanse of physical space can also be associated with a great chronological distance, and in consequence it is no surprise that the Romans often associated the Golden Age with faraway sites at the edges of the known world.⁴⁴⁸

This sense of Golden Age pastness contributes to the distinct lifestyle of the poet in this grove. Here, Maternus says, poets have moral subject matter for their eloquence, unlike the wickedness that oratory is preoccupied with (*Dial.* 12.3). Most importantly for present purposes, poetry has an exalted social role in this counter-society: the fortunate companionship (*Dial.* 13.1 *illud felix contubernium*) that they enjoy here is a consequence of the fortunate fact that the grove is

⁴⁴⁵ The lifestyle that the poet enjoys in the grove (absence of immorality, proximity to gods and primeval poets, etc.) also contains characteristic features of the Golden Age (Joseph (2014) 133) that contribute to the sense of chronological rupture in this space.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Levene (2004) 163-65.

⁴⁴⁷ Kraus (2014) 225, notes how the physical remoteness of the Maternus' rural refuge complements the chronological distance of its situation in the Golden Age and vice versa. For Latin's spatial metaphors of time, see most recently, Short (2016).

⁴⁴⁸ Thomas (1982) 21-27.

situated in the golden age (*Dial.* 12.3 *felix illud...aureum saeculum*).⁴⁴⁹ Poets are entrusted to communicate the gods' instructions to mankind and they enjoy their company at banquets alongside demigods, kings and primeval poets (*Dial.* 12.2, 12.4). They enjoy a personal autonomy that advocates do not have (*Dial.* 13.4-5) and no one receives "greater glory or more exalted honor" (*Dial.* 12.4 *gloria maior aut augustior honor*) than poets do from the illustrious denizens of the grove, a remarkable phrase, whose use of the adjective *augustus* suggests that the poet enjoys renown commensurate to the emperor.⁴⁵⁰

The poet's social prestige within his psychic refuge extends into his everyday life at Rome. Maternus cites Vergil as a case in point, noting the favour that he enjoyed with Augustus and among the Roman people, who hailed him once in the theatre upon hearing his poetry "as if he were Augustus" (*Dial.* 13.3 *sic quasi Augustum*), a scene that responds to Aper's portrait of the advocate speaking before a rapt audience in the Forum.⁴⁵¹ The entire public to a man venerates Vergil in the theatre (*Dial.* 13.2 *ipse populus...universus...veneratus*), much as the public (6.4 *populum*) surrounds the orator in the Forum, in a spirit of veneration (*quae...veneratio!*). A little later in his speech, Maternus similarly associates the poet's retreat with acquiring a posthumous renown that will outlast and that consequently has no need of any supportive decrees of the senate (*Dial.* 13.6). Maternus' speech thus suggests that the poet's psychic retreat into this Golden

⁴⁴⁹ Mayer (2001) 127, Joseph (2014) 133. The use of *contubernium* here to refer to a trans-temporal literary society draws strength from the use of this term during the imperial period to describe a community of like-minded intellectuals, on which, see Johnson (2010) 139-48.

⁴⁵⁰ The poet's alternative society in the grove responds to Aper's depiction of the orator's social influence in his first speech (Shirren (2000) 240).

⁴⁵¹ On the parity of poet and emperor in Maternus' speech, see van den Berg (2014) 160. Elsewhere, Maternus characterizes his change of careers to poetry as the cultivation of a "more august" (*Dial.* 4.2 *augustiore*) form of eloquence.

Age grove can bring him a prestige that is commensurate to the emperor's, yet independent of him and the senate.⁴⁵²

While such an account of the poet's social prestige at Rome might appear to undermine his seclusion, the scene of Vergil's rapturous reception in the theatre occurs *while* he is in retirement.⁴⁵³ Maternus says that he longs for Vergil's retirement, *in which* (*Dial.* 13.1 *secessum in quo*) the latter poet was held in favour by Augustus and the Roman people, with the scene of public veneration in the theatre adduced as proof of the people's adulation for him. In Maternus' account, the present-day poet psychically retreats into this Golden Age grove (*Dial.* 12.1 *secedit animus*) in a manner similar to how some imperial Roman Stoics and at least one Epicurean sought to withdraw into themselves (cf. chapters 2-3), though the destination of Maternus' poet is not his inner self but an external idea-location.⁴⁵⁴ Just as with those ascetics, the poet's psychic withdrawal represents the assumption of a particular attitude, and thus it is compatible with his continued presence in Rome, contrary to Aper's portrait of a physical withdrawal.

The poet's retreat to the grove of poetry represents his withdrawal into the literary tradition away from the influence of Roman society.⁴⁵⁵ More specifically, it conveys the idea that he can achieve contemporary and posthumous distinction as an eminent figure in Roman society solely

⁴⁵² van den Berg (2014) 144-45.

⁴⁵³ Likewise, for Maternus, the poet's "seclusion" (*Dial.* 12.1 *secretum*) from the City is compatible with his enjoyment of "that happy companionship" (*Dial.* 13.1 *illud felix contubernium*) of Golden age gods, poets and the like in the grove, rebutting Aper's claims that the poet is totally alone.

⁴⁵⁴ The use of *secedere* and *secessus* in these two passages is also suggestive. While these terms are often used of physical retirement, Seneca also uses them frequently to describe psychic retreat (*Ep.* 8.1, 25.6-7, 68.5-6, *Ot.* 1.1, 6.3, *Helv.* 13.4). Marcus Aurelius writes about withdrawal into "the little rural plot of the self" (4.3.4 τὸ ἀγρίδιον ἑαυτοῦ).

⁴⁵⁵ See esp. Levene (2004) 163-71.

through his poetry, without engaging in society's larger conversations and controversies through his writing. In addition to the poet's association with his primeval colleagues and with Apollo, the divine patron of poets, which has been discussed above, Maternus' poetic language and his poetic allusions in particular enact this point, for they show Maternus repeatedly drawing on the literary tradition for language, imagery, and ideas in order to support his claims that poets can make their way in society by devoting themselves to their writing and avoiding engagement with larger social issues.⁴⁵⁶ That is to say, Maternus relies on poetry as he argues that poetry is a viable vocation for an elite Roman who values traditional cultural objectives, thus enacting his argument as he speaks.

In particular, the allusively poetic, largely Vergilian nature of Maternus' rural retreat helps figure the grove as a uniquely literary space. Maternus' repeated references and allusions to Vergil, especially to his idealized vision of retirement to the countryside in his Praise of the Farmer (*Geo.* 2.458-540), characterize Maternus' retreat as a largely *Vergilian* grove.⁴⁵⁷ In particular, Maternus' two explicit declarations that he wishes to retreat *like Vergil* model Maternus' desire to imitate his Augustan exemplar, recalling his poetry as a whole, beyond specific passages. Though the strife and danger of the orator's life can lead to high political office, Maternus says, "I prefer the carefree and quiet retirement of Vergil," (*Dial.* 13.1 *malo securum et quietum Vergili secessum*), a phrase that also echoes Vergil's praise of the "carefree quiet" (*Geo.* 2.467

⁴⁵⁶ For the poetic allusions in Maternus' first speech, see van den Berg (2014) 160-63, and esp. Joseph (2014), who synthesizes earlier scholarship on the topic. On Maternus' poetic style of speech, see Bo (1993) 270, 278-79, Lauletta (1998) 195, 197, and Joseph (2014) 134.

⁴⁵⁷ For further allusions to Vergil in Maternus' speech beyond those discussed here, see Joseph (2014) 134n17. Vergil's habit of avoiding Rome in favor of withdrawal to Campania and Sicily (Suet. *Verg.* 11, 13) may also have made him and his work an attractive model for Maternus' isolated poet.

secura quies) of the farmer's life, which the Augustan poet wishes for himself.⁴⁵⁸ Likewise, a little later in his speech Maternus adapts Vergil's programmatic invocation of the Muses a few lines later in the *Georgics*, as well as parts of the following passage, in which Vergil expresses a desire that the Muses teach him natural science à la Lucretius and, should this fail, that he may learn to love (an idealized) life in the countryside, far off from the nightmarish city:

"in truth, as Vergil says, may the sweet Muses bear me far off from worries and cares and from the daily compulsion of doing something against my will, off to those sacred places and those springs. May I no longer fearfully make trial of the unhealthy and slippery forum and pallid fame." (*Dial.* 13.5 "*me vero dulces,*" *ut Vergilius ait, "Musae," remotum a sollicitudinibus et curis et necessitate cotidie aliquid contra animum faciendi, in illa sacra illosque fontis ferant; nec insanum ultra et lubricum forum famamque pallentem trepidus experiar.*)⁴⁵⁹

Several of the topographical features of Maternus' grove offer further support for such a metapoetic reading of the poet's refuge.⁴⁶⁰ The grove itself is the stereotypical site of poetic inspiration, as Aper himself says (*Dial.* 9.6), and it is thus a short leap for the grove to serve as a metaphor for poets or poetry.⁴⁶¹ In light of the metapoetic associations of groves and forests more generally, it is possible to interpret Maternus' description of his retreat to an allusively Vergilian grove as a symbol for his resort to the literary tradition as he avoids engaging with society through his writing.

⁴⁵⁸ Heilmann (1989) 387, Mayer (2001), 128, Joseph (2012) 19.

⁴⁵⁹ The beginning of Maternus' statement explicitly quotes Vergil's invocation of the Muses: "Me first all may the Muses, sweet beyond compare, whose holy emblems I bear, smitten by immense love..." (*Geo.* 2.475-76 *Me uero primum dulces ante omnia Musae, quarum sacra fero ingenti percussus amore...*). For this and several further allusions to Vergil's Praise of the Farmer in this passage, see Schmaus (1887) 20, Heilmann (1989) 387-88, Lauletta (1998) 197-98, Mayer (2001) 128, 130, and Joseph (2012), 19-20, 22, (2014) 134-35.

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. pgs. 19-20 for the use of memory-locations in Roman rhetoric as an aide-memoire.

⁴⁶¹ Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 14, write, "the 'sacred wood' also has a symbolical element, standing for something rare and inaccessible in poetry." Quintilian (*IO* 10.1.88), e.g., likens Ennius' venerable yet archaic poetry to a grove. On the associations of timber and raw literary material in Latin literature, see Wray (2007).

Other topographical terms associated with the grove also serve as metapoetic idea locations. When Maternus asks that Vergil's Muses carry him off to "those springs" (*Dial.* 13.5 *illosque fontis*), this image calls to mind the watercourses in Vergil's countryside (*Geo.* 2.485-86). Yet the spring is frequently a symbol for literary sources in classical literature, which suggests that much like the explicit invocation of Vergil that it appears alongside, these springs may evoke Vergil and poetry in general as a font of inspiration for Maternus.

Maternus' repeated characterization of his refuge as a holy place also evokes a retreat into poetry, the work of Vergil in particular. In the passage just cited, Maternus' request that Vergil's Muses carry him off to "those sacred spots" (*Dial.* 13.5 *illa sacra*) evokes a programmatic moment in the *Georgics* where Vergil describes his devotion to the *sacra* (*Geo.* 2.476 'holy rites') of the Muses in general, suggesting that Maternus' journey to sacred space will take him to Vergil's poetry and to the poetic tradition more broadly. Likewise, earlier in his speech, Maternus describes the retreat to the grove as a spiritual journey in which "the spirit withdraws to pure and guiltless places...sacred abodes...the inner sanctuary of eloquence" (*Dial.* 12.1-2 *secedit animus in loca pura atque innocentia...sedibus sacris...eloquentiae...penetralia*). Mention of *loca pura atque innocentia*, as we have seen, calls to mind Lucan's Pharsalus, casting the grove as its blameless antithesis, yet the term *loca* ('places') is doubly evocative, given the common Latin metaphor of 'place-as-passage-of-literature'.⁴⁶² Maternus journeys back to Lucan in this phrase, and he reprises his use of the verb *secedere* here in his statement a little later (*Dial.* 13.1) that he

⁴⁶² *Locus* is used in this literary sense at *Dial.* 19.3, 20.5, 22.2, 31.6.

yearns for the *secessus* of Vergil in particular, retrospectively adding further support for our sense that Maternus' withdrawal here has a literary destination.⁴⁶³

The *sedes sacrae* ('sacred abodes') that the soul enjoys in the grove evoke the same metaphor of 'place-as-literary-passage', gaining additional expressiveness from the fact that this phrase appears first and repeatedly in Vergil's poetry.⁴⁶⁴ Likewise, *penetralia* ('inner sanctuary') here appears first (or nearly so) as a substantive in Vergil, who often uses the term.⁴⁶⁵ Maternus' use of these two topographical expressions does not appear to evoke a particular passage, but their markedly Vergilian pedigree further characterizes the metapoetic nature of his sacred retreat.⁴⁶⁶ In his second speech, Aper retrospectively confirms the metapoetic associations of the grove's holy space(s) when he declares that modern oratory must draw poetic ornamentation from the "shrine" (*Dial.* 20.5 *sacrario*) of modern poets such as Horace, Vergil or Lucan.⁴⁶⁷ In a somewhat similar manner, Maternus thus claims that poets journey to the sanctuary constituted by their poetic predecessors, yet unlike Aper's assertion, they remain at the hallowed site of their inspiration, without engaging their eloquence with society.

⁴⁶³ Cf. Mayer (2001) 128. Conversely, when Maternus expresses his preference for Vergil's *secessus* (*Dial.* 13.1), the echo of his earlier statement of spiritual retreat (*Dial.* 12.1 *secedit animus*) also helps to characterize this Vergilian retirement as a *psychic* journey to Vergil's poetry.

⁴⁶⁴ *Sedes sacra/sacrata* appears at *Aen.* 1.681, 2.525, 2.742; cf. 7.175, 9.4. While *sedes* is not commonly used to refer to a passage of literature as *locus* is, *loca* a few words earlier evokes this metaphor, foregrounding the image of 'place-as-passage' when readers encounter another word for location shortly thereafter.

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. Bo (1993) 306n126, Lauletta (1998) 194, and Joseph (2014) 134n17. Horace also uses *penetralia* as a substantive at *Carm.* 2.13.6.

⁴⁶⁶ Lauletta (1998) 194, makes this argument for Maternus' use of *penetralia*, which based on the discussion in the previous note, also holds for Maternus' use of *sedes sacrae*.

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. Joseph (2012) 22. On the holy nature of Maternus' grove of poetry, see pgs. 165-66.

Just as we have seen with Aper's tendentious claims, Maternus' idealized portrait of the poet's detachment clashes with certain aspects of the dramatic and literary context of his speech. Here too, scrutinizing the rhetorical image of the disengaged poet from this broader standpoint offers several contextual considerations that may influence how readers will interpret Maternus' account of the poet's detachment, suggesting that the writer's life is not tranquil, safe, or indeed, socially disengaged as Maternus claims it to be. First of all, Maternus' use of a grove as the poet's refuge employs a hackneyed trope just as likely to remind readers of the drawbacks and fundamental irreality of such a space as to captivate them with its attractive qualities.⁴⁶⁸

In a passage (*IO* 10.3.22-30) germane to Maternus' speech, the rhetorician Quintilian disparages the efficacy of retreat to charming woodland spots for the sake of speech-writing.⁴⁶⁹ Quintilian argues that the "retirement" (10.3.23 *secessus*) to the "groves and woods" (10.3.22 *nemora silvasque*) that many extol is indeed delightful, yet it is also a great distraction to writing and fails to produce the seclusion and solitude (10.3.22 *secretum...liberum arbitris locum*) that the orator requires. Instead, Quintilian praises the example of Demosthenes, who practised declaiming on the seashore so that the sea's din would ready him for the din of the crowd (10.3.30) and "stowed himself away" (10.3.25 *se...recondebatur*) in an underground study chamber in order to focus.⁴⁷⁰ Quintilian recommends that his readers imitate this, writing in their bedrooms with the doors shut (10.3.25 *clusum cubiculum*), at night if necessary. Yet, since such seclusion is rarely ours, Quintilian concludes, it is best that the mind create its own seclusion

⁴⁶⁸ On this issue in the *Dial.*, cf. Goldberg (2009) 82-83. In the context of philosophical dialogues, see Plut. *Mor.* 749a and Hösle (2012) 233-34. Comparison of country and city life was a rhetorical topos (ex. Quint. *IO* 2.4.24) and Martial adapts this contrast (*Epi.* 2.90) to compare poetry and oratory, aptly in a poem addressed to Quintilian.

⁴⁶⁹ Riikonen (1976) 82-83, gives a rudimentary discussion of this passage in tandem with Maternus' account of the poet's groves and thickets. Cf. also Gudeman (1914) 265, and van den Berg (2014) 142n41.

⁴⁷⁰ On this subterranean chamber, see also Plut. *Dem.* 7.6.

(10.3.30 *faciat sibi cogitatio ipsa secretum*) whether one is in a crowd, on the road, or at a banquet, so as to prepare oneself for the tumultuous nature of the Forum, where the orator must deliver his speech.⁴⁷¹

It seems plausible that Tacitus' rhetorically-trained readers will have been familiar with Quintilian's arguments here. Tacitus is closely concerned with Quintilian's rhetorical works in the *Dialogus*, and the similarity of language and theme between Quintilian's advice and Maternus' speech is clear.⁴⁷² Both passages address the same issue of whether distancing oneself from society (*secessus*) in the idealized countryside (Quintilian: *nemora silvasque*; Maternus: *nemora et luci*) can bring the desired seclusion (*secretum*) necessary to produce praiseworthy eloquence. As some scholars have inferred, readers of the *Dialogus* who recall Quintilian's arguments here may recognize that retreat to the solitude of the countryside is not as beneficial for writing as Maternus claims it to be.⁴⁷³ The distractions inherent in such a retreat, however delightful, will detract from the writer's efforts at composition. Whether his *métier* is poetry or oratory, the writer requires seclusion without such distractions: the austere isolation of an empty bedroom or a subterranean chamber will better facilitate the mental focus and hard work necessary for producing eloquence.

⁴⁷¹ Quintilian's account here of the speechwriter's psychic seclusion may reflect the influence of the philosophical leitmotif of withdrawal into the self examined in chapter 2. Like Seneca and others, Quintilian criticizes physical retirement as insufficient in itself for attaining true seclusion. His praise of Demosthenes for stowing himself away in his underground study chamber employs an expression (*se recondere*) theretofore found only four times in classical Latin, all in Seneca, two of which articulate accounts of withdrawal into the self (*Ep.* 8.1, 9.17). Much as the ascetic who has successfully drawn in on himself, Quintilian's master orator relies on mental seclusion (*secretum*) to brave sites that are inimical to inner tranquility, such as the Forum.

⁴⁷² On Tacitus' engagement with Quintilian in the *Dialogus*, see esp. Brink (1989); cf. Syme (1958) 114.

⁴⁷³ The scholars cited in note 473 above address the issue of physical withdrawal in these two passages.

Indeed, readers may have a similar reaction to Maternus' use of Vergil's idealized countryside in the Praise of the Farmer passage as a model for his description of the poet's groves and thickets.⁴⁷⁴ In the *Georgics* as a whole (cf. 1.118-46), the farmer's life contains great labour and offers no guarantee of success or prosperity: man must struggle to subsist. In light of his portrait of farming in the poem as a whole, Vergil's praise of the countryside at the end of *Georgics* 2 evokes the halcyon days of the Golden Age that have been replaced by the current age of "unrelenting labour" (*Geo.* 1.145-46 *labor...improbus*), and thus it is little surprise that Maternus concedes to Aper that his Vergilian grove may seem "overly mythical and made up" (*Dial.* 12.5). Tacitus' readers who consider Maternus' grove within these larger Quintilianic and Vergilian contexts may arrive at a conclusion similar to that reached through recognizing how Aper evokes Cicero's discussion of the orator's laborious isolation. Namely, writers of all kinds require seclusion to create skilled speech, yet this isolation is unpleasant and characterized by hard work and social sacrifice, with no assurance that it will pay off in the form of social recognition for their eloquence. Writing is not an idyllic vocation.

Second, Maternus' poetic grove is not as detached from the outside world as he claims, an issue that once again directs readers to the dramatic premise of the *Dialogus*, which further undermines Maternus' assertions. To begin with, the presence of the primeval poets Orpheus and Linus in the poetic grove (*Dial.* 12.5) brings the impermeability of poetry's sanctuary into question.⁴⁷⁵ While the precise circumstances vary, tradition holds that each was gruesomely murdered. However famous they are as poets, their looming fates cast a pall over the security of the secluded grove and may adumbrate Maternus' own fate. Such violence thus reveals an

⁴⁷⁴ See Joseph (2012) 21, and van den Berg (2014) 162-63, with further references on this issue.

⁴⁷⁵ Luce (1993) 31, van den Berg (2014) 55, 149-50.

unpleasant connection between the poetic grove and the citified oratory that Maternus has just likened to murderous combat (*Dial.* 12.4), a link perpetuated by the description of the grove itself.

Though Maternus uses Lucanian language (*BC* 7.869) to cast the poet's 'pure and innocent' groves and thickets (*Dial.* 12.1) as a refuge from forensic 'civil war', the larger context of this passage of Lucan casts doubt on the purity of Maternus' retreat. At the end of his seventh book Lucan says that men would shun the plains of Pharsalus due to its pollution from Roman civil bloodshed there *if* Pharsalus had been the only site of civil war and not simply the first. It is only now that Lucan asks the gods that it be permitted to express his hatred of 'guilty lands', a futile wish within this context, given the universal pollution produced by subsequent civic bloodshed.

The three remaining lines of Lucan's seventh book reinforce this point, while ending the book with another turn of phrase that reappears in Maternus' echo of this passage. Addressing the gods, Lucan writes (7.870-72) "Why do you oppress all the world, why do you acquit it all? The disaster in the West, and the lamentable waters of Pachynum and Mutina and Leucas have rendered Philippi pure (*puros fecere Philippos*).\" Lucan returns to his assertion that Pharsalus was only the first site to be polluted with civil bloodshed. When the whole world bears this pollution, Pharsalus' guilt loses its distinction. In a typically Lucanian paradox, the poet finishes his book by saying that the subsequent sites of civil strife culminating in the battle of Actium have rendered Pharsalus \"pure\" (7.872 *puros*). In retrospect, Lucan's prayer for permission to hate guilty lands is revealed as self-consciously futile, for after Rome's civil wars, pollution's

guilt has lost its meaning, incongruously rendering Pharsalus a site of innocence and purity compared to what followed.

Such an association radically undermines Maternus' claims about the grove's detachment from the profane practices of oratory at Rome and yet in doing so it aptly complements the image we derive from Maternus' own speech of his continued engagement with society through his poetic activity. At the beginning of his speech, Maternus defends his retirement from advocacy to focus on poetry, claiming that he has achieved greater renown through his poetry than by his speeches. In a mutilated and somewhat obscure passage, Maternus states, "I began to advance upon a reputation when †in Nero's reign† I broke the wicked power of Vatinius, who was desecrating the sacred rites of intellectual pursuits" (*Dial.* 11.2 *ingredi famam auspicatus sum, cum quidem †im<perante>† Nerone improbam et studiorum quoque sacra profanantem Vatirii potentiam fregi*).⁴⁷⁶ The violence of Maternus' language here is remarkable, compounded by the fact that he draws his expression *potentiam frangere* ('break the power') from a phrase introduced in Ciceronian oratorical invective against another man named Vatinius (*Vat.* 2 *ut...audaciam frangerem*).⁴⁷⁷ If we follow the conclusions of recent scholarship that Maternus carried out this attack through his poetry, this phrase suggests that Maternus' poetic work has perpetrated the same verbal violence against his opponents that he attributes to forensic oratory, a point ironically underscored by the Ciceronian echo.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁶ †im<perante>† Nerone follows Mayer's (2001) text; the mss. are divided between *in Nerone* and *in Neronem*.

⁴⁷⁷ Rabe (2015) 181-82. On Nero's Vatinius, see Rutledge (2001) 276-77.

⁴⁷⁸ For recent discussions of this issue that favour poetry as the medium of Maternus' attack, see e.g. Bartsch (1994) 103-4, 200-2, Penwill (2003) 140-41n10, Levene (2004) 169-70, and van den Berg (2014) 157-58. See Manuwald (2001) 8-9, 16, for an example of older arguments that Maternus attacked Vatinius in a speech. Maternus' obscure phrasing leaves the nature of Vatinius's offense against literature unclear.

The allusion to Lucan's *Pharsalus* contributes to this subversive subtext within Maternus' speech. Even as Maternus praises the poet's grove as a place of purity and innocence, his words draw readers back to a passage that radically undermines the value of these terms. Lucan's *Pharsalus* has lost its guilt and become 'pure' due to the subsequent ubiquity of civil war pollution rather than because of its freedom from moral depravity. Viewed through the subversive lens of this allusion, we see the innocence and purity of the grove and the poetry within it in a new and darker light. Even as he castigates oratory for its perpetuation of the strife of civil war, Maternus' attack on Vatinius illustrates his presence in the same figurative battle, and thus it is fitting that the grove should recall by antithesis a notorious civil-war battlefield. While the advocate's prominent position and sometimes destructive behavior in public life do indeed overshadow the poet's place in society and diminish his culpability by comparison, this allusion provides further evidence that the writer is not nearly so detached from society and its conflicts as Maternus would have his listeners believe.

Juxtaposing the seclusion of the poetic grove to Maternus' own account of his behavior in his speech naturally leads readers to compare the grove to the dramatic setting of the *Dialogus* as a whole, not least because he introduces his portrait of the poet's retreat from society while secluded within his own bedroom. As many readers have observed, Maternus' portrait of the physically and socially detached poet in his speech is sharply at odds with his own role in stirring social controversy through his poetry at the beginning of the *Dialogus*. While this observation does not depend upon a comparison of the poetic grove with the dramatic setting of the dialogue, such a juxtaposition contributes to this narrative tension and to the reader's sense that socially engaged literature is not as detached from the community as Maternus makes it out to be.

Maternus' own retreat to the groves and thickets prompts readers to compare his portrait of the poetic refuge to the nature and significance of his bedroom seclusion at the beginning of the *Dialogus*. We have seen how the poetic, largely Vergilian nature of the grove casts this idealized space as the home of a counter-society of the great writers of Rome's past, a haven for the poet from external circumstances. Yet we may also note that Maternus' persistent poeticisms during his speech cast that very speech of his as a retreat to the realms of poetry, and at a pivotal moment in his speech (*Dial.* 13.5), we recall, Maternus prays that Vergil's Muses will carry him off to the poet's springs and sacred places, thus explicitly inscribing himself within the literary utopia that he praises.

Vipstanus Messalla's reaction to Maternus' speech supports this interpretation.⁴⁷⁹ Messalla joins the discussion late, only entering Maternus' bedroom just after Maternus has finished his speech. When Messalla learns the subject of Aper and Maternus' discussion, Tacitus narrates, "'In truth', (Messalla) says, 'that conversation of yours would have given me boundless pleasure'" (*Dial.* 14.3 *'Me vero' inquit 'et sermo iste infinita voluptate adfecisset*), a response that adapts and expands upon Maternus' description of the poet's grove. Messalla's *me vero* echoes Maternus' prayer that Vergil's Muses may carry him (*Dial.* 13.5 *me vero*) away to the groves and thickets, while the "boundless pleasure" (*infinita voluptate*) that he says he would have experienced answers the "such great pleasure" (*Dial.* 12.1 *tantam...voluptatem*) that Maternus derives from the groves and thickets. Through these verbal echoes, Tacitus thus implies that Messalla's

⁴⁷⁹ For the following discussion, see esp. Joseph (2014) 139-40, and van den Berg (2014) 22-23, 143-44.

experience of Maternus' speech would have been similar to Maternus' experience of the groves and thickets.

Indeed, Tacitus' suggestive wording in this passage conveys the impression that the experience of the dialogue as a whole is a form of retreat. Upon first entering Maternus' bedroom, Messalla is unsure what his friends are doing, and asks whether he is interrupting their "secret deliberations" (*Dial.* 14.1 *secretum consilium*) concerning some legal case, an expression that suggests that the characters' discussion in Maternus' bedroom contains the same quality of seclusion that Maternus prizes in the poet's retreat (12.1 *secretum*). The characters in Maternus' bedroom have thus enjoyed a similarly pleasurable mental retreat to poetic eloquence through listening to his speech and through their private conversation as a whole.⁴⁸⁰ Maternus' appearance within his own poetic retreat and Messalla's reaction to his speech thus encourage readers to compare the groves and thickets and the dramatic setting of the *Dialogus* in Maternus' bedroom, and to question whether Maternus' own eloquence in his bedroom is as detached from society as he has portrayed it in the groves and thickets.

While Maternus is secluded when his friends find him at the beginning of the *Dialogus*, this portrait belies his own subsequent account of the poet's pleasurable detachment from society. As the work begins, the characters find Maternus in his bedroom, likely at his city house, hard at work on revising the play that he recited a day earlier so as to publish it, an image that more closely resembles Quintilian's vision of the hardworking orator's writerly isolation in his

⁴⁸⁰ Messalla's comment that their discussion will also bring delight "to those who hear of it" (*Dial.* 14.3) suggests that external readers of the *Dialogus* enjoy a comparable experience of mental retreat by reading the work in its entirety.

bedroom than it does Maternus' own claims.⁴⁸¹ Yet, as we have seen, the literary efforts that Maternus undertakes in his bedroom are all too socially engaged. He is aware of the stir that his *Cato* has caused and the risk that he has incurred, yet he has no desire to avoid the appearance of making social commentary. Indeed, he says that he is readying the play for publication so that he can begin work on his next tragedy, which he says "I have already arranged and formed within myself (*intra me*)" (*Dial.* 3.3) and which will communicate anything that he had left out in his *Cato*. Maternus thus makes clear that he is employing both the privacy of his bedroom and the hidden confines of his psychic space to produce socially engaged writing, courting conflict and controversy in a manner that Aper says better befits an advocate and that Maternus himself associates with orators of the late Republic.⁴⁸²

In his first speech, Maternus thus visualizes the poet as spatially and socially detached in an idyllic grove to illustrate his fantasy of writing as a pleasurable task that allows the writer to attain social prestige in and out of society simply by focusing on his writing, without any need to compromise that prestige by participation within society. The holy nature of the poetic refuge casts the writer as a sacrosanct figure whose dissociation from society marks his close relationship with eloquence and his estrangement from those who abuse skilled speech to destroy their fellow citizens. At the same time, the delightful, quiet quality of this space symbolizes the pleasure and tranquility inherent in the poet's profession undermining Aper's portrait of the poet's retreat as a laborious, disagreeable self-exile. Likewise, by travelling back in his mind to a refuge ensconced in the golden age, the poet inhabits an alternative society of the imagination where he

⁴⁸¹ On the urban location of Maternus' house, cf. Mayer (2001) 91.

⁴⁸² On Maternus' tragedies as a form of political engagement, see references at Devillers (2015) 143n41. Levene (2004) 168-69, and van den Berg (2014) 19-20, 156-59, 161, caution that the text does not provide positive evidence

enjoys honor and influence amidst the inspiring company of past authors who constitute Rome's literary patrimony, Vergil most of all.

Yet the quietist engagement with literature that this mental retreat embodies does not condemn the poet to the physical solitude or the social obscurity that Aper attributes to this profession. Instead, the poet's psychic withdrawal to literature inspires writing that brings him an equally prominent place in contemporary society, replete with public adulation and the favour of the emperor, as well as the prospect of posthumous fame. The poet's retreat in Maternus' speech thus represents the writer's dream of effortlessly achieving prominence in society, present and future, while remaining independent of and uncompromised by substantial engagement with that same society.

Yet the tension between Maternus' portrait of the poet's detachment from society and the broader context of his claims undermines his fantasy of writing as a vocation that brings its practitioners prestige within the world of literature and in society at large while preserving their independence from the competition, conflict and moral compromises that characterize the pursuit of this prestige within Roman society. Viewed through the lens of Quintilian's instructions to orators, the writer's withdrawal to the groves and thickets promises less inspiration than Maternus claims. It is an impractical cliché, not a suitable refuge for the writer; the more austere seclusion of a bedroom or of a focused mind will provide a less delightful yet more effective setting for writing.

that Maternus consciously seeks to make social commentary through his poetry. Instead, he is aware that at least part of his audience derives such a commentary from his work and he makes no effort to avoid such interpretations.

Second, Maternus' tendentious portrait of the poet's detachment in the groves and thickets adumbrates poetry's enduring relationship with the poet's social circumstances. Just as certain denizens of the grove, writers are not exempt from danger, while the grove's ambiguous Pharsalus-like 'purity' adumbrates Maternus' vigorous participation in social conflict at Rome. Indeed, Messalla's reaction to Maternus' speech prompts readers to compare Maternus' portrait of the detached writer to Maternus' own behavior in his bedroom as the dialogue begins. Such a juxtaposition confirms Maternus' claims that poets can achieve public prominence through their work, yet this comes not from the excellence of their writing, but from the social impact of what they write, a conclusion that is consistent with Tacitus' interest throughout his works in poets not as purely literary figures, but as social actors whose work makes an impact in the community around them.⁴⁸³

3. The Imperial Orator's Solitude: Curatius Maternus' Second Speech

The last portrait of an isolated practitioner of eloquence in the *Dialogus* appears in the work's sixth and final speech. In the closing pair of speeches, the characters' debate has shifted to the causes for the decline of oratory's prominence in society between the late Republic and the imperial present. In the final speech of the *Dialogus* (36-41), Maternus offers a sociopolitical explanation for this change, arguing that Rome's transition from Republic to principate has restored its social stability, but in so doing, has also robbed oratory of the widespread political upheaval and civil strife that fostered the orator's prominence during the Republic. To illustrate his argument, Maternus portrays the imperial orator and his late-Republican counterpart in contrasting spaces that symbolize the role that each plays in his respective society. Unlike the late-Republican advocate, whose persistent association with the Forum signals his social

⁴⁸³ Ash (2016) examines the role of individuals in Tacitus' works who are explicitly described as poets.

preeminence, Maternus locates the imperial orator in less publicly visible backroom spaces whose confinement and isolation symbolize his straitened ability to achieve a position of prominence under the principate. At the same time, certain aspects of Maternus' portrait of the present-day orator's isolation echo Aper's disparaging account of the solitary poet. These correspondences build on Maternus' depiction of poetry in his first speech to suggest that while the poet enjoys an idealized psychic seclusion that affords him social distinction, it is the imperial advocate, not the poet as Aper claims, who has failed to secure a central role in contemporary Roman society.

In his discussion of oratory's transition to the imperial period, Maternus highlights a variety of literal and figurative constraints imposed on the imperial orator that prevent him from achieving the renown of his Republican counterpart, thus laying the groundwork for his subsequent portrait of the modern advocate's physical isolation.⁴⁸⁴ Speaking of the idyllic days of the Republic, Maternus associates its prosperous state with a lack of boundaries on speaking time, trial length, and the number of advocates:

"no one was corralled into making his entire speech within a very small amount of time, and adjournments were unrestricted and each man chose his own limit in speaking, nor was the number of days or advocates bounded. (*Dial.* 38.1 *nemo intra paucissimas horas perorare cogeatur et liberae comperendinationes erant et modum in dicendo sibi quisque sumebat et numerus neque dierum neque patronorum finiebatur.*)⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸⁴ Maternus foreshadows this discourse on modern oratory's confinement during the characters' discussion at the beginning of the work when he refers to his retirement from the "cramped quarters of the Forum's cases" (*Dial.* 4.2 *forensium causarum angustis*) in favour for "that more august eloquence" (4.2 *illam...augustiore eloquentiam*), describing poetry with an adjective (*augustus*) that derives its reverend quality from a basic sense of increase (cf. *augere* 'to increase').

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. how Aper's poet is "compelled" (*Dial.* 9.3 *cogatur*) to round up a reluctant audience for his recitation. *Cogere* appears only once elsewhere in the *Dialogus*. As at *Dial.* 9.3, *cogere* here emphasizes the modern orator's lack of autonomy. For the spatially evocative use of the adjective *liber* ('free', 'unrestricted') in a similar context, cf. *Ann.* 4.32.1.

The implication of Maternus' statement here is that advocacy has declined under the principate because it suffers from these same figurative confinements, which collectively diminish the advocate's control over how he presents his suit.⁴⁸⁶

Maternus bears this out in his next sentence, declaring that during his third consulship, Pompey "was the first to confine these things, and to put reins, so to speak, on eloquence," (*Dial.* 38.2 *primus haec...adstrinxit imposuitque veluti frenos eloquentiae*). Here, Maternus figures Pompey's imposition of a variety of statutory controls as the imposition of bridles on a horse so as to impede its unrestricted movement.⁴⁸⁷ Even the modern advocate's clothing confines him. Maternus asks rhetorically "how much humbleness do we think that those woollen cloaks have brought to eloquence, bound and as it were, closed inside of which, we chat with the judges?" (*Dial.* 39.1 *quantum humilitatis putamus eloquentiae attulisse paenulas istas, quibus adstricti et velut inclusi cum iudicibus fabulamur?*)

Just as restrictions on speech length, adjournments, and the like impose figurative restrictions on the contemporary advocate, his clothing literally hems him in.⁴⁸⁸ The adverb *velut* ('just as') highlights the metaphorical use of the verb *includere* ('to close inside'), which is more properly used for enclosure within physical space, while the more apposite use of the participle *adstricti* ('bound') looks back to its use moments earlier to describe Pompey's figurative bridling of oratory through his statutory reforms, thus linking these different forms of confinement. This

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. Frier (2010) 71.

⁴⁸⁷ This equine simile looks forward to a second one moments later (*Dial.* 39.2) in which Maternus compares the imperial advocate's relegation to backroom spaces to a truncated race-course. By contrast, Maternus describes eloquence such as the late-Republic enjoyed as the companion of "unbridled" (*Dial.* 40.2 *effrenati*) people.

diverse group of literal and figurative restrictions upon the imperial orator shows how the courtroom spaces that Maternus describes fit into a larger discourse in which confinement and enclosure signal the limitations on the modern advocate's ability to achieve social distinction through his eloquence in imperial society.

The chief location that is associated with the modern advocate is his courtroom, a small, enclosed location whose isolation marks both his reduced abilities and his diminished social status during the imperial era. Maternus introduces the issue as a rhetorical question: "how much strength do we believe that hearing rooms and record-offices have subtracted from oratory, in which the greatest number of cases these days are set forth?" (*Dial.* 39.1 *quantum virium detraxisse orationi auditoria et tabularia credimus, in quibus iam fere plurimae causae explicantur?*). After a simile comparing these undignified locations to an overly constricted race-course, he continues, noting how judges thwart the advocate's attempt at producing a compelling speech with his repeated interruptions and through the control that he exerts over the trial as a whole, and "amidst all this, one or two men are present in court as you speak, and the matter is transacted in solitude, so to speak." (*Dial.* 39.3 *unus inter haec dicenti aut alter adsistit, et res velut in solitudine agitur.*)

The hearing rooms and record-offices, Maternus says, have robbed the advocate's eloquence of his strength. The verb *explicare* ('to set forth', literally 'to unfold, spread out') ironically draws attention to the constricted nature of modern oratory, implicitly pointing to oratory's inherent need for room to unfold itself and highlighting the inadequacy of its modern venues for this

⁴⁸⁸ Frier (2010) 73-74, describes the unwieldy *paenula* at issue here as a "poncho-like woolen garment, sewn closed at the front and usually hooded...Although a wearer could roll up the sides of this cloak onto his shoulders in order

purpose. When the advocate is called upon to orate in these confined locations, the judge frequently interrupts him, negating all the effort that he has put into producing a polished speech. The orator's performance is thus reduced to a humiliating series of exchanges with a domineering judge, underscoring the judge's control over the orator and the humble little courtroom. To make matters even worse, there is scarcely an audience to witness this travesty. In such an adverse setting, the imperial advocate has no opportunity to display his eloquence before the community, let alone in a favorable manner that would help him accrue prestige among his fellows and a reputation that would endure in time to come.

Scholars have puzzled over the nature of the *auditoria et tabularia* ('hearing rooms and record-offices') that Maternus refers to in this speech, since these courtroom locations are not consistent with most surviving evidence for the sites of legal activity in the late first and early second centuries CE, an issue that will be addressed at greater length later in this section. The reference to *tabularia* has naturally been associated with Rome's various archival spaces, especially the famous Tabularium that sat atop the Capitolium hill and whose base remains visible.⁴⁸⁹ On the basis of Maternus' citation of *tabularia* here, Frier argues that both *tabularia* and *auditoria* refer to the hearing rooms of the emperor and his officials, rejecting the more common and less technical sense of *auditorium* to describe spaces where people gathered to listen to a variety of activities such as declamation, recitation and the like.⁴⁹⁰

to free his arms, it would undoubtedly be even more cumbersome and constraining than the traditional toga".

⁴⁸⁹ Frier (2010) 82-83. Cf. also de Angelis (2010a) 17.

⁴⁹⁰ Frier (2010) 82.

While such arguments are certainly helpful for understanding the historical context of Maternus' comments here, such an approach offers less help for understanding the rhetorical function of these spaces in Maternus' speech. For this latter purpose, it is more useful to focus on the role that these isolated spaces play in demonstrating the modern orator's failure to achieve any significant social distinction through his profession. When this passage is viewed through such a rhetorical lens, a number of striking parallels emerge between Maternus' depiction of the imperial advocate and Aper's account of the abject poet that suggest that in Maternus' view, the imperial advocate is the pathetic outsider, not the poet.

The repeated use of the term *auditorium* creates a link between these two figures.⁴⁹¹ Just as the imperial orator pleads in near-empty *auditoria* in Maternus' second speech, Aper describes how the poet is forced to construct his own *auditorium* (*Dial.* 9.3) as part of his futile struggle to present his work to the public. A little later, Aper applies his criticism of poetry to Maternus' decision to retire from advocacy to write tragedies, summoning him "from the recital halls and the theatres" (*Dial.* 10.5 *ab auditoriis et theatris*) into the Forum where the real battles are.⁴⁹² By locating the imperial advocate in *auditoria et tabularia*, Maternus employs a suggestively similar phrase. In each case, the disfavoured practitioner of eloquence is situated in *auditoria* and a similar sounding toponym that starts with a *t*- and that ends with an *-a*. Maternus builds upon this parallel by likening the contemporary advocate's courtroom to an empty theatre. After evoking the modern orator's solitude as he delivers his speech, Maternus continues, "Yet the orator needs

⁴⁹¹ On similarities between an enclosed imperial courtroom and a recital hall, see de Angelis (2010b) 151.

⁴⁹² At *Dial.* 10.7, Aper also locates Maternus' controversial recitations in *auditoria*.

shouting and applause, and a sort of theatre, so to speak, which was the daily lot of orators of old" (*Dial.* 39.4).⁴⁹³

The dispiriting scene within the modern orator's courtroom extends these parallels. Like Aper's poet, the present-day advocate encounters apathy from the public and fails to impress his audience.⁴⁹⁴ He is not the focal point within his courtroom, struggling with the judge's constant interruptions as he attempts to deliver his speech, robbing him of the opportunity to win over the judge or impress those in attendance, much as the poet Bassus in Aper's speech (*Dial.* 9.3-4) must beg and plead reluctant audience members to attend his recitation. Maternus' imperial orator also struggles to attract an audience at all, for only "one or two men" (*Dial.* 39.3 *unus...aut alter*) are present as he speaks, a turn of phrase that recalls Aper's claim that in a best-case scenario, memory of the poet's recitation will fade away "within a day or two" (*Dial.* 9.4 *intra unum aut alterum diem*), an echo that suggests a connection between the poor attendance at the orator's speech and his futile hopes for fame, even as it cleverly uses Aper's own words to suggest that the modern orator, not the poet, lacks the social prestige that a well-attended demonstration of eloquence would represent.⁴⁹⁵ Maternus aptly characterizes this pitiful turnout as a veritable solitude (*Dial.* 39.3 *solitudine*), inverting Aper's claim that the poet must retreat into a solitude (*Dial.* 9.6 *solitudinem*) in the wilderness in order to get worthwhile writing done.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ Bablitz (2007) 136, notes that applause (*plausus*) is out of place for the orator here, and is more appropriate of the theatre.

⁴⁹⁴ The woollen poncho that the modern orator wears as he pleads in these back rooms causes a "plunge in rhetorical solemnity" (Frier (2010) 72) that is reflected in the orator's undignified style of speech while he wears such a garment (*Dial.* 39.1 "we chat with the judges" *cum iudicibus fabulamur*). See also Mayer (2001) 165.

⁴⁹⁵ Variations on the expression *unus et alter* occur 4 times in the *Dialogus*. See pgs. 208-9 for an allusion by Pliny to instances of this expression in the *Dialogus*.

⁴⁹⁶ These two passages are the only two instances of *solitudo* in the *Dialogus*.

Much as when Aper uses this charged term, Maternus' comparison of the imperial advocate's courtroom to a solitude fittingly evokes the immediate situation while adding further detail to his portrait of the modern orator as a social nonentity. Just as we have seen in Aper's speech, the term *solitudo* elegantly highlights the imperial advocate's social isolation, for his uninspiring performance in a nearly empty room embodies his failure to attain any social prestige through his work. Likewise, *solitudo* here once again evokes the distasteful image of barren wasteland: the adverb *velut* ('just as') flags the expression *in solitudine* as a simile.

Although the physical countryside is not under discussion as it is in Aper's first speech, the image of an unproductive wilderness here contributes to the recurring imagery of the social (in)fertility of eloquence that we have seen elsewhere in the *Dialogus*, contrasting with Maternus' characterizations of late-Republican oratory as a plant that enjoys vibrant, though unchecked growth due to the fertile subject matter provided by Rome's civil strife. For instance, a little later in his speech Maternus once again highlights the social barrenness of oratory under the principate when he says, "that great and distinguished eloquence is the nurseling of license...the companion of uprisings and the spur of an unbridled people...it does not sprout (*non oritur*) in well-ordered states" (*Dial.* 40.2-3), whereas thanks to its political turbulence, the late Republic had a more vigorous form of eloquence, "just as an untamed field bears lusher grass" (*Dial.* 40.4 *sicut indomitus ager habet quasdam herbas laetiores.*).⁴⁹⁷ Cast as an infertile wasteland, imperial oratory thus occupies a marginal space in figurative terms as well,

⁴⁹⁷ See also *Dial.* 37.5-7.

languishing on the periphery of the Roman social life, while its fertile Republican counterpart takes pride of place.

This spatial dichotomy gains further support from the persistent location of Republican oratory in the Forum at the centre of immense crowds. Just as Maternus recounts that eloquence in those days was necessary to acquire and maintain "a conspicuous and eminent place" (*Dial.* 36.6 *conspicuum et eminentem locum*) in society, so too, in Maternus' speech forensic eloquence itself in that era occupied such a physical place within Rome. The Republican orator appears at the centre of a crowded Forum. In those days, Maternus claims, men "virtually lived at the rostra" (*Dial.* 36.3). Immediately after his description of the lonely imperial advocate isolated in his hearing-halls and record-offices, Maternus says that the noise and applause that is missing from these spaces is precisely what orators of old always enjoyed,

"when so many distinguished nobles crowded the Forum at the same time, when clients too, and tribes and municipal embassies and part of Italy stood present (*adsisteret*) for those on trial, when the Roman people (*populus Romanus*) believed that its interests were at stake in the majority of trials." (*Dial.* 39.4)

The late-Republican advocate, Maternus says, is hemmed in by the abundant crowd eager to hear him speak. The use of the verb *adsistere* here ('stands present') to convey the crowd size echoes its use moments earlier (*Dial.* 39.3 *adsistit*) to highlight the paltry one or two men who attend trials nowadays. With its image of concentrically expanding circles of people attending trials in the Forum, extending from aristocratic denizens of the City to citizens from Italy to the Roman state itself (*populus Romanus*), Maternus' phrasing evokes the Roman people's collective interest in oratory during the Republic, heightening the contrast with the pervasive apathy towards advocates in the present day.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁸ Likewise, Maternus depicts (*Dial.* 36.5) the Republican orator's influence extending to the provinces and even to foreign nations, not the modern advocate, as Aper had asserted (*Dial.* 6.3).

Indeed, Maternus associates the Forum with Republican oratory, tout court. He wistfully states that even if oratory of the present day has more integrity, nevertheless "that Forum" (*Dial.* 38.1 *illud forum*) made greater use of eloquence, metonymically referring to late-Republican oratory through its traditional location in the Forum.⁴⁹⁹ Shortly after this, Maternus claims that while Pompey was the first to impose restrictions on Republican oratory, these changes were nevertheless small enough that "everything was (i.e. still) transacted in the Forum" (*Dial.* 38.2 *omnia in foro...gererentur*), a statement that suggests that oratory's shift away from the Forum is tied to the sociopolitical changes that have robbed oratory of its traditional leading role in society, even if the start of these restrictions on oratory did not remove it from the Forum.

Maternus suggests much the same in a later, vexed passage when he claims that "what Forum remains from the orators of old," (*Dial.* 41.1 *quod superest †antiquis oratoribus forum†*) is proof that the state has not yet reached its ideal form, a statement that also associates the Forum with the symbiotic relationship between oratory and the immoral behavior that creates a need for it. If we accept Winterbottom's text here, this passage implies that the Forum is fading away but that it has not yet disappeared, for the principate has not yet wholly reformed society. Maternus then shifts to a series of rhetorical questions designed to highlight the enduring societal problems that prevent the Forum and the oratory that it represents from vanishing altogether. In his second question, he asks "what municipality comes to us for patronage except one that a neighboring people (*vicinus populus*) or domestic discord is agitating? (*domestica discordia agitat?*)" (*Dial.* 41.2)

⁴⁹⁹ "Integrity" (*Dial.* 38.1 *veritati*) follows Mayer's (2001) text.

This phrase draws readers back once again to Vergil's hellish portrait of the city in the Praise of the Farmer that Maternus' poet flees from in his first speech. Speaking of the fortunate man who shuns the dystopic city in favour of the blessed countryside, Vergil writes, "neither the fasces of the people (*populi*), nor the purple of kings has overcome him, nor the discord that agitates faithless brothers (*infidos agitans discordia fratres*)" (*Geo.* 2.495-96).⁵⁰⁰ The fortunate man who lives in the countryside, Vergil writes, is not swayed by civic offices, royal power, and most importantly for Tacitus' readers, neither is he stirred by civil strife. Maternus' adaptation of this passage here suggests to his listeners that imperial-era Rome resembles Vergil's dystopic city, for insofar as it retains the practice of oratory, modern Rome suffers from the verbal warfare that citizens inflict on each other, much as civic violence wracks Vergil's hellish cityscape.

These echoes of Vergil's portrait of the city in Maternus' second speech also offer further insight into his enigmatic portrait of the modern orator delivering his speeches in solitudinous "record-offices" (*Dial.* 39.1 *tabularia*). With the dystopic city from Vergil's Praise of the Farmer already foregrounded in readers' minds thanks to his repeated allusions to it in his first speech, Maternus' audience may recall that the fortunate man just mentioned above who rejects the city in favour of a rural paradise, "sees neither iron laws nor unhealthy Forum, nor the people's record-offices" (*Geo.* 2.502-3 *nec ferrea iura insanumque forum aut populi tabularia uidit*).⁵⁰¹ In the Praise of the Farmer, record-offices are one of the many symbols of the hated city that the rural recluse shuns, alongside the *insanum forum*, which Maternus has already sought to distance himself

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. Gudeman (1914) 504. *Discordia* appears as the subject of the verb *agitare* in only these two passages in classical Latin and in a passage of Lucan (6.780) that also alludes to these lines of Vergil (Haskins (1887) 224).

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Gudeman (1914) 489. On allusive foregrounding, see e.g. Levene (2010) 98-99.

from in his first speech (*Dial.* 13.5). Law and advocacy have no place in either poet's rustic utopia.

This divided allusion to Vergil prompts readers to consider the relationship between oratory's shifting location in the Forum and record-offices across Maternus' two speeches.⁵⁰² In his first speech, the poet psychically retreats from the Forum and the city as a whole, since both of these places are associated with oratory, which he portrays as a contemporary form of eloquence that has deteriorated from poetry, the first medium through which eloquence was expressed. In his second speech, Maternus endows oratory with chronological and topographical distinctions. In the late Republic, he claims, forensic eloquence occupied a prominent social and physical position in Roman society, which occasions the orator's location in the Forum at the centre of a crowd. Thanks to the advent of the principate, he continues, oratory is now less destructive but also largely irrelevant, and so advocates are represented as pleading their cases in secluded record-offices and hearing halls, far from public attention. Should readers view the orator's shifting location in the *insanum forum* and *tabularia* through the lens of this divided allusion to Vergil, they may conclude that from the perspective of the reclusive poet that Maternus shares with his Augustan model, modern advocacy in its record-offices is still part of Vergil's hellish cityscape, even it no longer occupies centre stage in the Forum.

Just as we have seen in the debate over the poet-as-outsider in the first pair of speeches in the *Dialogus*, Maternus' claims are highly tendentious and often inaccurate.⁵⁰³ The imperial orator is

⁵⁰² For divided allusion in Latin literature, see e.g., Wills (1998) and Marchesi (2008) 26-37, esp. 26-27.

⁵⁰³ van den Berg (2014) 205n90, describes Maternus' rhetorical strategy as "the gross mischaracterization of present circumstances in order to cast better light on late-republican (i.e. Ciceronian ideals)." On historical inaccuracies in

neither so isolated nor such a social non-entity as Maternus asserts. Here too, examining the spatial aspects of Maternus' account in their historical and dramatic contexts offers readers a broader perspective on the modern advocate's role in Roman society, tempering Maternus' unduly grim portrait while also challenging his assumption that isolating persuasive eloquence eliminates its ability to speak to the community. To begin with, Maternus' description of Rome's legal topography under the principate is highly inaccurate, undermining his account of the imperial advocate as an outsider, ironically highlighting the continuing importance of his position in present-day Roman society.

The account of the modern orator's isolation that Maternus gives in his second speech does not match other historical evidence for the spaces of legal activity during the imperial period. Judicial oratory at Rome was typically located outdoors, in open spaces.⁵⁰⁴ Beginning with the Forum Romanum, the fora in the city-centre were always the most common spaces for advocacy. Historical sources for forensic oratory during the imperial period such as Seneca the Elder and Quintilian presume that the orator still pleads in such common, open spaces.⁵⁰⁵ Indeed, while Maternus claims that the Forum *used* to be crowded with the bustle of legal activity (*Dial.* 38.1, 39.4), historical and literary evidence indicates that these common spaces were only growing busier with legal activity during this period, for they continually expanded throughout the early

Maternus' portrait of imperial oratory, see e.g. Williams (1978) 35, Luce (1993) 22, Bartsch (1994) 108, Gallia (2009) 186, Frier (2010), van den Berg (2014) 187-207.

⁵⁰⁴ de Angelis (2010a) 6-8. For imperial Rome's legal topography, see Bablitz (2007), esp. 13-50, de Angelis (2010c), and Färber (2014).

⁵⁰⁵ Frier (2010) 80.

principate up to and including Tacitus' own time in order to keep up with demand for space for legal activity.⁵⁰⁶

Be this as it may, Maternus' historicizing argument blaming the principate for oratory's physical displacement has naturally inspired scholars to look for historical explanations to justify his enigmatic account of the imperial courtroom. Frier's recent historical analysis of Maternus' account of imperial Roman legal topography links his portrait of the isolated advocate to a long-term trend towards holding trials in more enclosed, often indoor locations.⁵⁰⁷ As part of this trend, when the emperor and his officials acquired judicial authority with the rise of the principate, they sometimes heard cases in a more private, controlled setting, out of public view. For instance, emperors used their residences to hold trials throughout the imperial period.⁵⁰⁸ This trend has also been connected to the increasing prominence of the *cognitio extraordinaria* during the early empire, a legal procedure in which the emperor or a single official who derived his authority from him oversaw the entire suit, and which placed stricter limits on advocate's ability to plead at length, without interruptions.⁵⁰⁹ This migration of certain legal activities during the early empire to more controlled, intimate spaces and the rise of a trial procedure that resembles the interventionist judge in Maternus' speech has led some scholars to posit that Maternus'

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. van den Berg (2014) 190, 194, 196-97, with further references. In a similar manner, at least some of the non-locational confinements and enclosures that Maternus cites as constraints upon the imperial orator also appear erroneous in the light of historical evidence. It appears that permission was extended for even lengthier forensic speeches, even though they were increasingly regulated, the practice of multiple advocacy continued under the empire, and there is no other testimony that corroborates Maternus' claims that the unwieldy *paenula* was common courtroom attire. Rather, the toga remained the expected clothing for the Forum throughout the high empire (Frier (2010) 75-76, van den Berg (2014) 193-96).

⁵⁰⁷ Frier (2010) 79, and passim. On this trend in legal topography, see de Angelis (2010a) 16-18, (2010b) 128, 135.

⁵⁰⁸ On the locations of the emperor's legal activity, see de Angelis (2010b), esp. 128-35 and 142-55 on hearing cases at his house.

⁵⁰⁹ de Angelis (2010a) 17. On the *cognitio extraordinaria*, see e.g., Buti (1982). Maternus' portrait of the interventionist judge bossing the modern advocate around differs greatly from Quintilian's descriptions of the passive judges who presided over Rome's traditional courts (Frier (2010) 76-78).

portrayal of the isolated imperial orator is related to these changes in how and where the emperor and his officials heard cases.⁵¹⁰

However, even if we accept the relevance of these important developments in Rome's legal system to Maternus' portrait of the imperial orator, his arguments still appear grossly overstated. In spite of the trend towards conducting some legal activity in more enclosed, indoor locations, Maternus nevertheless portrays the Forum as the preserve of Republican oratory when Rome's fora continued to be used for legal activity and expanded continually throughout the first and early second centuries CE. Moreover, while some cases were heard in smaller, less publicly visible venues during the imperial period, this did not necessarily mean that the public took little or no interest in them.⁵¹¹ Vitruvius (6.5.2), for instance, advises advocates and other men involved in public life to build spacious accommodations at their homes for domestic gatherings such as private trials, which indicates that holding legal activity at more intimate venues did not necessarily deprive advocates of the opportunity to attract substantial public attention.

Likewise, the case for linking Maternus' *auditoria* and *tabularia* to the encroachment of the imperial courts is somewhat tenuous. While Frier cites abundant evidence for the technical use of the word *auditorium* in reference to the offices of imperial officials, he concedes that the earliest surviving evidence appears in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, while he argues that even though there is no other evidence that trials were held in *tabularia*, the presence of a number of imperial record-offices in Rome suggests that this location may also plausibly evoke imperial

⁵¹⁰ Frier (2010) *passim*. Cf. also de Angelis (2010a) 17.

⁵¹¹ de Angelis (2010a) 17, van den Berg (2014) 196.

encroachment on the traditional Roman courts.⁵¹² He concludes that Tacitus (not Maternus) "saw in the judicial system of his time something that his contemporaries, even the most astute of them - and, surprisingly, this would also include contemporary jurists-, were on the whole ignoring."⁵¹³ Thus, even supposing that Tacitus or his work's protagonist is a visionary, Frier's conclusions nevertheless neatly illustrate the fact that Maternus' observations about imperial legal space were not shared by even his professional contemporaries, as far as surviving evidence indicates. Accordingly, if Tacitus' knowledgeable readers interpreted Maternus' description of *auditoria* and *tabularia* as a reference to the disagreeable venues of the imperial courts, they will have also seen this as a nascent trend, not the location where "the greatest number of cases" (*Dial.* 39.2) were heard. Thus, from the perspective of Maternus' audience and Tacitus' original readership, Maternus' description of the imperial orator's seclusion probably seemed greatly exaggerated, no doubt directing many readers to form less pessimistic conclusions about the social estrangement of the orator from imperial Roman society.

To be sure, readers may well have associated Maternus' claims with the somewhat diminished status of oratory under the principate. Historical evidence suggests that the nobility lost its monopoly on the profession during this period as increasing numbers of lower-status individuals made a living as advocates, prompting aristocratic resentment.⁵¹⁴ Likewise, the emperor and the senate acquired jurisdiction over some of the most significant and noteworthy criminal cases, hearing them out of public view, leaving advocates to plead cases with somewhat diminished

⁵¹² Frier (2010) 82-83.

⁵¹³ Frier (2010) 86.

⁵¹⁴ Bablitz (2007) 141-50.

competitive stakes before the people.⁵¹⁵ At least partially as a consequence, elites during the early empire placed increasing importance on cultural pursuits such as recitation, declamation and literary composition in their quest for social distinction among their peers, though these pastimes supplemented rather than replaced traditional avenues for competitive display such as oratory.⁵¹⁶ Nevertheless, while Maternus' portrait of the imperial advocate's isolation may well have reminded elite readers of such undesirable changes to the social prospects of advocacy under the empire, the overt exaggeration and inaccuracies of his spatialized account would likely have directed them to reflect upon the continued viability of oratory as a path to social distinction under the empire.

Let us return now to the point briefly argued above that locating the orator in a less publicly visible space does not necessarily bespeak his social irrelevance, which leads us to the second important qualification on Maternus' description of the isolated imperial advocate. Much as we have seen with the competing portraits of the secluded poet in the first pair of speeches in the *Dialogus*, Maternus' account of the modern orator's lonely little courtroom evokes the dramatic setting of the work in Maternus' bedroom, complicating his simplistic association of physical seclusion and social irrelevance, just as it did for Aper's portrayal of the poet. Instead, this connection suggests that while eloquence in imperial Rome operates under certain constraints, this does not prevent its practitioners, be they writers or engaged in public life, from making social significant commentary.

⁵¹⁵ Roller (2011) 202-4. Roller (ibid.) and van den Berg (2014) 202-3, also cite orator's loss of autonomy in public assemblies during the imperial period as decision-making power shifted to the senate and the imperial court, though Maternus' speech explicitly concerns itself with judicial oratory.

⁵¹⁶ See note 163.

The imperial advocate's hearing-halls and record-offices recall Maternus' bedroom in certain respects. For Maternus, the modern orator seeks to make a reputation through his eloquence by orating in small, nearly empty rooms that are isolated from events in the larger world. So too, in the *Dialogus*, the characters debate the role of eloquence and its practitioners in imperial society within the confines of Maternus' *cubiculum*, a secluded space within the Roman house that was often a safe haven for behavior that its occupants wanted to keep private from the knowledge and judgement of those not privileged with entry.⁵¹⁷ Likewise, Maternus' bedroom is nearly empty, much as the courtroom that he describes: Aper, Secundus and Tacitus find him there working on his *Cato*, apparently alone, and it is an elegant conceit of the dialogue that the young Tacitus is the only uninvolved spectator, silently living up to the meaning of his name.

These modest parallels might escape the reader's attention if Tacitus and his characters did not also repeatedly frame their debate in the bedroom as a trial. In the prologue to the work, Tacitus twice describes Fabius Iustus's question about oratory's decline as a *quaestio* (*Dial.* 1.2 'inquiry'), a term often used of a judicial investigation, a subtext made explicit when the characters cast their initial debate over poetry and oratory as a trial, for which Aper unsuccessfully solicits Secundus to serve as judge (*Dial.* 4.1-5.4, 11.1).⁵¹⁸ Later, when Messalla enters Maternus' bedroom (*Dial.* 14.1-2), he wonders whether the characters assembled there are preparing for a trial, while the dialogue ends with the characters' mutual promises that they will continue to

⁵¹⁷ Riggsby (1997) 43-47, 50-52.

⁵¹⁸ The absence of a judge in the work's 'trial of eloquence' is a point of dissimilarity from Maternus' vision of the imperial courtroom, where a domineering judge is all too present.

pursue their respective 'prosecutions' at a future date (*Dial.* 42.2).⁵¹⁹ The characters' debate thus emerges, albeit loosely, as a trial of eloquence.

Yet this figurative trial secluded within Maternus' bedroom is hardly the futile exercise of rhetoric found in Maternus' vision of the imperial courtroom. The bedroom's detachment from the outside world and its near complete lack of an audience do not inhibit the characters from delivering insightful and eloquent speeches. Indeed, if anything, given the urgency of the situation caused by the offense that Maternus' plays are rumoured to have caused, the privacy of the bedroom setting aids their candour. More importantly for our purposes, the secluded setting of the characters' discussion-cum-trial does not inhibit them from participating in the larger cultural debate over the role that practitioners of eloquence play (or fail to play) in imperial Roman society at large and from thereby achieving a measure of social distinction while doing so. Several times the characters understatedly suggest that their conversation will be heard by many others (*Dial.* 14.3, 26.7, 32.7), premonitions that Tacitus fulfills when he recalls their conversation as a way of answering Fabius Iustus's question at the beginning of the work.⁵²⁰

These parallels between the two trials, literal and figurative, thus undermine the simplistic connection that Maternus draws in his second speech between the seclusion of rhetorical eloquence and the putative inability of its practitioners to speak to a larger audience. Instead, they suggest that while imperial Rome has displaced orators somewhat from the centre of cultural life, this does not prevent those with rhetorical skill from adapting to the new

⁵¹⁹ For other instances of the trial motif, see *Dial.* 10.5-7, 16.4, 24.1-2, 32.5. Cf. van den Berg (2014) 21-23. Elements of the trial motif appear in dialogues dating back to Plato and Cicero in Greek and Latin literature, respectively (cf. van den Berg (2014) 63-64, Devillers (2015) 149n95, with further references).

⁵²⁰ For internal suggestions of the future fame of the *Dialogus*, see also discussion of the 'day after' motif at pg. 163.

circumstances so as to continue using their eloquence to engage with society while building their reputations. One self-evident, yet key difference between the two trials is instructive here, namely the fact that unlike Maternus' depiction of the imperial orator, the debate in Maternus' bedroom is of course not a real trial, but largely consists of a series of speeches that reflect the strong influence of declamation on the work.⁵²¹ During the imperial period, with oratory's aforementioned decline in prestige, 'backstage' cultural pursuits such as declamation gained increased importance, supplementing traditional careers like oratory as venues of aristocratic competitive self-display.⁵²²

In this context, the differences between the two secluded trials suggest that backstage cultural pursuits such as declamation constitute an alternative venue for self-display, to the limited extent that oratory fails to meet this need. The trial motif that runs through the *Dialogus* encourages readers to consider in parallel the characters' declamatory speeches within Maternus' bedroom and the role of forensic oratory under the empire. In this context, the similarity between the modern orator's courtroom in Maternus' speech and the setting of the dialogue-cum-trial in Maternus' bedroom may draw readers to question which pursuit offers rhetorically skilled elites under the empire a better venue for building their reputations, given that oratory has been displaced somewhat from the centre of cultural life. The sharp contrast between the social nonexistence of the imperial advocate in Maternus' speech and the understated promise of future fame for the dialogue's participants suggests that to the limited extent that oratory has been physically displaced from its traditional venues and consequently offers elites a less viable avenue for self-promotion, cultural pursuits such as the characters' declamatory speeches and

⁵²¹ E.g. Luce (1993) *passim*, van den Berg (2014) 42-47.

⁵²² For this issue in relation to the *Dialogus*, see Roller (2011) 211-19.

implicitly, the publication that commemorates them, offer an alternative pathway toward attaining social distinction.⁵²³

In his second speech, Maternus thus locates the imperial advocate in isolated hearing-halls and record offices as well as in a figurative wilderness in order to illustrate how society's advances towards superior morality under the principate have greatly diminished his social role, depriving him of his audience and rendering him an outcast. Maternus' portrait of the imperial advocate's isolation thus casts his futile efforts to achieve social distinction through his profession as a humiliating and enervating form of estrangement from Roman society that resembles and inverts Aper's unflattering representation of the poet in many details. In the imperial present, society's continued progress towards its moral ideals has increasingly removed its need for oratory. The advocate has thus lost his audience, a condition that is made manifest by his isolation within the figurative wasteland of neglected back rooms. Should society continue on this path, Maternus continues, the orator will become altogether irrelevant (*Dial.* 41.3).

Yet tensions between Maternus' claims and the broader historical and dramatic context of his claims undermine his exaggerated portrait of the modern orator as a complete social nonentity while suggesting at the same time that to the degree that oratory has receded from the cultural spotlight, elites can adapt their rhetorical skills to compete in new arenas for self-promotion that are compatible with the aristocrat's somewhat reduced visibility under the empire. In light of the inaccuracies and the exaggerations that permeate Maternus' portrayal of the modern advocate's physical detachment from society, readers will be reminded of the significant role that advocates

⁵²³ Maternus neglects to consider publishing speeches or any other form of composition as part of the advocate's pursuit of renown, an approach that would have seemed ill-advised to Tacitus' friend Pliny, as we shall see in the

retain under the early empire, attenuating Maternus' claims that advocates have become almost completely irrelevant to society at large under the principate.

Second, parallels between Maternus' portrait of the imperial orator's isolated courtroom and the 'trial' of eloquence that takes place in his bedroom subvert the superficial connection that he draws between the seclusion of eloquence and the social estrangement of its practitioners from the community. Instead, the eloquent debate-cum-trial within his bedroom, and the hints that it will reach an external audience suggest that while the principate has deprived Rome's aristocrats of a degree of access to the social spotlight, they are nevertheless capable of adapting their rhetorical skills to participate in cultural pursuits that will allow them to continue engaging with a larger public and to thereby continue seeking social distinction through their eloquence. Practitioners of eloquence are thus not so physically detached from social life as Maternus claims, but neither does such detachment necessarily prevent them from engaging with a broader audience through their eloquence and from achieving a degree of prominence while doing so.

4. Pliny on the Dialogus and the writer's self-seclusion (Ep. 1.6 & 9.10)

Tacitus' exploration of the figure of the spatially isolated and socially marginalized intellectual was not lost on his friend and colleague Pliny. Among the letters of Pliny addressed to his friend Tacitus, letters 1.6 and 9.10 both focus on these themes while simultaneously alluding to their treatment in the *Dialogus*, particularly to its first pair of speeches, thus continuing the dialogue on this issue, now framed as an epistolary conversation between the author of the *Dialogus* and his friend.⁵²⁴ Yet unlike Aper and Maternus in their first speeches, Pliny focuses primarily on his

following section.

⁵²⁴ These two letters have been central to scholarly debate over the composition history of both the *Dialogus* and Pliny's *Epistles*. While the argument of the present section does not depend on precise dates of composition for either work, it follows the contemporary scholarly consensus that both *Ep.* 1.6 and 9.10 postdate and contain

own seclusion as a speech-writing advocate and declines to side wholly with either character as to whether solitude is an idyllic respite from society that inspires superior eloquence or a dystopian domain that highlights the futility of his laborious efforts. For Pliny, the writer's solitude can allow and even stimulate great writing, but the process is not always easy and does not guarantee success. Much like the *Dialogus* as a whole, however, Pliny uses the seclusion that he enjoys at his Tuscan villa in these two letters to explore his position within society as a solitary writer, in his case, his quest for contemporary and especially posthumous fame and his ambivalence over whether he can achieve such distinction through his writing.⁵²⁵ Pliny's solitude in these letters illustrates that it is still possible to attain prestige as a writer and as an advocate in the imperial present. Success or failure in this endeavour is not contingent upon help from friends, the inspiration of literary models or the subject-matter afforded by contemporary political circumstances. For good or ill, the position that his writing will achieve in society present and future depends upon Pliny alone.

4.1. Pliny, Letter 1.6

In letter 1.6, Pliny writes to Tacitus from his Tuscan estate, recounting his surprising success at managing to hunt and write at the same time, crediting his success at the latter endeavour to the quiet sylvan environment. Throughout this short letter, a series of allusions call further attention to Pliny's efforts to write while he is hunting alone in the solitary countryside, first hinting at concern that his rural retreat may reflect the futility of his efforts at composition before suggesting the opposite, namely that his rustic solitude provides an ideal setting for producing

allusions to the *Dialogus*. For *Ep.* 1.6, the arguments of Bruère (1954) 166-68, have many followers, while arguments to this effect for *Ep.* 9.10 originate with Lange (1814), on whose contribution see also Gudeman (1914) 5-6.

⁵²⁵ For Pliny's Tuscan villa as the likely setting for *Ep.* 1.6 and 9.10, see Sherwin-White (1966) 99-100.

good writing. The letter's addressee and its allusive evocations of the *Dialogus* in particular strongly suggest that Pliny is relating his efforts to write to the tract that his friend Tacitus has composed on eloquence.

The allusions at the beginning of the letter hint at some initial trepidation on Pliny's part over the quality, quantity, and significance of his writing, raising the possibility that his rural location may emblemize his writing as irrelevant and 'inurbane'. The phrasing of Tacitus' imagined amusement (*Ep.* 1.6.1 *Ridebis, et licet rideas*) may evoke the words of Maternus when he excuses his discussion of the orator's physical confinement, both within his constricting cloaks and within the deserted hearing halls and record offices: "What I am about to say may seem trivial and laughable, yet I will say it, if only in order that it might be laughed at" (*Dial.* 39.1 *Parvum et ridiculum fortasse videbitur quod dicturus sum, dicam tamen, vel ideo ut rideatur.*).⁵²⁶ In this passage, Maternus anticipates that he may make his interlocutors laugh, and assents to their potential amusement before describing the advocate's hapless attempts to ply his trade, with the solitudinous nature of his courtroom reifying the social insignificance of forensic oratory under the principate. Pliny opens letter 1.6 by anticipating Tacitus' amusement and authorizing it (*licet*) in similar words. As the letter will go on to show, Pliny is the advocate trying to ply his trade in sylvan seclusion, in his case, writing something, perhaps a speech. Should readers recall Maternus' words here, Pliny's opening statement may momentarily raise the question as to whether modern oratory is a laughing-stock as Maternus asserts in his second speech and whether Pliny's attempts at writing are thus similarly futile.

⁵²⁶ Marchesi (2008) 118, identifies this parallel as "tonal more than literal".

Pliny's following self-identification sustains these doubts. His self-description as "I, that man whom you are familiar with" (*Ep.* 1.6. *ego, ille quem nosti*) acknowledges that Tacitus knows him as a studious man not prone to vigorous pursuits, yet at the same time, it also echoes the first line of Catullus' twenty-second poem "Varus, that Suffenus whom you are quite familiar with" (22.1 *Suffenus iste, Vare, quem probe nosti*).⁵²⁷ This poem concerns the poet Suffenus, an otherwise witty and "urbane" man (22.2, 22.9 *urbanus*) who composes an immense amount of dreadful poetry and immediately publishes it. When he writes poetry, Catullus observes, this otherwise cultured man turns into "a goat-milker or a ditch-digger" (22.10), "more boorish than the boorish countryside" (22.14 *infacetost infacetior rure*). Like Tacitus' imagined laughter, then, this Catullan parallel also builds the expectation that Pliny's efforts at writing are indeed risible, figuratively worthy of the backwoods that he occupies.

These momentary doubts are dispelled, however, when Pliny declares the reasons for amusement: his implausible success at boar-hunting while managing to stay idle and write. Pliny does not reveal what he has written, though his description of rehearsing and then noting things down on wax tablets suggest that he is in the early phases of composing something.⁵²⁸ The absence of any explicit reference to poetic composition by him in his letters until the fourth book provides circumstantial evidence that it is a prose work, while the context of the present letter and Pliny's use of Minerva as metonymy for his writing in letters 1.6 and 9.10 suggests that he may be working on a speech or speeches, given Martial's use of Minerva to celebrate Pliny's

⁵²⁷ cf. Marchesi (2008) 118.

⁵²⁸ Pliny also thus belies the letter's initial expectation that he is a backwoods, Suffenus-like writer by the fact that he does not immediately publish his work.

activity as an advocate (*Epig.* 10.19.14 = *Plin. Ep.* 3.21.5.5).⁵²⁹ Indeed, many readers have seen a reference to the orator Aper from the *Dialogus* in Pliny's account of successful boar-hunting at the letter's beginning.⁵³⁰

Pliny then defends the unusual practice of writing while on the hunt by claiming that, "it is amazing how the spirit is stirred by action and the body's movement" (*Ep.* 1.6.2 *mirum est ut animus agitatione motuque corporis excitetur*). The physical exertion is an aid to composition. This phrase also echoes Maternus' famous description of eloquence as a flame in his second speech in the *Dialogus*: "great eloquence feeds on its fuel like a flame and it is stirred up by turbulence and it grows bright through conflagration" (*Dial.* 36.1 *magna eloquentia, sicut flamma, materia alitur et motibus excitatur et urendo clarescit*).⁵³¹

In this passage, Maternus compares forensic eloquence to a flame to illustrate its paradoxical nature. Like a flame, it is roused to greater heights by *motus*, a term that refers to civil disturbances with respect to Maternus' historical argument, yet whose basic meaning of 'movement' furnishes the image of fanning a growing flame. The brighter and more illustrious Eloquence becomes, the greater the civic conflagration. This image articulates the paradox of Maternus' argument that forensic oratory has declined since the late-Republic: the brilliance with which eloquence shone in that era was fuelled by the civil strife that was prevalent in that period.

⁵²⁹ Not all scholars agree that Pliny is writing prose here: e.g. Lefèvre (2009) 247, assumes that Pliny is composing poetry. In addition, Pliny also alludes to Maternus' two definitions of great oratorical eloquence in the present letter as he describes his own sources of inspiration as he writes (discussed further below). Cf. Sherwin-White (1966) 100, Gibson and Morello (2012) 187.

⁵³⁰ See esp. Köves-Zulauf (1992) 335-36, for a summary of observations on Aper-as-boar and for further references. Whitton (2012) 356-57, links the image of the boar in letter 1.6 to the *delator* Aquilius Regulus, whom Pliny figuratively 'hunts' in the previous letter (1.5), though he skewers him by means of that letter, rather than through a speech.

From the perspective of Maternus' metaphor, eloquence does not appear to be an unmitigated good, for its comparison to a flame implies that it also has a potentially destructive power.⁵³²

Comparing Pliny's remark to its allusive model reveals his reaction to Maternus' historicizing argument for the decline of eloquence. While Pliny and Maternus have a shared concern with both present-day and posthumous recognition for eloquence, their differences are more revealing.⁵³³ The two men have different eras of eloquence in mind. Pliny refers to the successful production of eloquence in the present day, whereas Maternus' definition locates it in the late-Republican past. Pliny's allusive exclamation thus implicitly undermines Maternus' historical argument, calling attention to his claims that eloquence has declined only to highlight its successful production in the present. Furthermore, Pliny does not appropriate Maternus' flame simile, thereby removing the suggestion that eloquence can cause social harm. Likewise, while Pliny's description of his compositional inspiration is recognizably similar to Maternus' concern with forensic eloquence, throughout his second speech Maternus is speaking about forensic oratory delivered *viva voce*, whereas Pliny refers to his intellectual stimulation as a writer, perhaps as a speech-writer. For Pliny, eloquence persists in the present, yet it is benign and exists now in written form.

The two men's shared interest in the causes of eloquence reveals further disagreement. While the language of movement in both passages is recognizably similar, Pliny's adaptation of Maternus'

⁵³¹ Bruère (1954) 167, cf. Murgia (1985) 175-77.

⁵³² Cf. Edwards (2008) 42.

⁵³³ For Pliny's recurring interest in fame in his letters, see note 558-59. While Pliny does not explicitly articulate his preoccupation with fame in letters 1.6 and 9.10, his allusions in both letters compare his written work to the acclaimed oratory of the late-Republican period, as is argued below.

wording differs markedly in sense from the point that Maternus is making. While Maternus uses *motus* figuratively in his definition to suggest that the tumultuous movements of civil strife spur better forensic oratory, Pliny employs similar language to claim that the bodily movements required by hunting in the countryside have been a great benefit to his writing. In place of Maternus' historical and political explanation, Pliny's statement credits the writer's own behaviour as a key stimulus to his writing, namely the vigorous physical exercise pursued during his leisure time; no mention is made of broader social circumstances. Unlike Maternus, Pliny's allusion thus suggests that meaningful achievement in eloquence does not depend on the course of political events.⁵³⁴

After this praise of hunting and the salutary effect that its physical exertion has had on his writing, Pliny reintroduces the paradox that he highlighted at the start of the letter: the forest, solitude and the silence devoted to the hunt are all great aids to him as he writes. As in that initial passage, this portrait of hunting as a solitary, silent pursuit is unexpected, for boar hunting was usually a boisterous group activity.⁵³⁵ Coming so soon after his praise of the physical exertion inherent in hunting, this praise of sylvan solitude qualifies that statement and the argument of its allusive model. Indeed, the triad of *silvae*, *solitudo* and *silentium*, unparalleled in the letter, which otherwise uses parallel or contrasting word-pairs, places special emphasis on the salutary effects of backcountry seclusion on eloquence.⁵³⁶ In the previous statement, Pliny has accepted Maternus' argument that tumult can inspire great eloquence, yet his statement implies that this is the tumult of hunting, not civil strife. In the following sentence praising solitude, Pliny departs

⁵³⁴ Cf. Edwards (2008) 42, Marchesi (2008) 127.

⁵³⁵ Posch (1983) 375-76, Marchesi (2008) 121.

⁵³⁶ Cf. von Albrecht (1989) 165.

still further from Maternus' arguments. Even the exertion of hunting is less important than the tranquil, solitary forest setting for facilitating good writing.⁵³⁷

The sentiment and the phrasing of Pliny's praise of solitude also continue the letter's engagement with Maternus' historicizing analysis of eloquence in his second speech while also recalling Maternus and Aper's debate over the meaning of the poet's isolation early in the *Dialogus*. As he echoes these two initial speeches, however, Pliny appears to adapt their observations about the poet to his efforts to write oratory. To begin with, it is noteworthy that Pliny describes the silence and the solitude of the forest as "great spurs to thought" (*Ep.* 1.6.2 *magna cogitationis incitamenta*), the only instance of *incitamentum* in Pliny's letters. Given this letter's persistent engagement with the *Dialogus*, *incitamentum* may remind readers of this word's only appearance in the *Dialogus*, in Maternus' second speech, during his second, famously disparaging definition of 'great eloquence': "that great and distinguished eloquence (*magna illa et notabilis eloquentia*) is the nurseling of license, which fools call liberty, the companion of uprisings and the spur for an unbridled people (*effrenati populi incitamentum*)" (*Dial.* 40.2).⁵³⁸

⁵³⁷ While Pliny does not explicitly say that the tranquil setting of his hunt is *more* important than the hunt's physical exertion for inspiring his writing, the silence and the solitude of his hunt are more congenial to his concentration on writing than they are to hunting. Indeed, greater physical exertion during a hunt would likely create greater noise (Posch (1983) 376), and so Pliny's praise of silence undermines his praise of the exertion of hunting in the previous sentence. While Marchesi (2008) 127-28, writes that this passage implies that such tranquil *otium* is only possible with the stability of the principate, the priority given to quietude in this passage does not seem to favour the principate specifically. Instead, Pliny's statement and its favour of tranquillity further undermine Maternus' argument that the turmoil of civil strife is optimal for inspiring eloquence without necessarily favouring the principate as an alternative: solitude and *otium* inspire eloquence in any political situation.

⁵³⁸ Maternus' two definitions of eloquence (*Dial.* 40.2 and 36.1, referred to by Pliny in the previous line) are verbally linked: each describes *magna eloquentia* in close relation to *licentia*. Pliny uses the related verb *licere* at the beginning and end of letter 1.6: instead of referring to the excessive freedom of the public, Pliny uses this verb to authorize his friend's behaviour.

Like Maternus, Pliny's focus is also on great eloquence, for the adjective *magna*, which modifies *eloquentia* for Maternus, is now appended to *incitamenta*. For Pliny, in other words, great spurs to thought will surely lead to great eloquence. Yet the differing contexts of this verbal echo illustrate Pliny's unique concerns. Just as in the previous sentence, Pliny's language once again suggests that it is possible to produce skilled speech in the present: eloquence depends on having the resources and leisure time to withdraw to the forest, not on any particular political dispensation.

Pliny and Maternus are also interested in different relationships of cause and effect. In *Dial.* 40.2, Maternus defines great eloquence as a cause (*incitamentum*) of unbridled behaviour by the public. Pliny, by contrast, is not concerned here or elsewhere in this letter with debating the social consequences of eloquence, but with highlighting the causes of that eloquence, namely leisure-time spent in seclusion. Though it is not explicitly stated in letter 1.6, Pliny's implicit goal is that his writing grant him social distinction, particularly with posterity to come.⁵³⁹ Just as in the previous line of the letter, Pliny echoes Maternus' language where he links forensic oratory to political disturbances yet pointedly associates his own compositional productivity with leisure-time, here, time spent in the solitude and the silence of the woods.⁵⁴⁰

Pliny's praise of quiet time spent alone in the woods also recalls Aper and Maternus' debate early in the *Dialogus*. Mention of "forests" (*silvae*) and "solitude" (*solitudo*) may call to mind Aper's disparaging description of the countryside as the unbounded wilderness where the poet banishes

⁵³⁹ See notes 558-59.

⁵⁴⁰ Maternus' definition of forensic eloquence as a cause of social strife polemically alludes to *Brut.* 45, where Cicero describes it as caused by a peaceful, well-ordered state (cf. the list of scholarship on this allusion at van den

himself in order to get his futile writing done (*Dial.* 9.6), even as Pliny takes a much more positive view towards the value of writing in such seclusion.⁵⁴¹ Aper is the only character in the *Dialogus* to describe the countryside as a *solitudo*,⁵⁴² and while he does not employ the term *silvae* (the word does not appear in the *Dialogus*), its use here alongside *solitudo* may adumbrate Aper's portrait of the countryside as a wilderness lacking any sense of divinity.⁵⁴³ The use of these terms here, especially *solitudo*, calls to mind Aper's position as Pliny skewers it, for Pliny employs this language while describing the salutary effect of the forest solitude on his efforts to write something significant, and he ends the letter by characterizing the forest as numinous.⁵⁴⁴ For Pliny, the writer's physical self-separation from society is not a sign of his social irrelevance as it is for Aper, but a precondition for producing writing capable of obtaining widespread recognition.

While these terms are closer to Aper's characterization of the groves and thickets, the structure of Pliny's phrase recalls Maternus' point of view, even as Pliny allusively modifies it. Pliny's description of his rural environment as "the surrounding forest and solitude and the very silence itself that is given to hunting" (*Ep.* 1.6.2 *undique silvae et solitudo ipsumque illud silentium quod*

Berg (2014) 206n91). Though Pliny's language here does not evoke Tacitus' model for this phrase, his sentiment in the present statement places him closer to Cicero in this respect than to Tacitus.

⁵⁴¹ Readers may anticipate encountering Aper's arguments after Pliny's account of boar (*aper*) hunting at the beginning of the letter.

⁵⁴² *solitudo* appears twice in the *Dialogus*, at 9.6 and at 39.4, where Maternus likens the modern orator's courtroom to a *solitudo*.

⁵⁴³ For a different view on the significance of Pliny's phrase *undique silvae*, cf. Marchesi (2008) 121n37, 129-31. While nothing prevents Pliny from potentially alluding to Calp. Sic. 7.30-32 or Lucr. 1.248-64 as Marchesi argues, I am convinced that Pliny is more likely to have in mind here the dialogue of his friend and addressee, to which he has already alluded several times throughout his letter. In the following letter (*Ep.* 1.7.5) Pliny writes to his friend Rufus that he wishes to address him using Rufus' own poetry. I contend that Pliny's inclination is similar in letters 1.6 and 9.10.

uenationi datur) echoes the beginning of Maternus' response to Aper's derisive description of the poet's rural withdrawal: "in fact the groves and thickets and the very seclusion that Aper was criticizing..." (*Dial.* 12.1 *nemora vero et luci et secretum ipsum quod Aper increpebat*).⁵⁴⁵ Pliny's paired terms describing the forest (*silvae et solitudo*) parallel a similar collocation in Maternus (*nemora et luci*), while emphasis on silence (*ipsumque illud silentium quod*) sonically resembles Maternus' emphasis on seclusion (*secretum ipsum quod*). These emphases on silence and seclusion resemble each other in sound and sense. Both *silentium* and *secretum* are nouns of similar length and sound (*s-t-m*), and both terms convey the writer's separation from others: in Pliny's case, silence sonically enhances his sense of seclusion, for the absence of sound is another sign that there is no one near him, while at the same time, it echoes Maternus' praise of silence as the first pleasurable quality that he ascribes to poetry's groves and thickets (*Dial.* 12.1).

Aside from Pliny's probable allusion to the *Dialogus* here, his praise of seclusion in the forest restates his belief that it is possible to produce socially significant eloquence in the present day under the principate, and that such solitude is a great aid to producing this skilled speech. If Pliny's praise of forest solitude recalls Maternus' description of the groves and thickets in his first speech, this connection offers further insight into Pliny's views on writing and his reaction to the *Dialogus*. Pliny's assertions that the production of skilled speech benefits from the writer's solitude and from his detachment from constraining social circumstances aligns him with Maternus' claims about the virtues of the groves and thickets in his first speech, yet as noted

⁵⁴⁴ While Aper and Pliny agree that the countryside is the natural place to get writing done, Aper characterizes this setting as emblematic of the writer's social irrelevance, whereas the discussion below in the present section illustrates Pliny's belief that the writer can produce great eloquence amidst the forest solitude.

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. Murgia (1985) 178.

above, Pliny's claims appear to focus on speech-writing, not poetry. Both branches of eloquence thus appear to benefit from the same writerly *otium* and detachment from the hurly-burly of everyday life.

Indeed, Pliny's likely echo of Maternus here may suggest that such forest solitude holds a similar symbolism here for Pliny as it does for Maternus, namely, a withdrawal into the literary tradition, away from the impositions, distractions, and constraints of contemporary society, though the optimistic Pliny shows no sign of Maternus' rancorous alienation from public life. In his collection of letters, Pliny is forthright about how his speech-writing is influenced by certain favored orators from the past. For instance, a little earlier in the same book (*Ep.* 1.2.2-4), Pliny recounts his imitation of Demosthenes, Cicero and Calvus in a speech that he has recently published.

The present letter's persistent engagement with forested solitude in the *Dialogus* may similarly suggest that Tacitus and his rhetorical work are also present in this woodland setting literally as well as figuratively, as a contemporary influence upon Pliny's intellectual efforts.⁵⁴⁶ As noted above, the boar hunt may call to mind Tacitus' character Aper and the *Dialogus* by extension, and the Tuscan forest itself reminds us of Maternus' groves and thickets. Indeed, the silence of this forest has reminded some readers of the meaning of Tacitus' name,⁵⁴⁷ and Pliny's emphasis on the contribution of this forest and particularly its silence to his compositional process could be an artful compliment by Pliny to Tacitus' influence upon his work as a new member of Rome's

⁵⁴⁶ Pliny recounts that when he was a youth, Tacitus seemed to him "more than anyone else one who could and should be imitated" (*Ep.* 7.20.5).

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. Woodman (2009) 32.

literary patrimony. Beyond his evident influence on the present letter and letter 9.10, the *Dialogus* is an important part of Tacitus' pervasive influence on Pliny's writing, particularly in Pliny's one surviving speech and in his first book of letters.⁵⁴⁸ Readers, then, who recognize the influence of the *Dialogus* on the present letter may see it as particularly fitting that Pliny has appropriated the image of the solitary writer in the forest to evoke in part the influence that the *Dialogus* has had on his own intellectual production.

Pliny thus engages closely with the *Dialogus* in letter 1.6 as he crafts his self-portrait as a solitary writer in pursuit of fame, implicitly arguing that achieving social recognition as an advocate is still possible in the present: it depends on the individual alone, irrespective of political circumstances, if only he can detach himself from society's distractions in order to immerse himself in his writing and in the literary tradition. With his description of the forest solitude, Pliny briefly evokes Aper's portrait of the failed poet's retreat from society into the wilderness, yet he sides with Maternus' vision of the writer's detachment from society as a stimulus to producing praiseworthy eloquence. Yet at the same time, Pliny allusively rejects Maternus' gloomy, historicizing account of oratory in his second speech that links its fortunes to political circumstances. Instead, Pliny's portrait of himself as writing alone in the forest draws on Maternus' idyllic description of the poet, appropriating Maternus' vivid portrait for his own efforts to write oratory instead.

Much as Maternus argues in his first speech, in letter 1.6, written eloquence does not depend on Pliny's social circumstances, provided that he can isolate himself from all manner of distractions

⁵⁴⁸ See esp. Bruère (1954) 164-66 and Murgia (1985) 181-91.

in order to focus on his work. By echoing the description of the poet's groves and thickets in Maternus' first speech, the numinous forest setting of Pliny's seclusion suggests that this freedom from distractions aids his ability to engage with the literary tradition, not least Tacitus. In turn, through twice relocating into the secluded Tuscan forest the causes of the *magna eloquentia* that Maternus had ascribed to late Republican oratory, Pliny offers more optimistic prospects for achieving fame through eloquence in the present day, if writers can achieve such solitude.

4.2. Pliny, Letter 9.10

In letter 9.10, Pliny once again writes to Tacitus from his Tuscan estate, this time recounting his failure at boar-hunting. Pliny nevertheless uses his time while travelling there and then at the villa to write poetry and to revise some speeches, although he is dissatisfied with his efforts: his poetry is nugatory, the work that his speeches require spoils his vacation, and his villa's rustic seclusion provides no help. After disparaging the poetry that he wrote on the trip to his villa, and then during down time on his estate, Pliny sums up his attempts at versification there while reproaching Tacitus: "And so, my poems are resting, which you believe are most agreeably brought to completion amidst groves and thickets" (*Ep. 9.10.3 Itaque poemata quiescunt, quae tu inter nemora et lucos commodissime perfici putas.*). As many readers have noted, this statement recalls Aper and Maternus' debate over the meaning of the poet's retreat to the groves and thickets, and Tacitus' putative favour for them as a site of poetic productivity conflates him with his character Maternus when the latter defends the groves and thickets as the source of and enduring refuge for eloquence (*Dial. 12.1 Nemora vero et luci et secretum ipsum, quod Aper increpabat, tantam mihi adferunt voluptatem, ut inter praecipuos carminum fructus numerem...*).

In turn, Pliny's recollection of Maternus' comments here activates other words in the letter as further references to Maternus' praise of the groves and thickets. Pliny's claim that Tacitus believes that this setting is the most agreeable (*commodissime*) for writing poetry evokes Maternus' statement shortly after the passage quoted above that it was in these groves and thickets that eloquence first appeared for mortals in agreeable guise (*Dial.* 12.2 *commoda*). Likewise, the rest that Pliny's poems enjoy while in retirement at his villa (*Ep.* 9.10.1-2 *in secessu...poemata quiescunt*) calls to mind the restful retirement (*Dial.* 13.1 *quietum...secessum*) that Maternus seeks in the groves and thickets.

These allusions to Maternus' praise of the groves and thickets clash with Pliny's claims in letter 9.10 that *otium* in comparable seclusion has enervated his versification. While Maternus champions the groves and thickets as a site of poetic inspiration, Pliny contrasts his Tuscan villa with this poetic refuge as he disparages his own poetic production. Pliny describes his verses as idle, verbose jottings, written during down time, first on the road, then when there is nothing else that he wants to do at his villa. Indeed, his characterization of his poetry as ephemera worth discarding immediately after composition more closely resembles Aper's portrait of the lonely poet who enjoys fleeting pleasure and short-lived social recognition (*Dial.* 9.1, 9.3-4, 10.1-2).⁵⁴⁹

It is after this negative characterization of his poetry that Pliny contrasts the ineffective role that

⁵⁴⁹ Another echo of the *Dialogus* may also highlight the disutility of Pliny's versification for his primary goal of seeking fame through oratory. Pliny first describes his poetry as "quite a few pieces plainly of a lighter nature" (*Ep.* 1.6.2 *plane non nulla leviora*), a phrase that recalls a comment at the end of Messalla's second speech in the *Dialogus* as he decries the impractical nature of contemporary rhetorical education. There are two kinds of rhetorical exercises, Messalla says, and they are both counterproductive for preparing youths for advocacy: "from these, the advice-speeches are indeed assigned to the (i.e. younger) boys on the grounds that they are plainly of a lighter nature and require less practical judgement" (*Dial.* 35.4 *suasoriae quidem tamquam plane leviores et minus prudentiae exigentes pueris delegantur*). This collocation of *plane* and *levis* occurs only in these two passages in classical Latin. If Pliny's readers recall Messalla's statement here, this reminiscence likens Pliny's poetic efforts to the juvenile exercises decried by Messalla, and more importantly, it may suggest that just like such *suasoriae*, Pliny's versification makes no contribution to his ambition of being a well-respected advocate.

his Tuscan villa plays in his versification with the claims of Maternus-cum-Tacitus that groves and thickets are the ideal sites to compose poetry. In light of Pliny's pervasive dissatisfaction with his poetry in this letter, the references to Tacitus' support for otiose seclusion undermine the latter's putative argument that a restful retreat to a solitary setting - physical or psychic - inspires the production of good poetry.⁵⁵⁰

At first sight, Pliny's description of his speech-revisions appears to share this unambiguously pessimistic tone. He is revising "one or two small speeches" (*Ep.* 9.10.3 *oratiunculam unam alteram*), he says, a task that he characterizes as very unpleasant, closer to rural labour than to a backcountry vacation. However, the letter's engagement with the *Dialogus* continues, thus offering further nuance to Pliny's creative reception of the image of the isolated wordsmith in the *Dialogus*. Given how the letter's addressee and its clear engagement with the *Dialogus* have foregrounded this text for readers, Pliny's comment that he is revising "one or two small speeches" is likely to call to mind a comment Aper makes in his second speech: "To my mind, Calvus himself, though I reckon he left twenty-one speeches to posterity, scarcely gives satisfaction in one or two small speeches" (*Dial.* 21.1 *ipse mihi Calvus, cum unum et viginti, ut puto, libros reliquerit, vix in una et altera oratiuncula satis facit*). These are the only two passages in classical Latin that employ the collocation *una (et) altera oratiuncula*. In this part of his speech, Aper is casting aspersions on late-Republican oratory: it had its merits, he argues, but it also had many flaws, and we should recognize that modern oratory has improved on them. Aper takes the late-Republican orator (and poet) Licinius Calvus as a case in point: though he

⁵⁵⁰ Just as with the fiction of solitary hunting in letter 1.6 discussed above, Pliny's ruminations about withdrawal to the 'groves and thickets'-like seclusion of his Tuscan villa elide the network of neighboring friends in its vicinity with whom he engaged in literary pursuits (Champlin (2016) 115-16).

was a highly regarded orator during his lifetime, very few of his speeches satisfy the standards of modern oratory.⁵⁵¹

Recognizing Pliny's turn of phrase as an allusion puts his speech-revisions in letter 9.10 in a more positive light. Tacitus' Aper might initially seem to be an unlikely figure for Pliny to echo here.⁵⁵² Pliny saw an enduring value in late-Republican oratory, including Calvus (*Ep.* 1.2.2), while Aper belittles the speeches of that era as outdated, and the statement of his that Pliny echoes is an unflattering assertion about how little of Calvus is still worth reading. Yet Pliny's words liken his revisions to precisely that small portion of Calvus' published speeches that meet with Aper's approval as a modernist. Readers of letter 9.10 who hear this echo may infer that Pliny hopes that (at least) some small portion of his revised speeches will be read and appreciated by a future age with its changed aesthetic standards, winning over even those future Aper-like readers who are not prone to revere the past.⁵⁵³

Despite hopes that his published speeches will achieve future fame, Pliny continues, such revisions are "unloveable, unpleasant and closer to the labors of the countryside than to its pleasures" (*Ep.* 9.10.3 *inamabile inamoenum, magisque laboribus ruris quam uoluptatibus simile*). Attaining lasting renown as a speech-writer will be hard, unpleasant work. Given the

⁵⁵¹ Aper then cites Calvus' famous speeches against Vatinius as an example of those few speeches of his that meet modern standards.

⁵⁵² Indeed, in letters 1.6 and 9.10, Pliny portrays himself as a boar-hunter, while such quarry (*apri*) may remind readers of Aper.

⁵⁵³ Calvus is a fitting model for Pliny due to his renown for his oratory, as a younger rival to Cicero (*Sen. Contr.* 7.4.6), and for his light, neoteric poetry. As noted above, Pliny imitates Calvus in his oratory (*Ep.* 1.2.2), while Pliny's versification is likened to Calvus' poetry at *Ep.* 4.27.4 and 5.3.5. At *Ep.* 8.7, Pliny also likens himself to Calvus while writing to Tacitus (Marchesi (2008) 109-13). On Calvus as an oratorical model for Pliny, see Sherwin-White (1966) 88-89, Picone (1978) 41-43, and Gamberini (1983) 37-40. For the relationship between Pliny's modest ambition in this passage for literary fame as a speech-writer and his persona elsewhere in his letters, see Appendix 5.

continual engagement of the present letter and its counterpart letter 1.6 with the *Dialogus*, I contend that the final sentence of letter 9.10 also calls to mind Aper and Maternus' dispute in the *Dialogus* over whether the poet's solitude is characterized by pleasure or labour.

As we have seen in sections 1 and 2 of this chapter, pleasure and labour are key points of dispute in the two characters' debate over the nature of the poet's seclusion. Maternus subsumes his praise of the groves and thickets under the rubric of what great pleasure they offer. In Maternus' view, as we have seen, composing poetry in this idyllic setting is the delightful product of effortless inspiration. By contrast, Aper describes versification as an arduous process devoid of long-lasting pleasure. In his telling, the poet's lifestyle is characterized by never-ending toil that culminates with the poet's retirement to the disagreeable solitude of the groves and thickets in order to finish his labours.

While the final sentence of letter 9.10 makes no direct verbal allusion to these comments on the pleasant or toilsome nature of the groves and thickets discussed in the *Dialogus*, Pliny characterizes his revisions in terms of *countryside* pleasure and labour, and describes them as *inamoenum* "uncharming", a rare adjective whose three other appearances in classical Latin all qualify a location and whose *-amoenus* root is properly applied to places.⁵⁵⁴ Pliny thus characterizes his speech revisions in terms of a laborious rural experience, not an idyllic one, and given his sustained engagement with precisely that part of the *Dialogus* where these two types of rural seclusion are competitively ascribed to the poet, it is plausible to conclude that Pliny is engaging with this discourse.

⁵⁵⁴ On *amoenus*, see TLL 1.0.1962.55-1963.70, Maltby (1991) 31.

Viewed through the prism of Aper and Maternus' debate over the meaning of the writer's solitude, Pliny's characterization of his speech revisions brings him closer to Aper's claims. For both men, the writer's rural seclusion is laborious and unpleasant, yet Pliny departs from Aper's pessimism in his allusive hope that one or two of his speeches will be well received by posterity. Rather more like the passage of Cicero's *Pro Caelio* (46) that Aper inadvertently evokes, for Pliny, crafting praiseworthy oratory requires a measure of self-seclusion and social renunciation to toil over one's writing. Just as Cicero asserts, for Pliny this is not a sign of the futility of his hopes for recognition, but rather the unpleasant means by which he may attain them.

Just as we have seen in letter 1.6, in the present letter Pliny portrays himself as an isolated writer in a manner that does not wholly align with the arguments advanced by either Aper or Maternus on this topic, though in this letter his sentiments are closer to those of Aper. Much as Aper argues in the *Dialogus*, Pliny's version of the grove of poetry at his idyllic Tuscan estate hosts his production of inferior poetry that does not deserve to reach an audience much less win him renown. This predicament, Pliny says, contradicts Tacitus' claims about the groves and thickets, a statement that conflates Tacitus with Maternus as it rejects them both. Furthermore, just as in letter 1.6, Pliny engages with Aper and Maternus' debate over the nature of the poet's seclusion while relating his own efforts to revise his speeches in retirement at his Tuscan estate. Pliny's mixed feelings about revising his speeches while in retirement resemble Aper's gloomy portrait of the isolated poet. For both men, the writer's rural retreat is laborious and unpleasant. Nevertheless, Pliny's attitude in letter 9.10 towards revising his speeches while in seclusion is less fatalistic than Aper's account. By allusively comparing his revised speeches to Calvus'

acknowledged classics, Pliny implicitly expresses hope that the idyllic setting of his rural retreat will allow him to recraft at least one or two speeches that will achieve future fame.

Here too, just as in letter 1.6, by adapting the image of the poet's seclusion in the groves and thickets to express his modest hopes for his oratory, Pliny locates the causes for this desired renown in his own laborious revisions, rather than in the utilitarian social connections that Aper emphasizes, in Rome's political circumstances as Maternus argues in his second speech, or in the inspiration of the literary tradition, expressed through the image of the secluded grove in Maternus' first speech. Yet even as Pliny calls attention to the grove's failure to inspire his poetry, his hopes for a modest Calvus-like renown for his speeches may suggest that the grove contains some inspiration for his oratory, embodied once again by Tacitus' *Dialogus* and perhaps by Calvus's speeches as well. Nevertheless, as the final sentence of letter 9.10 makes clear, making good use of this inspiration ultimately depends on Pliny's own hard work.

The solitude that envelops Pliny as he writes in letters 1.6 and 9.10 thus casts him as a solitary individual struggling to write and to distinguish himself thereby, among his contemporaries and with posterity. In this way, Pliny echoes the concerns that we have seen put forward in the varying portraits of the solitary intellectual in the *Dialogus*, for Pliny too is concerned with the individual intellectual's perspective here, and whether he truly matters to society. At the same time, however, Pliny's secluded pose in these letters lacks the sense of social estrangement that is attached to the isolated poets and advocates portrayed in the *Dialogus*.

At times, Pliny's allusions to the *Dialogus* in these letters make clear that he is reflecting upon the nature and meaning of solitude in that work as he crafts his own pair of contrasting creative responses to this issue. Much as Aper and Maternus differ sharply in the social value that they ascribe to the poet's seclusion in the first pair of speeches of the *Dialogus*, in these two artfully connected letters Pliny provides contrasting perspectives on whether or not his solitary writing will win him distinction and whether this process is delightful and easy or disagreeable and hard, although his optimistic and pessimistic accounts of writing in seclusion reveal greater qualification than the more tendentious claims of Aper and Maternus.

Even as Pliny thus closely engages with the *Dialogus* and its conflicting images of secluded poets in these two letters, his allusive interaction with Tacitus' work reveals his interest in the significance of his solitude as he writes and rewrites his speeches, not simply as he composes poetry, as Maternus and Aper discuss in the *Dialogus*.⁵⁵⁵ This is a consequence of the fact that Pliny's hopes for fame as an advocate rely in large part upon his published speeches, not simply upon their oral delivery, whereas the *Dialogus* and its characters neglect to consider the role or the location of speech-writing in their accounts of the contemporary orator's pursuit of fame, focusing instead solely on the advocate's delivery of his speeches *viva voce*.

By adapting this imagery of the poet's solitary struggle to achieve distinction through his written work, Pliny's letters highlight the similar nature of his experience as an advocate. A significant part of the renown that advocates like Pliny seek depends not simply upon the crowded nature of their courtrooms as they delivered their speeches. Instead, it was also crucial that they withdraw

⁵⁵⁵ As we have seen, in his second speech Maternus portrays the imperial advocate as physically isolated as he pleads his cases, yet Maternus makes no mention of how or where the modern orator composes these speeches.

from society, first in order to find the solitude necessary for composing fine speeches that would win over their audiences, and then later, in order to revise the texts for publication, so as to ensure a favorable reception by the reading public, both present and future.

Yet even as he adapts the conflicting images of the solitary poet in the *Dialogus*, Pliny shares the emphasis that Maternus and Aper place on the pivotal role that the solitary writer plays in his personal struggle to achieve social distinction, for good or for ill. In letter 1.6, Pliny alludes to Maternus' assertions that great oratory is caused by and, in turn, causes civil strife, yet he reconfigures these claims to explore the sources of inspiration for his own compositional process. Pliny uses the seclusion of his Tuscan estate and its surrounding forest in these two letters to suggest that the causes of the great eloquence that will capture society's attention still exist. For Pliny, these causes are disconnected from political circumstances: they lie in removing oneself from society and in drawing inspiration from the natural and literary environment in which one is immersed.

This solitary enterprise takes on a different complexion in each of the two letters. In letter 1.6, forest seclusion creates a pleasant atmosphere in which Pliny appears to compose socially significant oratory without undue effort. While in letter 9.10, the nearby villa is the site of Pliny's incessant toils, he nevertheless retains the hope that his hard work and social renunciation are not a sign of the futility of his efforts, but the sacrifice necessary to achieve distinction for at least a small portion of his written work.⁵⁵⁶ Read together, the two letters creatively engage with the *Dialogus* to suggest that as a writer, Pliny has the means within himself to achieve his goal of

⁵⁵⁶ See Appendix 6 for how this shift between pursuing personal fame as a leisured activity and as hard work relates to other connections between books 1 and 9 of the letter collection.

gaining literary immortality - but it will not always be easy or enjoyable. Within the interpretive context of these two letters, friends and society offer neither help nor any insurmountable obstacle to his efforts. Such a moral is encouraging, but also daunting: Pliny is alone in this most important endeavour.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has examined three accounts in Tacitus' *Dialogus* of physically or psychically secluded poets and orators that explore the role of the individual practitioner of eloquence in imperial society as he pursues traditional elite cultural objectives that centre around social distinction while he grapples with various obstacles that estrange him from the community at large. A final section analyzed Pliny's reaction to these accounts in the *Dialogus* as he reflects upon the meaning of his own solitary writing practices, though he does not convey any comparable estrangement from Roman society. These discordant accounts of solitary poets and advocates together illustrate a shared interest in the practitioner of eloquence as an independent individual who acts on his own, without the support of friends, relations or anyone else. They demonstrate a common concern over whether or not these socially detached individuals can attain distinction for their eloquence on their own, without succumbing to either the obstacles posed by society or to dependence on the assistance of others. There is general agreement among these three accounts that at least certain parts of Rome's intellectual class occupy a marginal position within Roman society, illustrated spatially through their solitude, as they deal with a variety of obstacles posed by society in their quest to achieve the respect of their peers.

Beyond this common concern with marginalized intellectuals and with their ability to achieve distinction through their own efforts, these portraits of solitary poets and orators provide diverse

perspectives on who is marginalized and on what this means for these estranged individuals. To begin with, the four accounts examined in this chapter differ over which parts, if any, of Rome's intellectual class are affected by these conditions. In the first two accounts of this chapter, Aper and Maternus offer contrasting perspectives on the poet's solitary efforts to achieve distinction, while in its latter two sections, Maternus and Tacitus' friend Pliny offer equally distinct portraits of latter-day advocates in similar circumstances, though Pliny also includes an account of his poetry composition in letter 9.10.

Second, the four accounts examined here exhibit a degree of variation in the precise nature of the cultural imperatives that imperial poets and advocates seek to meet. In his first speech, Aper is concerned with the poet's recognition and recompense in the most immediate material terms. In his second speech, Maternus pictures the modern advocate seeking to produce oratory that will make a substantial impact within his contemporary community, thereby granting him a comparably prominent position within that same community. Somewhat like Maternus' imperial advocate, in letters 1.6 and 9.10, Pliny seeks to gain a prominent position in Roman society through his writing, though his allusive language suggests that he is also concerned with his posthumous reputation as a writer. In his first speech, Maternus focuses on the poet's attainment of the spiritual, literary proxies of status and renown, in the present day and posthumously, which in his idealistic view also afford the poet comparable distinction within his contemporary community.

Third, when viewed together, these conflicting accounts of solitary orators and poets suggest that all practitioners of skilled speech may encounter an array of obstacles, both internal and posed by

society that threaten to impede their pursuit of distinction. In Aper's unflattering portrait of the poet Bassus, the practical-minded public astutely perceives that the poet's eloquence has no socioeconomic value, and so they respond with apathy to the poet's efforts to attract an audience. In his competing portrait of the poet, Maternus portrays public life at Rome as restless and pervaded by conflict, even dangerous. Even when these threats are absent, public life involves responsibilities that impose perpetual disruptions on those who live this way. By contrast, Maternus cites Rome's changed political circumstances under the principate as the primary impediment to the imperial orator's ambition. In the imperial present, society's continued progress towards its moral ideals under the princeps' benevolent control has increasingly removed its need for orators, producing a public apathy towards the orator that allusively resembles the community's indifferent response to the poet in Aper's first speech. Although he allusively likens his own solitary writing practice to these accounts of self-seclusion in the *Dialogus*, Pliny does not demonstrate any comparable estrangement from Roman society, although the alternation of success and difficulty that he experiences while writing alone in Tuscany indicates that solitude is necessary but not sufficient to foster praiseworthy eloquence. Lacking the external obstacles mentioned in the *Dialogus*, Pliny's solitary struggle is with himself. In letter 1.6, the solitude of the Tuscan countryside facilitates great writing; in letter 9.10, it is not enough.

These accounts also offer two contrasting perspectives on nature of this seclusion in relation to the efforts of orators and poets to achieve distinction. The four portraits of secluded eloquence examined here raise the question of whether the solitude that illustrates the personal struggles of these intellectuals reveals a form of autonomy that allows men to reach their goals or whether it

illustrates their dependence on others and their lack of self-sufficiency.⁵⁵⁷ In other words, these accounts of self-seclusion reveal two opposed positions on whether practitioners of eloquence during the imperial period reach their goals through forging ties within society's networks of exchange and obligation, or rather, by disentangling themselves from these same networks. Depending on which position a character takes, solitude either prevents an individual from achieving his goals or frees him to do so.

In Aper's description of the poet and Maternus' account of the imperial orator, practitioners of eloquence achieve distinction through their successful engagement with the community, and so Aper and Maternus' portraits of these figures languishing in physical isolation illustrate their failure to establish the meaningful ties within the community that would help them meet their cultural objectives. Accordingly, in both cases, these figures do not deliberately seek out their solitude any more than they seek out professional failure. Rather, by practising their respective crafts in adverse circumstances, they encounter solitude and concomitant professional disappointment. By contrast, in Maternus' account of the poet, and in Pliny's letter 1.6, retreat to solitude frees the writer to achieve his goals. Unlike Aper's poet and Maternus' imperial advocate, Maternus' poet and Pliny deliberately seek out solitude in the belief that detaching themselves from society will allow them to achieve their goals.⁵⁵⁸

Examining these tendentious portraits of self-seclusion in the *Dialogus* within their broader contexts offers further, more qualified models for how intellectuals may relate to imperial society

⁵⁵⁷ The association of self-seclusion and autonomy also appears in chapter 2 with the Stoic account of retreat into the self.

⁵⁵⁸ Yet, for Pliny, as letter 9.10 illustrates, such solitude is not always enough to inspire the praiseworthy eloquence that Pliny seeks to produce or to make his writing enjoyable.

from a social position that is marginalized in certain respects. In his first speech, Aper's unwitting evocation of Cicero's description of the orator's solitude suggests that for both advocates and poets, hard work in seclusion is essential to professional success with its attendant renown, rather than a sign of a failed career. Should readers of Maternus' portrait of the grove of poetry reflect upon Quintilian's pragmatic assessment of speech-writing in such locations, they will come to a similar conclusion. Both poets and orators require seclusion to compose praiseworthy writing, yet they need the austere isolation of a locked room free from distractions that will facilitate hard work. The narrative arc of Pliny's letters 1.6 and 9.10 suggests much the same: social renunciation and strenuous exertion are necessary to achieve renown as a writer, but this is no guarantee of success.

Such contextual readings also highlight the continued engagement of these intellectuals with Roman society from their relatively marginalized position as writers. In Maternus' first speech, subtle signs of the poet's engagement with conflicts in the world outside while sheltered within his grove symbolize the successful writer's inextricable ties with his social circumstances. Moreover, all the portraits of secluded poets and orators in the *Dialogus* draw attention to Maternus' own poetic activity and to the work's dramatic setting. Maternus courts public attention and incurs the enmity of powerful men through his poetry, composed in his bedroom and performed in recital halls, while the ensuing debate in that same bedroom seeks the lasting fame accorded to its literary models. Suggestive parallels between Aper's portrait of the lonely poet and the dialogue's account of Maternus' poetic activity demonstrate that poets can participate in society from their isolated position as writers rather than being socially irrelevant like Bassus.

Likewise, evocative language in Maternus' first speech and in Messalla's reaction to it leads readers to compare Maternus' idealistic portrait of the isolated grove of poetry to his own behavior in the dialogue, once again confirming the image of successful writing as a socially engaged vocation. In his second speech, parallels between Maternus' portrait of the imperial orator's isolated courtroom and the secluded debate-cum-trial in Maternus' own bedroom offer further support for the notion that the physical detachment of practitioners of skilled speech from society does not necessarily indicate their social irrelevance. Instead, hints that the characters' trial-like discussion in Maternus' bedroom will acquire future fame suggest that to the limited degree that oratory been displaced from the central role that it played in Republican society, cultural pursuits such as declamation and writing offer elites alternative avenues for self-promotion that are compatible with the constraints that elites now operate under in the early empire.

At the same time, these repeated references back to Maternus' poetic activity in the dialogue's dramatic setting also draw attention to an additional obstacle that practitioners of skilled speech may face from society, namely danger from powerful individuals who take offense at what they have heard or read. In the setting of the *Dialogus*, Maternus is dangerously overexposed, for his writing has offended certain powerful men without any justifiable pretext, and the work hints that his end may be near. Writers, such a reading suggests, can make a social impact through their work from their semi-detached position at the edge of society and receive recognition for doing so, yet if their work causes offense, the independent nature of their occupation can subject them to danger that is difficult to handle as an individual.

The accounts of secluded practitioners of eloquence examined in this chapter reflect an interest in whether orators and poets are still able to attain distinction on their own in imperial society in the face of personal and especially social and political obstacles to their professional success. This issue will have had a special saliency to the upper classes at the turn of the second century CE. In the *Dialogus*, Fabius Iustus, Messalla and Maternus take for granted that the status and recognition accorded to orators has declined during the imperial period. As we have seen, while recent scholarship largely contradicts their hyperbolic claims, there were a number of undesirable changes to the social prospects for advocates under the empire. Likewise, literary accounts from this period sometimes illustrate writers' concern over whether they can still assemble an adequate audience for a recital or make an independent living from their writing without the humiliations endemic in dependence on a patron, whether he is the emperor or an aristocrat.⁵⁵⁹

Moreover, the flight from public life of both Maternus and the poet that he describes, as well as the danger that Maternus himself incurs from his controversial tragedies have been read as understated references to the threats that writers faced under the empire if they exercised free speech without restraint, both at the dramatic and compositional dates of the *Dialogus*. Scholars have variously postulated references to the hostility of Vespasian, Domitian or certain *delatores* during the 70s, and through them, indirect critiques of Nerva, Trajan or certain *delatores* during the post-Domitianic period, though Tacitus' ambiguous wording leaves the precise origin of these

⁵⁵⁹ Uden (2015) 88-104, argues for a decline in the practice and the importance of recitals of Latin literature at about this time, concomitant with increased enthusiasm for Greek intellectual culture at Rome. On the stereotype of the poor poet in imperial poetry, see e.g. Markus (2000) 171-75.

threats to the writer unclear.⁵⁶⁰ At all events, many Roman writers during the imperial period evince anxiety over how to avoid offending the emperor and other powerful individuals while continuing to compose work that would resonate with their readership.⁵⁶¹

These excerpts from Tacitus' *Dialogus* and from Pliny's *Letters* offer a discordant array of perspectives on the independence of orators and poets during the early imperial period. Examined together, however, these portraits of secluded practitioners of eloquence reveal a recurring sentiment that at least for some, attaining status and reputation through the mastery of skilled speech is an arduous process that pits them as individuals against an unsympathetic, or even hostile society. Whether he is destined for success or failure, these accounts suggest, each individual must face these obstacles on his own.

CHAPTER 5: THE SOLITARY EMPEROR. THE SECLUSION OF TIBERIUS AND DOMITIAN

Introduction

⁵⁶⁰ For an influential historicist reading of Maternus' situation, see Bartsch (1994) 98-125. Gallia (2009) argues that the powerful men who threaten Maternus are *delatores*, not the emperor; van den Berg (2014) 158n90, responds that the precise nature of the threat remains unclear. See further references on the threat to Maternus at note 433.

⁵⁶¹ See e.g. Baltussen and Davis (2015) 115-208.

Like the upper classes, the emperors of the early principate sometimes sought solitude and seclusion from others.⁵⁶² Augustus provided a precedent, retreating to a lofty secluded tower or to a freedman's suburban estate whenever he wanted to do something in privacy without any interruption (Suet. *Aug.* 72.2), and Seneca reports (*Brev.* 4.2-4) that Augustus often longed to retire from public life to leisure, in order to "live for himself" (4.3 *se uicturum sibi*).⁵⁶³ Likewise, Suetonius relates that when Rome's first emperor was sick, he withdrew to Maecenas' gardens at the edge of the city, and that he was fond of escaping business in the City by retreating to the towns of Latium, coastal areas and the islands off the Bay of Naples (Suet. *Aug.* 72.2).⁵⁶⁴ In these excursions out of Rome, the emperor was able to avoid the urban crowds and the élite as a whole, yet some of his intimate retinue likely accompanied him wherever he went.⁵⁶⁵

Such imperial residences, however, sometimes afforded seclusion from this retinue as well. At Hadrian's sprawling villa complex at Tivoli, for example, the emperor had an island-like 35-room annex known as the 'Island Enclosure' devoted to his personal use that was separated from the rest of his residence by a circular canal, accessed by two retractable drawbridges, and an encircling outer wall that blocked almost all view of the world outside the enclosure.⁵⁶⁶ Presumably, Hadrian employed this secluded space as a place for rest and relaxation in privacy

⁵⁶² For imperial retreats, see Millar (1977) 24-28, Hollard (2009), and Gowers (2010) 85-86.

⁵⁶³ While Augustus' desire for leisure does not suggest that he is alienated from civic society, his yearning to 'live for himself' in Seneca's telling may evoke the philosopher's description of the Stoic sage (*Ep.* 55.4 *Ille solus scit sibi vivere*), who possesses a self-sufficiency that the multitude ignorantly ascribes to the recluse Vatia (Williams (2003) 139). The Stoic wise man gains this autonomy, we recall, by withdrawing into himself, and thus Augustus' hoped-for retirement in Seneca hints at his declining opinion of public life.

⁵⁶⁴ See further discussion of this passage of Suetonius at pg. 13. Hollard (2009) 231-34, and Gowers (2010) 85, suggest that Augustus' retreats form a precedent for subsequent emperors.

⁵⁶⁵ E.g. Paterson (2007) 143.

⁵⁶⁶ The Island's plan has no space for servants or their activities. On the Island Enclosure, also known as the 'Maritime Theatre', see MacDonald and Pinto (1995) 81-94.

and for doing what he wanted without unwelcome interruptions, much as Augustus used his isolated tower in Rome. While the reclusive behaviour of Augustus, Hadrian and the other emperors of the early principate within or beyond Rome was no doubt often associated with these and a variety of similar explanations, at times their solitary behaviour was interpreted as evidence of their social detachment from others, particularly from civic society at Rome.

This chapter examines the significance of the reclusive behaviour of Tiberius and Domitian, two emperors whose renowned preference for solitude is often associated by historical sources with their detachment from Rome's political community.⁵⁶⁷ Representations of their physical and metaphorical solitude in a variety of literary sources largely written after their deaths show how this self-isolation contributes to their characterization as distant and often as estranged from civic society, from the senate in particular. This chapter thus analyzes surviving literary representations of Tiberius and Domitian's isolation and the social contexts that imperial authors use to make sense of their reclusive behaviour, including numerous instances when imperial writers use spatialized language to suggest that these emperors are socially detached from their fellow citizens even if they happen to share their physical presence. Yet, when these accounts are juxtaposed with a broader literary and historical context, it becomes clear that from a less ideologically charged perspective, Tiberius and Domitian were not as physically secluded from others as imperial authors sometimes assert, which foregrounds the constructed, socially meaningful nature of these portraits of imperial isolation.

⁵⁶⁷ Tacitus' experience of Domitian colours his portrait of Tiberius, resulting in parallels between his accounts of the two emperors (Walker (1960) 82-137, 204-18). For historical parallels between the two emperors, see Suet. *Dom.* 20.1 with Jones (1996) 145.

Statius, Suetonius, Pliny and Tacitus often use the physical seclusion of Tiberius and Domitian to express the detachment of the two emperors from Rome's political community. Conversely, these authors sometimes employ figurative language to describe the emperor's separation from civic society in ways that liken his solitary social stance to a form of spatialized self-concealment, whereby his essential nature and authentic feelings are secluded from those around him. While authors writing after Domitian portray the reclusive behaviour of the two emperors as emblematic of their identity as tyrants who hold society at a hostile distance, Statius' adulatory account of the emperor Domitian instead associates his reclusive and inaccessible persona with his status as a quasi-divine emperor who is celestially detached from the lives of his mortal subjects.⁵⁶⁸ In most accounts, however, that associate their self-seclusion with tyranny, the reclusive behaviour of the two emperors represents a defensive turn inwards to the self that rejects society as an adversary. At the same time, this inward turn is often accompanied by an intense outward-facing surveillance that prefigures a later eruption of verbal or physical violence outwards against the political community, leading to sundered relationships and death.⁵⁶⁹ Beyond these individual outcomes, the emperor's self-concealment and its menace of future aggression atomize civil society, driving each man into his own personal solitude.

1. The Ideal of the Accessible Emperor

The association between the emperor's physical and visual accessibility and his harmonious relationship with civic society during the early imperial period characterizes imperial reclusiveness as a socially marked form of behaviour that suggested to some that the emperor did

⁵⁶⁸ On Domitian's divinity in the *Silvae*, see Seager (2010) 342-49.

⁵⁶⁹ On the emperor as unwatched watcher of the aristocracy, see Frederick (2003).

not have a meaningful relationship with his citizen subjects.⁵⁷⁰ Due to the immense power vested in his person, the emperor's presence and visibility, or the lack thereof, always had a political significance, both in public and formal settings as well as in more relaxed and intimate circumstances. The emperor's mere presence at an event conferred legitimacy on it and on the other participants, and the most likely way of obtaining a favourable interaction with him was by acquiring his personal attention, whether the setting was formal or otherwise.⁵⁷¹

These considerations rendered the emperor unavoidably prominent in any social setting.⁵⁷² In his panegyric of 100 that praises the emperor Trajan in idealizing terms, Pliny gives rhetorically amplified voice to this sentiment through spatializing language that expresses the obstacles that impede an emperor from obtaining seclusion from others. An elevated status like Trajan's, he says, permits nothing to be concealed: "yes, it opens up not merely emperors' households but their very bedrooms and their innermost hideaways (*cubicula ipsa intimosque secessus recludit*), it sets forth and displays every secret as an object of common knowledge" (*Pan.* 83.1).

When the emperor accepted his prominence by making himself accessible to his citizen-subjects, especially to the élite, he validated the role of the civic community as a source of moral value and of his own legitimacy. Rome's traditional ethical discourse considered moral value to be an attribute acquired by the approbation of one's peers. Through his accessibility, the emperor facilitated interactions in a wide variety of social settings where his subjects could affirm his

⁵⁷⁰ On the ideal of imperial accessibility, see Wallace-Hadrill (1982) 35, 42, Roche (2011) 60-64, Wilkinson (2012) 148-50, and Tuori (2017) 458 s.v. access, accessibility. Praise of a monarch's accessibility was a rhetorical topos (Menand. Rhet. 375.10).

⁵⁷¹ On the latter point, cf. Eck (2002) 212.

⁵⁷² On the emperor's prominence, see Fertik (2015). See also [Ov.] *Consol. Liv. Aug.* 351-52, Sen. *Clem.* 1.8.1-5.

superior status through their respectful behaviour, an action that simultaneously confirmed their role as the source of the emperor's legitimacy.⁵⁷³

At the same time, these mutually legitimating encounters facilitated by the emperor's accessibility also fulfilled the ideal of imperial *civilitas* 'civility', a virtue that describes the emperor's restraint of his overwhelming power as he interacted in a friendly and respectful manner with the upper classes and the Roman people as a whole.⁵⁷⁴ Through such behaviour, the emperor presented himself, however speciously, as a citizen among citizens. As Pliny says of Trajan, through his self-presentation as a citizen and a father (i.e. of his country), "he deems himself one of us - and he is more excellent and distinguished for thinking so" (*Pan.* 2.3-4 *Vnum ille se ex nobis – et hoc magis excellit atque eminet, quod unum ex nobis putat*).⁵⁷⁵ While Trajan and the other emperors of the early principate were clearly no ordinary citizens, this self-presentation nevertheless communicated that their superior power and status were symbolically based on the social order that they presided over.

Several times Pliny illustrates how Trajan fulfills these ideals by his close physical proximity to his subjects.⁵⁷⁶ In public, Trajan freely mingles with crowds, and individuals can approach and take their leave of him as they wish.⁵⁷⁷ When he watches the games (*Pan.* 51.4), he shares an equal place with the plebs and the public has a view of him there, not merely of his box. At home

⁵⁷³ See Roller (2001) 20-22. On this issue in the *Panegyricus*, see Connolly (2009) 271-72.

⁵⁷⁴ For the emperor as citizen, see Wallace-Hadrill (1982).

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. similar sentiment and wording ('one of us') at *Pan.* 63.2.

⁵⁷⁶ Seneca likewise describes the good ruler as "approachable and accessible" (*Clem.* 1.13.4 *aditu accessuque facilis*).

⁵⁷⁷ *Pan.* 23.2-3, 24.3-5, 76.7-9.

on the Palatine, Trajan has rendered the palace more public than the Capitolium.⁵⁷⁸ No forum or temple is so "unbarred" (*Pan.* 47.5 *reserata*). Within, the emperor is accessible to visitors for large parts of the day, and in consequence of his benevolence, the nobility gladly seek him out there and linger as if it were their common home (48.3 *ut in communi domo*).⁵⁷⁹ Trajan's accessibility extends to his leisure hours when he draws out many an evening in a sociable banquet (*Pan.* 49.4-5) and even his sleep is brief, for the emperor cannot bear to be away from his fellow citizens for too long (*Pan.* 49.8).

Romans could also conceive of other instances of imperial civility as a figurative form of accessibility.⁵⁸⁰ Pliny portrays Trajan's goodwill for senators with spatialized language that stresses the absence of figurative barriers between the manifestations of this attitude in his demeanour and the feelings that he holds in his mind. Pliny states that he believes Trajan's encouragement of the senators to exercise free speech not simply because of the emperor's words but also due to the earnest, guileless way that he delivered them, concluding, "what affirmation on his face, what great credibility in his eyes, demeanour, gesture, in short, in his entire body!" (*Pan.* 67.1 *quae adfirmatio in uultu, quanta in oculis habitu gestu, toto denique corpore fides!*)⁵⁸¹ The emperor's figurative and physical accessibility to his fellow citizens telegraphs his close affiliation with civic society at Rome.

⁵⁷⁸ Upon taking power, Nerva had sought to harness the positive associations of accessibility by renaming the palace a 'public house' (*Pan.* 47.4, ILS 9358 *publicae aedes*).

⁵⁷⁹ On prompt admission, see also *Pan.* 79.6. On the accessibility of the Palatium under Trajan, see Roche (2011) 60-61.

⁵⁸⁰ See [Quint.] *Comment. pet.* 44 for an illustrative parallel between the desirability of physical and figurative social accessibility in a political context, albeit dating to the late-Republic. For the ancient habit of treating physical demeanour as a sign of character, see Evans (1969), esp. 22-24.

⁵⁸¹ A similar correspondence between Trajan's visible emotions and his internal feelings at *Pan.* 73.4, 75.6.

In light of these considerations, when the emperor was seen as reclusive and inaccessible, this excited curiosity and suspicion, leading some to believe that he did not view Rome's political community as the source of his legitimacy and authority and that in a functional sense, the emperor was not a participating member of civic society.⁵⁸² These interpretations of the emperor's detachment from Rome's political community point in one of two directions. The emperor is either a tyrant or a sacrosanct absolute ruler, or to redeploy Aristotle's characterization of the politically disengaged in general (*Pol.* 1253a), he is either a beast or a god, a dichotomy of some salience for the following sections of this chapter. Conversely, given the conceptual associations between seclusion and estrangement explored in chapter 1, the belief that the emperor was socially detached from his citizen-subjects leads some authors to represent him in a state of solitude.

2. Imperial Interiority

A well-known feature of the literary representations of Tiberius and Domitian composed after their deaths is their propensity for secretiveness and dissimulation. Tacitus, for instance, reports that "Tiberius cherished none of his talents - as he deemed them - as much as dissimulation" (*Ann.* 4.71.2) while Cassius Dio introduces his portrait of Domitian by describing him as treacherous and dissembling (67.1.1). At times, these accounts of the two emperors' propensity for deception employ figurative language that likens their dissimulation to a form of spatialized self-concealment, whereby the emperor in question has secluded his true feelings within an inner self-space that is inaccessible to his interlocutors. This act may be read favorably, as a sign of his god-like remoteness, or critically, as an inversion of the wise man's inner retreat (see chs. 2-3).

⁵⁸² Witness the profusion of speculation occasioned by Tiberius' withdrawal to Capri in 26 (*Tac. Ann.* 4.57). The same dynamic applied to reclusive behaviour by aristocrats (*Sen. Ep.* 68.4-5).

In these passages, the emperor is often portrayed as concealing his authentic feelings within himself with language used elsewhere of physical concealment, a technique that reconfigures the emperor's ostensibly unobjectionable behaviour and demeanour as merely a deceptive facade. For instance, at the first meeting of the senate after Augustus' death in 14, Tiberius expresses his diffidence about accepting sole command over the empire, a sentiment which Tacitus derides as insincere. The historian observes that Tiberius was obscure even when he was not trying to conceal things, yet when, as here, he was "striving to hide away his (true) feelings deep down" (*Ann.* 1.11.2 *nitenti ut sensus suos penitus abderet*) he created an extra degree of uncertainty and ambiguity. The senators perceive his insincerity, but fear being seen to understand, for as the equestrian Marcus Terentius says in a senate speech in 32 shortly after Sejanus' fall, "it is hazardous (and) impermissible to search out the feelings that the princeps has hidden away (*abditos...sensus*), and his yet more concealed (*occultius*) plans" (*Ann.* 6.8.4.)⁵⁸³ In these passages, Tacitus employs the verb *abdere* 'to place out of sight, conceal' to create an image of Tiberius figuratively burying his feelings deep within himself, a self-location that he attempts to render inaccessible to other members of the political community through the implied threat of retaliation if he perceives others drawing near.⁵⁸⁴

Associating the emperor's social distance with his figurative self-concealment does not always yield such unflattering imperial portraits. In *Silvae* 4.2, Statius recounts his presence at a banquet in the Palatium where he is astonished at the opportunity to share Domitian's company in such informal circumstances: "Is it permitted to look at this face from near at hand, amidst wine and

⁵⁸³ For another image of Tiberius' dissimulation as figurative concealment, see *Ann.* 4.71.3.

⁵⁸⁴ For a similar figurative use of *abdere* applied to Tiberius, see *Ann.* 3.64.2. Tacitus employs this verb elsewhere when describing the physical withdrawals of L. Piso (*Ann.* 2.34.1) and of Tiberius himself (*Ann.* 4.67.1).

tables, and is it permissible for me not to rise?" (*Silv.* 4.2.16-17 *datur haec iuxta, datur ora tueri vina inter mensasque, et non assurgere fas est?*). While Statius waxes eloquent about the luxurious architecture of the emperor's new palace, these elements fail to hold his attention: "There was only time for me to gaze eagerly on him, only him, tranquil in countenance yet, softening his radiance with his serene majesty and modestly lowering the banners of his station; nevertheless, his concealed dignity shone on his face" (*Silv.* 4.2.40-44). In these passages, Domitian appears as a remote, semi-divine figure. Even though he is surrounded by a crowd of banqueters, he is not portrayed as speaking to others or as doing anything at all. He is only the object of Statius' quasi-religious veneration.⁵⁸⁵ Statius' astonishment at his physical proximity to the emperor draws its effect from its tension with the godlike Domitian's detachment from his subjects. It is abnormal, our poet implies, to come so near to such a sublime monarch.

Statius' allusive language in the first passage quoted above (*Silv.* 4.2.16-17) underscores this effect. The poet's wonder at the opportunity to gaze at the emperor from near at hand recalls the dead Anchises' astonishment in the *Aeneid* at seeing Aeneas close at hand in the Underworld: "Is it permitted to look at your face, son, and to hear your familiar voice and to reply?" (*Aen.* 6.688-89 *datur ora tueri, nate, tua et notas audire et reddere uoces?*). As Malamud argues, this touching Vergilian reunion highlights Domitian's distance from those around him, for Anchises' exclamation leads to the reciprocal, heartfelt interaction of father and son, while Statius gazes at and addresses the emperor yet receives no response.⁵⁸⁶ When viewed within the larger context of the two men's meeting in the Underworld, however, this Vergilian allusion also clarifies

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. Newlands (2002) 272, 274, 280. See also Newlands (2002) 234, (2003) 503, 508, on the concept of 'privileged visibility' in *Silv.* 1.6 (see next section), also applicable to this poem, according to which the ruler allows himself to be seen in a communal setting by his subjects, but only at a distance that preserves his reverence.

⁵⁸⁶ Malamud (2007) 231-32.

Domitian's isolation through similarity as well, not simply through contrast, for much as the incorporeal Anchises escapes Aeneas' grasp three times when he attempts to embrace his father (*Aen.* 6.700-2), Domitian is elusive, never fully revealing himself to Statius' scrutiny.⁵⁸⁷

Statius' figurative language in the second passage quoted above confirms this reading, likening Domitian's famously ruddy face to a form of celestial self-concealment. The godlike emperor, our poet implies, has condescended to associate with his mortal subjects at a banquet and, to this end, has attempted to suppress the visual signs of his divinity within himself. This attempt, however, is not wholly successful, for his godlike dignity shines out from its inner space of concealment, producing his rosy complexion and signalling his social detachment from his fellow banqueters, as noted above. The first direct view of Domitian in the *Silvae*, therefore, brings readers close to the emperor, only to reveal how remote and inaccessible he is to his subjects as a quasi-divine figure.

In the more numerous accounts of hostile writers, these acts of self-concealment often create a site of psychic security from which the emperor can scrutinize the latent feelings of those around him and attack them if he chooses. Tacitus observes that in the period immediately after the death of Augustus in 14, Tiberius did not present himself as the emperor so that he could appear to have been chosen by the nation rather than by inheritance. Yet, he continues, "afterwards, it was learned that his hesitation had been put on in order to peer into the inclinations of the leading men, for he stored away their words and impressions, twisting them into an accusation," (*Ann.*

⁵⁸⁷ Statius' hymnic three-fold invocation of the emperor as *te* (14-15) may recall Aeneas' threefold attempt to embrace his father, a motif that "stands as a major element in V[ergil]'s representation of Aen[eas] as a lonely and isolated figure" (Horsfall (2013) 474). Such a reading shifts Domitian's Vergilian exemplar from Aeneas to

1.7.7 *postea cognitum est ad introspiciendas etiam procerum voluntates inductam dubitationem: nam verba vultus in crimen detorquens recondebat.*) Here, Tacitus employs vestimentary imagery with *inductam* to portray Tiberius as 'clothing himself' in hesitation, an unthreatening facade that permits him to ascertain the senators' real feelings about the succession, figuratively spying on the private sentiments they carry within themselves.⁵⁸⁸ In turn, unobserved, Tiberius stores his observations away deep within his memory, maliciously misinterpreting them as hostile, with the implication that they will re-emerge someday in the form of imperial persecution.⁵⁸⁹

At times, this inner retreat and its concomitant surveillance of others lead to this implied result, namely an unpredictable eruption of savagery on the emperor's subjects. In his first discussion of Tiberius' character in the *Annales*, Tacitus describes how people compared Tiberius' character to that of his stepbrother Agrippa Postumus as they contemplated who would succeed the elderly Augustus. Tiberius, they felt, had an appropriate age and experience in war, but he had his family's haughty air, "and many signs of savagery, though they were repressed, burst out" (*Ann.* 1.4.3 *indicia saevitiae quamquam premantur, erumpere*). Indeed, in Tacitus' obituary of Tiberius (*Ann.* 6.51.3), the historian figures his progressive and increasingly pronounced moral decline as a gradual eruption.⁵⁹⁰ Distinguished in lifestyle while a private citizen, Tiberius was concealed

Anchises and returns Statius from his role as an Anchises-figure in the allusion just examined back to his position as a latter-day Aeneas as he characterizes himself at the beginning of the poem (4.2.1-2).

⁵⁸⁸ On the vestimentary image here, cf. O'Gorman (2000) 86. For the present section, see also O'Gorman pgs. 78-91.

⁵⁸⁹ Tacitus also uses the verb *recondere* while describing Tiberius' fondness for seclusion during his retreat to Rhodes, when he avoided assemblies and 'hid away' (*Ann.* 4.57.2 *recondere*) his pleasures.

⁵⁹⁰ This formulation follows Woodman's interpretation of Tiberius' obituary as commemorating a progressive decline in Tiberius' character, rather than as gradually unveiling a static nature that had been there all along. No matter the interpretation, Tiberius' worsening behaviour is figured as an eruption. See Woodman (1998a), defended at (2017) 290-93.

and devious and attempted to disguise his vices through much of his reign (*occultum ac subdolum...obtectis libidinibus*), but once all his closest associates had died, "he finally erupted into wicked and disgraceful deeds" (*postremo in scelera simul ac dedecora prorupit*).⁵⁹¹

On rare occasions, Tiberius allows his private feelings to emerge in a prudent manner, yet these exceptions only prove the rule. When Tiberius reacts to a mutiny in Pannonia in 14 by dispatching Drusus at the head of a detachment of troops, Tacitus characterizes this action as a rare exception for an emperor who was otherwise "cloistered and prone to conceal all the grimmest matters" (*Ann. 1.24.1 abstrusum et tristissima quaeque maxime occultantem Tiberium*). Here, Tacitus expresses Tiberius' habitual suppression of his feelings with a bold, figurative application of the past participle *abstrusus* 'concealed from view, secluded', "whose form," as Walker observes, "suggests a violent action thrusting him away from his fellows."⁵⁹²

More frequently, however, the emperor sequesters his feelings for a time, only to reproduce them much later with deadly consequence. When Agrippina behaves like a man and a military leader on the Rhine frontier, this behaviour "penetrated unusually deeply into Tiberius' mind" (1.69.3 *id Tiberii animum altius penetravit*) offending him. Sejanus exacerbates the situation, for "[he] was inflaming and heaping up these feelings, through his familiarity with Tiberius' character sowing hatreds for the distant future, which (i.e. Tiberius) would stow away and bring out when grown (*quae reconderet auctaque promeret*)" (*Ann. 1.69.5*). Here, Tacitus figures Sejanus as sowing Tiberius with seeds of hatred for his daughter-in-law. Once implanted, Tiberius is to conceal

⁵⁹¹ For the concealment of Tiberius' anger with harmful results or with the threat of future harm, including looming eruption, see also *Ann. 2.28.2, 4.21.1, 4.72.3*.

⁵⁹² Walker (1960) 63. Tacitus employs this same verb to describe physical self-concealment at *Ann. 4.69.1*.

these malignant feelings from others until they germinate in the form of increasingly blatant displays of hostility.⁵⁹³

Tacitus also invests Domitian with a similar sort of inaccessible interiority that harbours his malevolent feelings until they eventually erupt. Upon Agricola's successful campaigns in Britain, Tacitus writes that Domitian learned of these things, "as was his custom, with a glad countenance but an anxious heart" (*Agr.* 39.2), for he recognizes that Agricola's superlative reputation as a general is an implicit challenge to his own authority. In response to these concerns, Tacitus writes that Domitian "decide[s] that it is best for the moment to store away his hatred until the onslaught of Agricola's fame and the favour of the army would go into remission (*Agr.* 39.4 *optimum in praesentia statuit reponere odium, donec impetus famae et favor exercitus languesceret*), using phrasing with medical undertones that suggests that the brooding, Juno-like Domitian is sick from a plague of Agricola's fame, and that his decision to store the offense away deep within himself preserves the essence of this moral malady.⁵⁹⁴ Domitian conceals this sickly hatred within himself in his subsequent interactions with Agricola, first in a meeting in the Palatine palace upon Agricola's return to Rome (*Agr.* 40.3), whose brevity and secrecy betrays the insincerity of Domitian's goodwill, and second, in a mendacious interview several years later where the terrified Agricola is forced to beg off candidacy for a coveted proconsular command before the emperor, who is "prepared for simulation and composed with a presumptuous air"

⁵⁹³ Tiberius secures Agrippina's exile to Pandateria in 29, where she dies in 33.

⁵⁹⁴ Tacitus' description of Domitian here reechoes Vergil's portrait of the seething Juno at the start of the *Aeneid*, when the accumulated offenses of Paris and Jupiter "remain stored away, deep in her mind" (*Aen.* 1.26 *manet alta mente repostum*). Domitian's brooding interiority thus likens him to a figure whose rage opposes her to Rome's very foundation, and surely plays on Domitian's self-identification with Jupiter, on which, see Fears (1981). For medical language at *Agr.* 39.4, see Woodman (2014) 288.

(Agr. 42.2). At last, however, Domitian's concealed, disease-like hatred erupts in physical form when rumour reports that he sickens and kills Agricola by poison (Agr. 43).

All the same, Tacitus consoles himself, Agricola died before the nadir of Domitian's reign, in which he describes the emperor's persecution of the aristocracy in terms of gory military combat (Agr. 44.2-45.1). Unlike even Nero, the historian continues, Domitian insisted on watching his crimes in person, occasions "when his cruel, famously ruddy complexion allowed him to make a close observation of so many men's pallid reactions, a complexion that he used to fortify himself against (i.e. evidence of) shame (*quo se contra pudorem muniebat.*)" (Agr. 45.2) Domitian's red face is figured as a fortified barrier that blocks any evidence of shame at his outrages from escaping the confines of his conscience and from subsequently manifesting on his face through blushing, for his naturally ruddy complexion leaves it unclear when, if ever, his rosy hue reflects remorse.⁵⁹⁵ In turn, Domitian's fortified countenance grants him the psychic security to surveil the senators, to see if any of them blanch at his attacks on their colleagues.

Tacitus also likens Tiberius' inscrutable appearance to a fortress. In 20, the senator Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso is brought up in the senate on charges of raising a rebellion in Syria and of poisoning Germanicus. The trial captures the attention of the whole City, who wonder how the defendant and plaintiffs will conduct themselves and whether "Tiberius [will] sufficiently constrain and suppress his feelings" (Ann. 3.11.2 *satin cohiberet ac premeret sensus suos Tiberius.*). Later in the trial, Piso recognizes his declining chances for acquittal and hesitates whether to proceed with the trial. When he decides to continue and re-enters the senate, he

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. La Penna (1975).

encounters the senators' ferocious hostility, but "nothing terrified him more than the sight of Tiberius without pity, without anger, steadfast and barricaded against being breached by some powerful emotion (*Tiberium...obstinatum clausumque...ne quo adfectu perrumperetur*)" (*Ann.* 3.15.2).

The language of this scene likens Tiberius' guarded and impassive demeanour to a military stronghold, barricaded against an enemy irruption, a threat that represents the impassioned appeals that Piso and perhaps his allies hope to make.⁵⁹⁶ Tacitus' description of Tiberius as *obstinatum* 'steadfast' evokes Tiberius' ears, indicating that they are figuratively closed to any emotional appeals that seek to penetrate them. The language likening Tiberius' physical disposition to a barricaded fortress thus suggests that he is under sentimental siege by Piso and his associates, who will not be able to get through to Tiberius with an emotional appeal. In turn, just as with the image of Domitian examined above, Tiberius' inner defenses also hide away his real feelings from others, whether this is his resentment at Piso for stirring up civil war in Syria (*Ann.* 3.14.3) or guilt for opposing Piso to Germanicus, as was rumoured (*Ann.* 3.16.1, *Suet. Tib.* 52.3). Tiberius' inward retreat behind his social defenses thus makes normal interaction with others impossible, for no one else can reliably discern his feelings and he is emotionally unresponsive when others attempt to communicate with him.⁵⁹⁷ Even in the midst of the senate, Tiberius is alone.

⁵⁹⁶ For *claudere* and *perrumpere* in the context of a military siege, see TLL 3.0.1307.18-68, 10.1.1666.59-70. Pace Woodman and Martin (1996) 166-67, I contend that the aural associations that they discover in *obstinatum* do not prevent a military metaphor here but instead direct readers to apply the image of the military stronghold to Tiberius' guarded physical mien.

⁵⁹⁷ O'Gorman (2000) 83. Suetonius describes Tiberius as "generally silent, never or very rarely making conversation, even with his intimates" (*Tib.* 68.3).

These images of depraved psychic self-concealment cast Tiberius and Domitian as a sort of anti-sage, opposed in a general way to the image of the Stoic wise man who withdraws into himself (ch. 2). Such imagery in Tacitus appears broadly moralizing in nature rather than particularly Stoic, perhaps a function of the widespread influence of this philosophy on the attitudes of Rome's upper classes beyond those few who were Stoic adherents.⁵⁹⁸ As a result, some of these metaphorical portraits of imperial self-concealment broadly characterize the two reclusive emperors as moral abominations in figurative terms generally reminiscent of an ethical system familiar to many Roman readers.

Philosophy forms an explicit subtext in at least one of the instances of reclusive interiority addressed in this section. When Tacitus speculates that opening up the mind of a tyrant like Tiberius would yield a dreadful sight of inner torment, the historian credits his observation to "the most excellent man in wisdom" (*Ann.* 6.6.2), a reference to Plato's description (*Rep.* 579d-e, *Gorg.* 524e-25a) of the impact of immoral behavior on a man's soul, especially that of a tyrant.⁵⁹⁹ It will also be useful to recall here from chapter 2 how Stoic authors write that solitude, whether spiritual or physical, can be harmful to men who lack moral attainment because the absence of external observers, even ignorant ones, places no external impediment on immoral behaviour. Here, we may also remember how Epictetus (*Diss.* 4.1.85-88) advises that his readers deal with the fear induced by a Domitian-like tyrant not by sacking that ruler's physical fortress, but by conquering their own inner spiritual citadels, which are tyrannically occupied by emotions such as fear and over-attachment to the people and things that the tyrant can take away and destroy.⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁸ On the influence of Stoicism during the principate, see Brunt (1975).

⁵⁹⁹ Woodman (2017) 113-14.

⁶⁰⁰ See pgs. 47-48 and 77-78.

These Stoic authors thus illustrate solitude's harmfully symbiotic relationship with moral depravity while Epictetus' advice in particular draws a parallel between the tyrant's fortress and a soul that is ruled by erroneous value judgements.

A similar dynamic animates these portraits of Tiberius and Domitian. In the passages examined above, the two emperors metaphorically seclude themselves, thrusting their feelings into an inner psychic space that they intend to be inaccessible. This self-concealment marks their estrangement from those around them. It impedes their authentic communication, preventing their subjects from understanding their real disposition and thus from being able to influence it.⁶⁰¹ On occasion, when others understand the emperor's intentions despite his efforts, communication is nevertheless impeded, for they perceive his desire to detach himself from them socially and the danger for them if they reveal their knowledge or attempt to probe his feelings.⁶⁰² The emperor thus keeps potential interlocutors at a social distance, and privately fosters his anger and resentment without their interference.

Likewise, much as Stoic authors sometimes compare the well and badly managed soul to a fortress, Tacitus portrays both Tiberius (*Ann.* 3.15.2) and Domitian (*Agr.* 45.2) barricaded within their respective psychic strongholds. In these two passages, the emperors harbour mistaken and malevolent value judgements behind their fortified exteriors, just as Epictetus likens the mismanaged soul to a tyrant's citadel. Likewise, both Tiberius and Domitian have a defensive stance towards the world around them, much like the Stoic man in his spiritual stronghold, albeit due to motivations that Tacitus clearly characterizes as abhorrent. Tiberius is determined to avoid

⁶⁰¹ Cf. O'Gorman (2000) 80.

⁶⁰² Cf. *Ann.* 1.11.2, 4.71.3, 6.8.4, discussed above.

being 'breached' by an emotional appeal from Piso, while Domitian fortifies himself with his ruddy face to prevent any evidence of shame at his persecution of the senate from escaping his conscience in the form of a blush. Neither emperor is receptive to the plight of the men before him.

Yet, further extending this inverse parallel with philosophy, the psychic security that each emperor finds from hiding within himself also has a latent potential for fostering verbal or physical violence. While the Stoic sage stays secluded within his psychic citadel, these two emperors use their emotional self-concealment to silently inspect their associates and erupt with fearful savagery when impulse or a long-held plan urges them on. These psychic withdrawals thus characterize Tiberius and Domitian as tyrannical anti-sages. They retreat into themselves to cherish false and harmful value judgements, not to connect spiritually with a kindred community of reason, but to wallow alone in their resentments and self-torment until they lash out at those around them.

For Tacitus, this behaviour has a similar function to physical self-seclusion. When Tiberius writes a letter to the senate from Capri in 32 complaining about accusations against a friend, Tacitus darkly interprets the agitated opening of the letter as evidence of inner torment produced by his crimes, adding "If the minds of tyrants should be opened up (*recludantur*), lacerations and blows would be visible, since just as bodies are torn apart by scourgings, so is the soul by savagery, lust and wicked plans" (*Ann.* 6.6.2). Tacitus' phrasing here once again evokes the image of Tiberius' soul as a secluded space, for his hypothesis about opening it up presupposes

that it is normally closed and inaccessible.⁶⁰³ Tacitus then concludes his interpretation, writing "neither his station in life nor his solitudes protected Tiberius from acknowledging the torments of his heart and his own punishments" (*Ann.* 6.6.2 *Tiberium non fortuna, non solitudines protegebant quin tormenta pectoris suasque ipse poenas fateretur*). In this passage, Tacitus implies that both Tiberius' closed mind and his physical solitude normally function as obstacles to authentic communication with the senate; both reveal his alienation from them. Yet at the same time, as he states here, both of these impediments failed to prevent Tiberius in this instance from inadvertently revealing what he was trying to hide, namely his inner depravity and the torment that he suffers as a result.

Indeed, there is a degree of continuity between these two strategies for self-concealment in Tacitus' narrative, illustrating how the emperor could resort to physical retreat when an inward withdrawal failed to distance himself sufficiently from others. When Germanicus' body is returned to Rome in 20, Tacitus writes that everyone was aware that Tiberius was happy that his stepson had died and further notes that Tiberius and his mother did not appear in public at this time. Perhaps, he continues, they thought it beneath their dignity to lament openly. The historian then adds in a weighted and pejorative alternative, "or it was out of concern that when everyone's eyes scrutinized their expression, they would be understood as false (i.e. in their lamentation)" (*Ann.* 3.3.1 *an ne omnium oculis vultum eorum scrutantibus falsi intellegerentur*.) According to this latter interpretation, Tiberius and - here uncharacteristically - Augusta contemplate

⁶⁰³ As Woodman (2017) 113, points out, Tacitus' phrase *recludantur...mentes* likely recalls the programmatic opening of Silius' *Punica*, when the poet declares his intention to lay bare the anger and hatred that the Romans and Carthaginians bore towards each other and to thereby "open the minds of heaven" (1.19 *superasque recludere mentes*). Such an echo likens the savagery in Tiberius' mind to the deep animosity that each empire held towards its foreign foe.

appearing in public while concealing their real feelings within themselves, yet they intuit that such an emotional withdrawal will be transparent and so they absent themselves physically.⁶⁰⁴

3. *Domitian at Rome and Environs*

Just as many instances of the two emperors' figurative self-concealment examined in the last section occur at Rome, their physical seclusion in the City and its environs is sometimes associated with their estrangement from civic society, with these latter accounts focusing predominantly on Domitian and his seclusion in the imperial palace on the Palatine. At times, however, other places in Rome and its vicinity besides the palace were also associated with Domitian's reclusive behaviour.

Midway through his *Panegyricus*, Pliny uses Domitian's withdrawal to a suburban estate to illustrate the emperor's contemptuous disengagement from Rome's political community and his antagonistic relationship with the senate in particular as he disdains to advance even the pretense that he is a citizen in a society of fellow citizens. In his speech, Pliny recalls how Domitian once retreated to a suburban estate during the consular elections, using the episode as a negative foil for Trajan's citizen-like decision to participate in the rituals surrounding the announcement of his election as consul before the electoral assembly in the Campus Martius. In a thinly disguised reference to Domitian, Pliny inveighs against previous emperors who disdained to participate in the civic ritual, "cloistered and hidden away" (*Pan.* 63.5 *abstrusus atque abditus*) while they are elected consul in their absence, either drowsy and nauseous from the previous night's debauchery or all too alertly plotting exile and death for the consuls announcing their election (*Pan.* 63.3). It is a depraved form of ambition, he says, to disrespect political office in this way, "and when you

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. O'Gorman (2000) 82-83.

gaze out from your gardens upon the Campus (i.e. Martius) and the electoral assembly, to keep away from them as though you were separated by the Danube and the Rhine!" (*Pan.* 63.4 *cumque ex proximis hortis campum et comitia prospectes, sic ab illis abesse, tamquam Danubio Rhenoque dirimare!*).

With this image of Domitian ominously observing Rome's elections, Pliny characterizes the emperor's garden seclusion as an unobserved site of external surveillance, investing it with a latent potential for future violence, qualities already encountered in the last section in hostile accounts of the emperors' psychic withdrawals. At the same time, through this simile, Pliny compares Domitian's seclusion on a suburban estate near the Campus Martius, likely the Gardens of Lucullus on the Pincian Hill, to the separation produced by the Danube and the Rhine, rivers that separated Rome from its barbarian enemies.⁶⁰⁵ The reclusive emperor is figuratively placed beyond the confines of Roman civilization and his contemptuous stance towards the political community is equated to the hostile and uncomprehending attitude of Rome's barbarian foes.

Such behaviour, Pliny says, fails to preserve even the semblance of a free state and expresses the arrogant belief of Domitian and other emperors like him that behaving like a senator by participating in Rome's electoral traditions would somehow detract from their authority as emperors, an attitude that renders them "over-arrogant lords" (*Pan.* 63.6 *superbissimis dominis*),

⁶⁰⁵ Earlier in the speech, Pliny notes Domitian's occupation of "those famous gardens of that general who was once famous" (*Pan.* 50.6 *ipsos illos magni aliquando imperatoris hortos*). The reference suggests either the Gardens of Pompey or Lucullus; Durr (1938) 182, and Beard (1998) 26, favour the latter. The Gardens of Lucullus previously hosted the political withdrawals of Lucullus in 63 BCE (Plut. *Luc.* 38.2-39.2) and Valerius Asiaticus in 46-47 CE (Tac. *Ann.* 11.1.1, Cassius Dio 60.27.1-4). On conflict on the Rhine and Danube frontiers during Domitian's reign, see Jones (1992), 128-31, 135-39, 141-43, 150-55.

a clear reference to Domitian in particular.⁶⁰⁶ And yet, he continues, such rulers abstain from civic life even more so due to fear that they will pollute the Campus Martius and the political rituals there, thereby offending against both gods and men, an outcome that even debased rulers fear (*Pan.* 63.7-8). In Pliny's view then, Domitian's suburban withdrawal spatially expresses the emperor's craving for the status of the consulship even as he contemptuously refrains from interacting with the civic body that confers it.

Imperial solitude can also be found in more crowded and communal venues at Rome, as Statius demonstrates in the *Silvae*. In Statius' occasional poetry, Domitian is only rarely seen, and even when the poet shares his company and describes him in detail, as we have seen in *Silv.* 4.2 above, Domitian remains remote and inaccessible. More frequently, he is an absent presence, with the effects of his godlike power everywhere present even as the text denies readers a view of the emperor interacting with his subjects or otherwise revealing his character.⁶⁰⁷

In *Silvae* 1.6, for instance, Domitian dazzles the public celebrating the Saturnalia at an amphitheatre with an awe-inspiring display of luxury, sumptuous food and entertainments, yet he himself is barely seen. Here, the emperor is shown sharing a Saturnalian feast with his subjects (*Silv.* 1.6.46-68), yet he is not depicted as interacting with them in any way. Furthermore, by mentioning Domitian last and alone after enumerating various different social categories, Statius creates the sense that Domitian does not belong to any of society's orders but stands outside of them, unique and separate. Indeed, by placing such great emphasis on Domitian's decision to join

⁶⁰⁶ On Domitian as *dominus*, see Cordes (2017) 223-31.

⁶⁰⁷ McCullough (2008/9). Domitian is only briefly glimpsed in poems on the Saturnalia (1.6.46-50) and a lion hunt (2.5.27-30), though both poems concern him. His physical presence is wholly absent from poems on his equestrian statue in the Forum (1.1), on his seventeenth consulship (4.1), and on his construction of the Via Domitiana (4.3).

the feast, Statius implies that such proximity to his subjects is an exception to the rule, while Statius' parenthetical comparison of Domitian's attendance to that of a god characterizes the emperor's appearance as a divine epiphany by a celestial ruler who is normally more physically removed from his mortal subjects.⁶⁰⁸

Here too, Domitian's detachment from his subjects is combined with a sense of his surveillance of them, a benign form of behaviour in Statius' poetry.⁶⁰⁹ Late in the poem, the poet's focus shifts back to the amphitheatre, a vision in miniature of Roman society, with Domitian as an earthly Jupiter (*Silv.* 1.6.27) presiding over the various orders of society mentioned earlier at the banquet (1.6.43-44). As the sequence of amphitheatrical spectacles extends into the evening, Statius recounts Domitian's arrangement of artificial illumination to allow the entertainments to continue into the night. As the flaming orb ascends above the arena, "the sky is illuminated with flames and permits no license to the obscurity of night" (*Silv.* 1.6.89-90 *conlucet polus ignibus nihilque obscurae patitur licere nocti.*).⁶¹⁰ In this final scene of the poem and of the first book of the *Silvae*, Domitian himself is unseen, yet his artificial lighting subjects everything to his gaze and to that of the spectators. Given the theatre's metonymic relationship with Roman society as a whole, as noted above, this image of the emperor's light revoking the license of night (*licere*) is an apt symbol for the unseen Domitian's panoptic, yet benign surveillance of his subjects, a reassuring contrast to the minimal restraints (*Silv.* 1.6.84 *licere*) that he places upon their behaviour during the festival. In this poem, then, Domitian is an elusive figure, naturally remote and unseen like a god. On this special occasion, he appears to his subjects but does not interact

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. Newlands (2003) 511, McCullough (2008-9) 152. Newlands (2002) 240-41, comments, "[Domitian's] presence then does not create communal values, as at the symposium, but rather reinforces hierarchical divisions."

⁶⁰⁹ Newlands (2003) 503, 512, McCullough (2008-9) 152-53.

with them. Instead, he ends the poem in a more natural pose, indulging his subjects' license while keeping out of sight, and yet simultaneously subjecting them to his panoptic gaze, in order to benevolently regulate their freedom.

In the first poem of the *Silvae*, the isolation of the equestrian statue of Domitian is yet more marked, relaying his celestial detachment from his subjects. The solitary, inscrutable nature of his sculpture reflects the absence of communication between him and his subjects while its fearsome, holy aura relays how his ideology of divine kingship separates him from Rome's civic community. At the same time, the statue's commanding position and expansive view of the surrounding cityscape associate Domitian's detachment from the political community with his benign yet aloof administration of his subjects. Although Domitian's equestrian statue occupies the middle of the Forum Romanum, one of the most frequented places in the City, Statius represents it and the emperor by metonymy as isolated from the surrounding cityscape and its inhabitants. Near the beginning of the poem Statius likens the statue to a benevolent Trojan Horse (*Silv.* 1.1.8-16), a comparison that suggests that the sculpture has hidden, inaccessible interior even as the poet denies that this secluded space harbours a hidden menace.⁶¹¹ Much as the emperor himself, the statue presents an ambiguous visage: "it is pleasing," the poet says, "to gaze upon a face mixed in its features, bearing war and tranquil peace" (*Silv.* 1.1.15-16 *iuvat ora tueri mixta notis bellum placidamque gerentia pacem.*). The statue's expression is imprecise, relaying Domitian's ability to wage war and to establish peace to protect his subjects.

⁶¹⁰ Suet. *Dom.* 4.2 credits the innovation of artificial lighting at the theatre to Domitian.

⁶¹¹ Domitian's genius weighs down the statue (*Silv.* 1.1.58).

Statius' allusive language lends this image greater depth. Gazing upon the statue's face (*ora tueri*) once again recalls the shade Anchises' first glimpse of his son Aeneas in the Vergilian Underworld (*Aen.* 6.688-89 *datur ora tueri, nate, tua et notas audire et reddere uoces?*), just as when Statius sees the inscrutably statuesque Domitian in person at the Palatium (*Silv.* 4.2.16 *datur ora tueri?*).⁶¹² As in *Silv.* 4.2, this recollection of Anchises' glimpse of his son and his anticipation of dialogue marks Domitian as a latter-day Aeneas and refounder of Rome, yet once again it also underscores Statius' inability to interact with Domitian, now a real statue. Here too, switching Vergilian exemplars once again, Aeneas' subsequent failure to embrace his ghostly father may also telegraph Statius' separation from the emperor, who, by contrast, is inaccessible behind his all too solid facade.

Other aspects of Statius' ecphrasis underscore the remoteness of the equestrian statue and thence Domitian, suggesting that they are fearsome and best not gazed at. Midway through the poem (*Silv.* 1.1.52-55) Statius asserts that Adrastus and Castor's horses Arion and Cyllarus, respectively, would have been terrified at the sight of the equestrian statue, the latter from the nearby temple of Castor and Pollux, while a little later (71-73), Marcus Curtius is initially panicked by the statue's size and gleam before calming down.⁶¹³ One particular source of the statue's fearsome nature lies in its left hand (*Silv.* 1.1.37-39), which holds an image of Minerva holding Medusa's severed head, famed for its ability to turn those who see it to stone. While the martial associations of the equestrian statue suggest that it is meant to terrify Rome's foreign enemies, Statius' praise of Domitian for his victories in civil wars (*Silv.* 1.1.79-80) and his

⁶¹² The collocation *ora tueri* appears in only these three passages in Latin literature, all at a hexametre line ending.

⁶¹³ Newlands (2011) associates Arion's fear here with two instances from the *Thebaid* where this horse expresses fear in the face of evil, an interpretation that characterizes the statue's menacing quality as negative. By contrast, Cordes (2014) 303, explains Curtius' fear as an appropriate reaction to a divine epiphany.

emphasis upon the fearsome Gorgon head in the statue's civic setting telegraph the emperor's readiness to pacify domestic foes as well.⁶¹⁴ The emperor's subjects would thus do well to maintain a respectful distance.

As the poem draws to a close, Statius gives the statue's sense of remoteness further development, emphasizing its physical solitude in a scene that expresses the emperor's godlike detachment from his subjects.⁶¹⁵ During the silence of night, the poet writes (*Silv.* 1.1.94-96), Domitian's divinized relatives descend from their heavenly perch to commune with the emperor's equestrian statue, rendering it a sacred place. In this final narrative scene of the poem, Statius does not depict crowds of citizens surrounding the statue, much less the emperor, which he might have done easily enough, given the poem's function commemorating the statue's recent dedication, doubtless a public event. Instead, Statius empties one of Rome's busiest civic spaces by imagining the Forum at night when Domitian's statue is alone, as the surrounding silence attests. Alone in its nocturnal solitude, the emperor's statue only associates with his dead, deified relatives, who appear once mortals are absent.⁶¹⁶ The statue's godlike detachment from the living inhabitants of Rome and its association with supernatural beings in this scene reflect Domitian's divine self-presentation and his separation from his mortal subjects.

⁶¹⁴ See McCullough (2008-9) 151. The "tranquil peace" (*Silv.* 1.1.16 *placidam...pacem*) on Domitian's face evokes the "tranquil peace" (1.40 *placidam...pacem*) that Lucretius seeks from Venus as a relief from Rome's civil wars during the late Republic. This latter passage is the first appearance of this collocation of words in Latin literature. Such an echo suggests that Domitian's peace-making abilities include quelling Saturninus' revolt in Germany in late 88 or early 89, shortly before this poem's composition in 90.

⁶¹⁵ Newlands (2002) 67-68.

⁶¹⁶ Besides Domitian's dead relatives, the only other character to interact with his statue is Marcus Curtius, the early Republican hero (*Silv.* 1.1.74-83).

Here too, the isolation of the emperor's equestrian statue facilitates his watchful gaze over his subjects. The statue's enormous size and height are a frequent refrain in the poem. The sculpture, for instance, is larger than the Trojan Horse of old (*Silv.* 1.1.12-13) and is so lofty that it is almost visually inaccessible for onlookers on the ground, whose eyes grow tired as they try to discern its lofty vantage point (87-88), points of emphasis that further distance the statue and its imperial model from the emperor's subjects.⁶¹⁷

However isolated it may be, the statue exerts control over its surroundings. As the poem opens, the horse and its rider are said to "embrace" (*Silv.* 1.1.2 *complexa*) the Forum, rather than the inverse, figuratively dominating their environment. A little later in the poem, Statius writes "Your lofty head enclosed by pure mist, you shine over the temples and seem to gaze out, (*ipse autem puro celsum caput aëre saeptus templa superfulges et prospectare videris*) to see whether the new palace arises more beautifully, its flames scorned, whether the Trojan flame is vigilant with its silent torch and Vesta is praising now her proven maid-servants" (*Silv.* 1.1.32-36). From its lofty perch, Domitian's statue gazes beyond the Forum southeastward over the house of the Vestals and Temple of Vesta with the Palladium within, and above it to the emperor's palace on the Palatine hill.

Statius' phrase *aere saeptus* "enclosed by mist" here recalls how Vergil's Venus and more directly Valerius Flaccus' Juno enshroud Aeneas and Jason respectively as the two heroes approach foreign cities to prevent anyone from seeing them (*Aen.* 1.411 *Venus obscuro gradientis aëre saepsit*; Val. Flacc. 5.400 *aere saeptus*), suggesting that Domitian's statue

⁶¹⁷ Newlands (2002) 70-71.

similarly surveils its surroundings from a lofty vantage point that is itself concealed.⁶¹⁸ At the same time, however, this cloud is *purus*, an adjective used to denote translucency or indeed, cloudlessness, such as is found in the upper atmosphere, which conjures the image of a radiate crown surrounding the emperor's head, another sign of his divinity. While Geyssen and Marshall argue that Statius' incongruous language here cannot reproduce the Vergilian image of misty concealment, I contend that Statius' unambiguous allusion to Vergil and Valerius here in combination with the ethereal and translucent associations of *purus* relay the one-directional nature of the statue's concealment. High in the air, the sculpture is figuratively enveloped in a divine aura that impedes the gaze of onlookers from penetrating the emperor's celestial facade. From this conspicuous yet obscured vantage point, the emperor's statue surveys the cityscape, its gleam overshadowing Rome's temples (33-36).⁶¹⁹

The statue's privileged view reflects Domitian's benevolent supervision of the state.⁶²⁰ The sight of the emperor's palace on the Palatine evokes his control over the imperial household, telegraphing his ability to manage the state more broadly. The prospect of the Temple of Vesta and its tested maidservants suggests as much, calling to mind Domitian's role as a censor of public morals when he dealt with several instances of the Vestals' sexual misbehaviour. In a similar vein, the sculpture's view of the Palladium, a symbol of Rome's continued security, evokes Domitian's role as protector of the state. In the first poem of the *Silvae*, then, the lofty isolation and inscrutability of Domitian's equestrian statue express his celestial separation from

⁶¹⁸ On this passage, see Vollmer (1898) 222, Ahl (1984) 93, Geyssen (1996) 88-91, McCullough (2008-9) 151, and Marshall (2011) 334-35.

⁶¹⁹ Recall the viewer's struggle to make out the emperor's lofty statue at *Silv.* 1.1.87-88. Geyssen (1996) 91, rightly draws attention the associations of moral purity contained by *purus* in contrast with the Vestals supervised by the statue, on which, see below. The emperor is shielded from the scrutinizing gaze of his subjects by his manifest moral purity.

his subjects, who he conscientiously watches over, albeit at a distance. The emperor, this image implies, is independent of and superior to the society that he rules over.

Domitian's new palace on the Palatine hill was a natural symbol for his image as a ruler and, in consequence, both favorable contemporary writers and later hostile sources express his detachment from the civic community by representing the palace and its denizen as isolated and unapproachable. In Statius' account in *Silvae* 4.2 of his presence at a banquet hosted by the emperor there, the palace's cosmic dimensions create a sense of immense distance between the poet and the emperor that complements Domitian's figurative self-concealment during the feast, as examined in the previous section.⁶²¹ The immense, august edifice, for instance, is supported by enough columns to hold up the very heavens (*Silv.* 4.2.18-20), an image that relays how Domitian's hierarchical form of rule separates him from his diminutive subjects.

The massive palace's close identification with the emperor as well as its domination and expansive view of its surroundings once again reflect Domitian's benevolent control of society from an elevated, outside position. The edifice "embraces" (*Silv.* 4.2.24 *amplexus*) the heavens, the opposite of what one might expect, encompassing much of it within its walls, and yet Domitian is greater still, filling it with his genius, though the building cannot contain him (23-26). Given its cosmic scale, the peaks of the palace are visually inaccessible to onlookers. They can scarcely be discerned from the ground and are liable to be confused with heaven itself, an image that simultaneously relays the divine emperor's aloofness from his subjects and implies that he enjoys an all-encompassing view of their activities (*Silv.* 4.2.30-31), just as his statue

⁶²⁰ Frederick (2003) 220-21, McCullough (2008-9) 150.

⁶²¹ Newlands (2002) 262-64, 268-69.

does in *Silvae* 1.1.⁶²² For Statius, the unapproachable size and height of the emperor's palace convey how Domitian's divinity detaches him from his subjects who banquet within.

Pliny offers a sharply contrasting perspective on Domitian's reclusive banqueting behaviour. Unlike the public, convivial image that Trajan projects through his communal dining practices at the palace, as noted in section 1, Pliny declares that Domitian arrived at feasts already "gorged with a solitary dinner before midday" (*Pan.* 49.6 *ante medium diem distentus solitaria cena*) whereupon he menacingly surveils his guests, belching from satiety as he observes their hunger before throwing food in front of them that he himself disdains to touch. Finally, tiring of even this specious commensality, Domitian retreats back to his secluded gluttony and luxury. Suetonius seconds Pliny's account of Domitian as an early eater, which he says leads him to dine hastily, eating very little, adding that he ended his banquets early, "for until the hour for sleep he did nothing except go for a walk alone in a secluded place" (*Dom.* 21.1 *nam ad horam somni nihil aliud quam solus secreto deambulabat.*).

For Pliny, Domitian's solitary dining practices illustrate his tyrannical estrangement from aristocratic society at Rome.⁶²³ Romans often viewed dining as a social activity meant to be shared with others, no doubt because commensality enacted and reenacted group identity. The social aspects of dining were even seen as embedded in Latin itself. Plutarch's brother (*Mor.* 726e-f), for instance, jokingly asserts that Latin speakers derive *cena*, Pliny's term for Domitian's

⁶²² Cf. McCullough (2008-9) 145. N.b. how Domitian's statue in *Silv.* 1.1 similarly weighed down with the emperor's genius (56-60) as it

embraces the forum (2) and affords an expansive view of its surroundings from its lofty vantage point (32-36) that is difficult to view from the ground (87-88).

⁶²³ See Braund (1996a).

lonely dinner, from *κοινωνία* 'fellowship', as evidenced by the fact that Romans typically shared dinners with their friends.⁶²⁴ Dining alone was thus considered unsociable, a sign of deviancy from group identity, a practice associated with social outcasts such as the Cyclops Polyphemus, who eats his guests in the seclusion of his cave, a portrait that influences Pliny's account of Domitian, as we shall see in a moment. Given the political significance of the emperor's leisure-time pursuits, Pliny treats Domitian's unsociable dining practices as a symbol of his political persona as an autocrat who selfishly hoards his resources rather than sharing them with his subjects.

Domitian remains aloof when he finally joins the banquet. Belching from his solitary meal in front of his hungry guests, he initially ignores their needs. Pliny's use of the unusual word form *eructans* to describe the emperor's eructation likens him to Vergil's Polyphemus, belching up the remains of his slaughtered guests (*Aen.* 3.632 *eructans*), the first of three instances in Latin literature where this word form is used to describe a living being,⁶²⁵ a glancing echo that provides one of several signs that the reclusive emperor is a Polyphemus-like brute who will savage those who broach his seclusion. When Domitian finally feeds his guests, he does so in a way that reinforces his detachment from them, refusing to touch the food that he "throw[s]" (*Pan.* 49.6 *obicis*) at them, a verb that sonically echoes the physical barriers (*Pan.* 47.5 *obices*) that normally impede his subjects from interacting with him at his palace.⁶²⁶ Just as in many of

⁶²⁴ Isidore (*Orig.* 2.20.14) also reports this etymology.

⁶²⁵ Aside from quotations of Vergil, *eructans* appears four times elsewhere in Latin literature, once of a whale and three times of a river or volcano, including once of Aetna (*Aen.* 3.576) just before the Polyphemus passage mentioned above, making it more likely that Pliny's wording would evoke this part of Vergil's poem.

⁶²⁶ These two passages are the only instances of *obex* and *obicere* in the *Panegyricus*.

the accounts examined above, Domitian uses his social distance from his fellow banqueters to menacingly surveil his guests (*Pan.* 49.6 *spectator adnotatorque conuiuiis tuis immines*).

All this, Pliny says, is a "pretence of a banquet" (*Pan.* 49.6 *convictus simulationem*), using the term *convictus* ironically to evoke how Domitian's tyrannical behaviour undermines the word's basic meaning of living together. As Braund observes, "Even though Domitian joins his guests at the *conuiuium*, psychologically he remains the sole eater in his failure to join with them on equal terms."⁶²⁷ Just as in Statius' account of a Palatine banquet with the emperor in *Silvae* 4.2, Pliny highlights the tension between Domitian's physical proximity to his subjects at a feast and his social detachment from them, with the implication that it is unnatural for Domitian's subjects to share his presence, given his social distance from them. True to form, he ends the banquet early and retreats back to his clandestine gluttony and concealed luxury (*Pan.* 49.7).

Overall, for Pliny, Domitian's time spent within the Palatine *Domus Flavia* is enshrouded in an ominous solitude that separates him from his fellow citizens. During Domitian's reign, he says, the palace was an *arx* (*Pan.* 47.4 'citadel'), a term whose semantic association with the verb *arcere* 'to keep away' succinctly expresses how he used his residence to seclude himself from others.⁶²⁸ Pliny's vivid comparison of the palace's relative accessibility under Domitian and Trajan bears this out in greater detail.⁶²⁹ When guests visit Trajan at the palace, Pliny says, "there are no obstacles, no grades of humiliation nor are there always further difficulties and obstacles after you have already crossed a thousand thresholds" (*Pan.* 47.5 *Nullae obices nulli*

⁶²⁷ Braund (1996a) 46.

⁶²⁸ For *arx* and *arcere*, see pgs. 47. For the numerous imperial Latin authors who associate the *arx* with tyranny, see TLL 2.0.739.44-54, Armisen-Marchetti (2011) 70-71.

contumeliarum gradus superatisque iam mille liminibus ultra semper aliqua dura et obstantia), a laudatory statement that gains point from its contrast with the limited physical access to Domitian at his court.

Even when guests enter his palace, Domitian remains inaccessible, lurking within his private quarters. Visitors must endure endless indignities as they seek an imperial audience. Some are admitted to the palace for the *salutatio* but are denied a personal interview with the emperor in his private quarters, while others obtain such audience, but only with great difficulty and humiliation. Implicit here in Pliny's hyperbolic account is the resentment that this incurred with his senatorial audience, who, he insinuates, depended upon the favour of servile and freedman attendants to gain access to a monarch who was supposed to be a fellow citizen and senator.⁶³⁰ In turn, once the audience is completed, Domitian's guests beat a hasty retreat, leaving a trail of "flight and desolation" (*Pan.* 48.3 *fuga et vastitas*) in their wake. Once again, the emperor's inaccessibility and reclusiveness express his autocratic style of rule.

Both Pliny and Suetonius link Domitian's assassination to his socio-spatial isolation from his subjects in the palace. Suetonius reports that shortly before his murder, Domitian attempts to thwart numerous portents of his looming demise by seeking safety through greater isolation. He now insists on giving prisoners hearings "only in seclusion and alone" (*Dom.* 14.4 *nec nisi secreto atque solus*) and he installs phengite on the walls of the palace's porticos, a bright, reflective stone that he uses to see what is going on behind his back, a fearful tactic that, as Hulls

⁶²⁹ Cf. Roche (2011) 60-64.

⁶³⁰ Cf. Roche (2011) 60-61, with further references.

observes, "emphasizes Domitian's desire to remain apart from everyone around him."⁶³¹ In a similar fashion, Pliny reports (*Pan.* 49.1-2) that at that time Domitian misguidedly sought protection in the seclusion and solitude afforded by his palace walls, their narrow, barricaded entrances, and his general inaccessibility.⁶³² Yet, rather than obtaining security, he continues, Domitian merely succeeded in isolating himself with the punishment for his crimes, for a personified Punishment (*Pan.* 49.1 *Poena*) effortlessly penetrates his solitude and executes him. Suetonius conveys a similar point in less figurative language, describing how the absence of bystanders and the locked doors preventing access to Domitian's chambers facilitate his assassination by his own household staff (*Dom.* 16.2, 17.2).⁶³³

Pliny draws on Stoic imagery (*Pan.* 49.2-3) to criticize Domitian's fatal physical retreat. Instead of seeking safety from hostile subjects in the seclusion afforded by physical fortifications, Domitian would have found greater security in the spiritual protection afforded by his subjects' affections, for "this is an inaccessible citadel, this an impregnable fortification, not to need any fortification. A man who has not encircled himself with affection vainly girds himself with terror" (*Pan.* 49.3 *Haec arx inaccessa, hoc inexpugnabile munimentum, munimento non egere. Frustra se terrore succinxerit, qui saeptus caritate non fuerit*). Much as Stoic writers who employ the metaphor of the citadel of the soul (see chapter 2), Pliny argues that seeking security through physical seclusion (*Pan.* 49.2 *solitudine et claustris*) is fundamentally misguided.

⁶³¹ Hulls (2014) 181.

⁶³² For accounts of the emperors Vitellius and Nero wandering alone in the palace shortly before their demises as a symbol of their rejection by society, see Tac. *Hist.* 3.84 and Suet. *Ner.* 47.3, respectively.

⁶³³ Pliny's depiction of Domitian in this passage secluding himself with his own punishment resembles Tacitus' account of the inner torments of Tiberius' inscrutable mind (*Ann.* 6.6.2), though Tacitus does not describe these torments breaking into Tiberius' mind as Punishment infiltrates Domitian's palace. Roche (2011) 62-63, observes that Pliny's account of Domitian's death focuses on his isolation from the public, glossing over the fact that members

Domitian's assassination illustrates the fallibility of this strategy. Instead, the solution is once again a matter of changing attitudes, although Pliny does not advise Trajan to adopt a Stoic attitude of detachment from his subjects. Rather, much as Seneca advises Nero, Pliny counsels Trajan that through his blameless conduct and by fostering a spirit of concord with his subjects, their love for him will be his sentries while they themselves will become his fortifications (*Pan.* 49.2 *erus...amoris excubiis...civium celebritate defenditur!*).⁶³⁴ For Pliny, Domitian's seclusion in his palace separated him from his subjects on a day to day basis, but it did not protect him from the fatal consequences of this uncivil style of rule.

A memorable scene in the *Panegyricus* in which Domitian is likened to a wild beast adds further nuance to the association that Pliny draws between Domitian's seclusion and his autocratic style of governance. While the palace under Trajan is open to all,

"that most fearsome beast had not long ago fortified it with the greatest terror, while, shut in a cave, so to speak, now he lapped the blood of his relatives, now he emerged for the slaughter and bloodshed of eminent citizens. Before his doors were horror and menace and fear alike for those admitted and excluded. In addition, he himself was terrifying to meet and to look upon...no one dared to approach or address him - he always sought darkness and seclusion and never left his solitude except in order to make a solitude" *Pan.* 48.3-5 *quam (i.e. domum) nuper illa immanissima belua plurimo terrore munierat, cum velut quodam specu inclusa nunc propinquorum sanguinem lamberet, nunc se ad clarissimorum civium strages caedesque proferret. Obversabantur foribus horror et minae et par metus admissis et exclusis; ad hoc ipse occurso quoque visuque terribilis...Non adire quisquam non adloqui audebat, tenebras semper secretumque captantem, nec umquam ex solitudine sua prodeuntem, nisi ut solitudinem faceret.*

Certain aspects of Domitian's portrait here resemble Pliny's account of his tyrannical behaviour in other passages discussed above. In fear of his fellow citizens (cf. *Pan.* 49.3 below), Domitian

of his own household killed him in order connect his secluded death with his distant style of divine rule and his poor relationship with his senatorial peers.

⁶³⁴ Likewise, Seneca does not counsel Nero to withdraw spiritually rather than physically, but to cultivate their affections and to seek safety in their presence, for "the one impregnable fortification is your citizens' affections" (*Clem.* 1.19.6 *Unum est inexpugnabile munimentum amor civium*), a passage that appears to influence the passage of Pliny under discussion (Braund (2008) 349).

immures himself in a fortress whose menacing atmosphere deters some from entering and terrifies others who are granted access.

Yet Pliny amplifies this portrait here by describing Domitian as a fearsome wild beast secluded within his cave, a characterization that he reprises shortly thereafter when he speaks of the emperor's "famously secret lairs and savage hideaways, into which he was driven by fear, arrogance and hatred of mankind" (*Pan.* 49.1 *arcana illa cubilia saevique secessus in quos timore et superbia et odio hominum agebatur*). Since at least as early as Plato (*Rep.* 565d-66a), tyrants have been linked to wild animals.⁶³⁵ The comparison with beasts draws attention to the tyrant's savage nature.⁶³⁶ As a species of wild animal, Seneca writes (*Clem.* 1.25.1, 1.26.4), tyrants do not behave according to reason, but harbour an innate cruelty that leads them to attack their subjects "just as a harmful or dangerous beast bounds forth from its lair" (*Clem.* 1.3.3 *tamquam malum aliquod aut noxium animal e cubili prosilierit*), an image that prefigures Pliny's description of Domitian emerging from his cave-cum-palace to destroy his fellow citizens.⁶³⁷ Most importantly for this present chapter, as irrational, savage and aggressive creatures, wild beasts are often portrayed in classical literature inhabiting the wilderness as asocial loners,⁶³⁸ a

⁶³⁵ Roman writers such as Cicero (*Off.* 2.48, *Rep.* 3.32) and Seneca (citations in text) make this association in the context of Roman politics, while Seneca portrays Claudius as beast-like to express his political faults (*Apoc.* 5.1-3, with Braund and James (1998) 285-97). Braund and James 296, argue that generalizing descriptions of the tyrant as beast in the *De Clementia* implicitly refer to Claudius. For discussion and further references, see Dunkle (1971) 14, Garland (1995) 50-52, Leigh (1996) 192n36, Woodman (2006) 185, and Braund (2009) 452, s.v. imagery, bestial (of tyrants).

⁶³⁶ Dunkle (1971) 14, writes, "*Saevitia* properly refers to the ferocity of wild animals (cf. Quint. 1.1.1) and only metaphorically to the cruelty of men. This primary association of *saevitia* with wild beasts perhaps can provide an answer as to why this word began to seem appropriate as a term descriptive of tyranny." On the *saevitia* of Tiberius, e.g. numerous references in Tac. *Ann.* (listed at Woodman and Martin (1989) 79), Suet. *Cal.* 6.2, 30.2, Plin. *NH* 14.144; Domitian: Suet. *Vesp.* 1.1, Tac. *Agr.* 45.2, Plin. *Pan.* 49.1, 52.7, SHA *Com. Ant.* 19.2.

⁶³⁷ Dury (1938) 32.

⁶³⁸ For instance, in Lucretius' account of mankind's beginnings (5.925-98), the bestial nature of early human life in the wilderness is associated with the absence of social relationships.

socio-spatial stance that reinforces the expectation that tyrants occupy solitary spaces for similar reasons when they are compared to such creatures. As a monstrous beast, Domitian's cave-like seclusion in the Palatium expresses his brutish alienation from others, for even worse than a wild animal, he uses it as a lair where he figuratively consumes his own family members and emerges only to destroy eminent citizens.⁶³⁹

While Pliny draws on a tradition of political invective when he characterizes Domitian as a "beast" (*belua*), the image of Domitian in a figurative cave eating human flesh cannot fail to evoke the Cyclops Polyphemus, the reclusive beast-like human who feeds on the flesh of Odysseus' companions when they intrude on the seclusion of his cave.⁶⁴⁰ Above, we have seen how Domitian's belching after his solitary dinner evokes the Cyclops' eructations after eating Odysseus' comrades, an association that gains further strength from the fact that Pliny's portrait of the belching emperor (*Pan.* 49.6) comes shortly after his description of how Domitian bestially consumes the flesh of his relatives in his Palatine cave. Aside from the general similarities between Polyphemus and Domitian in their respective bouts of cave-bound cannibalism, Pliny describes Domitian's fearsome aura in this scene (*ipse occursu quoque visuque terribilis...non adire quisquam, non adloqui audebat*) in terms that evoke the unapproachable nature of Vergil's Polyphemus (*Aen.* 3.621 *nec uisu facilis nec dictu adfabilis ulli*).⁶⁴¹ As a bestial Polyphemus figure, Domitian does not participate in the common

⁶³⁹ As Seneca notes (*Clem.* 1.26.4), the tyrant even surpasses the wildness of beasts since the latter leave their own kind unmolested while the tyrant does not.

⁶⁴⁰ On the rhetorical background of Pliny's description of the emperor in this passage, see Dunkle (1971) 14, Hutchinson (2011) 129. For the Roman tyrant as a cannibal, see Leigh (1996). For Tiberius as cannibal, see Suet. *Tib.* 21.2, 59.1, 61.5, the last with Champlin (2006) 33.

⁶⁴¹ Cf. Horsfall (2006) 425-26. Ovid *Pont.* 2.2.113-14, describes Augustus as *not* a Polyphemus figure while describing the Cyclops' fearsome solitude (113 *vasto...antro*) in terms that also allude to Vergil's account of Polyphemus and his seclusion (*Aen.* 3.617 *vasto...antro*).

endeavours of a political community, but lives alone in a lawless solitude, savagely destroying those who broach his seclusion (cf. Hom. *Od.* 9.112-15, 187-89).

The final epigrammatic statement that Domitian only left his solitude to make another one reprises the now familiar image of how the emperor's seclusion operates as a shelter from which he surveils and sometimes emerges to savage his subjects, as he does here in the form of a Cyclops-like beast. Pliny's use of the term *solitudo* in this passage plays on its multiple valences as he conveys this point.⁶⁴² By describing Domitian's departure from the palace as leaving a *solitudo*, Pliny evokes the term's basic meaning of the state of being alone and the place where this state is experienced, yet his bold characterization of the glittering Domus Flavia as a cave also evokes the word's secondary sense of wilderness, which complements Pliny's description of the emperor as a beast.

Similarly, his statement that the emperor only left this solitary, feral state in order to make a *solitudo* somewhere else once again draws on both senses of the term. The phrase 'to make a *solitudo*' (*solitudinem facere*) is used in Latin to describe an act of martial destruction, evoking the term's secondary sense of 'wasteland', and will have reminded Pliny's listeners in particular of the British general Calgacus' denunciation of Roman imperial expansion in the recently published *Agricola* of his friend Tacitus when the general says "they make a desert and call it peace" (*Agr.* 30.5 *ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*).⁶⁴³ Pliny's use of this turn of phrase characterizes Domitian as a conqueror of Roman society who wreaks destruction on his own

⁶⁴² On the meaning of *solitudo*, see pg. 162.

⁶⁴³ Bruère (1954) 162. On the earlier history of this phrase, see e.g. Liv. 8.13.14-15, Curt. 8.8.10, 9.2.24, Plin. *NH* 6.182, and Sanford (1937), Woodman (2014) 243-44.

people with a brutal intensity equivalent to Rome's conquest of Britain, rendering Rome a wasteland.

While Domitian does not physically transform Rome into a wilderness or create widespread material destruction there, Pliny's evocative language here expresses how the emperor's forays from his tyrannical seclusion dissolve the bonds of civic society, plunging each man into his own personal solitude, a state in which his fear of the emperor estranges him from making common cause with his fellow citizens to rectify the situation and thereby to exercise his proper autonomy. Domitian, in other words, only emerges from his seclusion to lay waste to the social ties that render Rome a community, thereby alienating men from each other.

Pliny's description of the aristocracy's plight under Domitian bears this out, for his attacks upon the elite maroon each of them in a literal and figurative solitude. During Domitian's reign, Pliny says, it was prudent for good men to turn away from the state (*Pan.* 66.4) and pass their lives in darkness (44.5), "cloistered in leisure or atrophy, buried as it were" (45.2 *otio aut situ abstrusos et quasi sepultos*). Many such men are driven out of their homes, some of which crumble in a "foul desolation" (*Pan.* 50.3 *foeda vastitate*) that echoes the "flight and desolation" (*Pan.* 48.3 *fuga et vastitas*) of aristocrats fleeing Domitian's court. Now, by contrast, under Trajan, men may at last return to their houses, which are now secure to be opened up again (*Pan.* 62.7). Thanks to the new regime, the houses' "atrophy has been cleared away" (*Pan.* 50.4 *deterso situ*), and the new emperor himself has "drive[n] out their solitude" (*solitudinem pellere*), leading the houses themselves to delight in the fact that they are once again frequented.

4. Tiberius' Withdrawals: Rhodes, Rome, and Capri

Much as we have seen with Domitian in section 3, accounts written after Tiberius' death also associate his reclusive physical behaviour with his alienation from Roman society, complementing accounts of his metaphorical self-concealment examined in section 2. Tiberius' extended sojourn on Rhodes between 6 BCE and 2 CE and his parallel retreat from political life encouraged such associations before he became emperor. In 6 BCE, despite the fact that he was the second most powerful man in the Roman empire after Augustus, Tiberius withdrew from Rome for motivations that are debated by our ancient sources. The ambiguity surrounding his intentions complements many of these authors' claims that Tiberius retired due to enmity with some of those whom he was leaving behind, for it speaks to Tiberius' inscrutability to those around him and to society at large and thus reinforces the reader's sense that Tiberius' withdrawal was a sign of his alienation from others, though from who precisely remains subject to debate.

Roman historians report a variety of potential sources for the alienation that they believe drove Tiberius to retreat from Rome and from public life. Some believed that Tiberius was increasingly disenchanted with his wife, Augustus' granddaughter Julia, that he was angry with his stepfather Augustus for not adopting him; others maintained that he had retired in order to safeguard his prestige.⁶⁴⁴ Suetonius (*Tib.* 10.1) writes that at the time of his departure Tiberius cited weariness with holding offices and a need for rest, which complements Cassius Dio's skeptical report (55.9.5, 8) that Tiberius used a desire for education as a pretext to retire. Multiple sources relate that Tiberius retired to make way for the advancement of Augustus' adopted sons Gaius and Lucius, a motivation that Suetonius and Velleius Paterculus recount only emerged later,⁶⁴⁵ while

⁶⁴⁴ Julia: Tac. *Ann.* 1.53.1, 6.51.2, Suet. *Tib.* 10.1, Cassius Dio 55.9.7; Augustus: Cassius Dio 55.9.7-8. Prestige: Suet. *Tib.* 10.1. For Tiberius' Rhodian retirement, see Weller (1958), Levick (1972), Jakob-Sonnabend (1995), Herbert-Brown (1998), Bellemore (2007), Prokoph (2014).

⁶⁴⁵ Suet. *Tib.* 10.1, 11.5, Vell. Pat. 2.99.2, Cassius Dio 55.9.5.

Cassius Dio also reports allegations (55.9.7) that Augustus had sent him away for plotting against the young men. Common to all these conflicting accounts is the sense that Tiberius' relocation to Rhodes was undertaken with the aim of detaching himself from public life or from some or all of his family, while the proliferation of motivations reported by our sources cumulatively casts Tiberius as an inscrutable figure.⁶⁴⁶

For some, Tiberius' departure from Rome and his life on Rhodes served as a symbol of his estrangement from his family and from Roman society in general. According to Suetonius (*Tib.* 10.1-2), when Tiberius declared his intention to retire, he ignored his mother's pleas and Augustus even made public complaints in the senate that he was being abandoned. Tiberius was so determined to leave that he fasted for four days, and at his departure, he maintained his distance from those who accompanied him to his ship at Ostia, saying nothing to any of them and "kissing very few of them" (*Tib.* 10.2), leaving even his wife and son behind.

Although post-Tiberian sources do not generally portray Tiberius as literally isolated on his journey to Rhodes and during his sojourn there, at times they nevertheless convey the sense that he is secluded from Roman society in particular, and sometimes even from his Greek neighbours on the island. Suetonius, for instance, reports (*Tib.* 11.1-3) that Tiberius frequented the island's gymnasias and intellectual salons, walking around without a lictor and affably exchanging favours with the island's denizens, yet such sociability with Greeks merely serves to highlight Tiberius' detachment from Roman society.⁶⁴⁷ Sources for Tiberius' journey stress that he took few people

⁶⁴⁶ Even the Tiberian partisan Velleius Paterculus reports (2.99.2) that Tiberius initially dissimulated his honorable intention of withdrawing to yield to Gaius and Lucius.

⁶⁴⁷ Thorburn (2008) 439-40. On Tiberius' sociability with Greeks on Rhodes, see also Quint. *IO* 3.1.18.

with him from Rome. Cassius Dio reports that Tiberius took "neither certain others (i.e. friends) nor his entire retinue" (55.9.5), while Tacitus relates in passing (*Ann.* 4.15.1) that Tiberius took only a single senator with him as a companion in his retirement. While such accounts provide no evidence that Tiberius was ever literally alone on his trip to Rhodes, they emphasize how Tiberius' withdrawal separated him from his friends and dependants back at Rome.⁶⁴⁸

At times, Tiberius' behaviour on Rhodes is depicted as reclusive and unsociable. Tacitus provides the most lurid accounts of such activity by Tiberius on Rhodes, reporting rumors at the beginning of his reign that "not even during the years at Rhodes when under a veneer of retirement (*secessus*) he acted as an exile did he contemplate anything besides anger, deceit and secluded lusts (*secretas libidines*)" (*Ann.* 1.4.4). Later in the *Annales*, Tacitus alleges that "in the seclusion of Rhodes (Tiberius) had been accustomed to avoid gatherings and to hide his pleasures away" (*Ann.* 4.57.2 *Rhodi secreto vitare coetus, recondere voluptates insuerat*).

Elsewhere, Tacitus associates Tiberius' seclusion on Rhodes with murder. Tiberius, he writes, habitually consulted astrologers while on Rhodes, but suspected them of being frauds who would betray his secrets, and so he employed "an elevated wing of his house" (*Ann.* 6.21.1 *edita domus parte*) and a single trusty slave to test them in private.⁶⁴⁹ The slave led each astrologer "along a trackless cliff" (*per avia ac derupta*), whereupon he would hurl the man to

⁶⁴⁸ Scattered notices also identify as part of Tiberius' retinue at Rhodes the senator Sulpicius Quirinius (*Tac. Ann.* 3.48.1), the equestrian Vesularius Atticus and the otherwise unknown Julius Marinus (*Ann.* 6.10.2) as well as an unnamed freedman and the philosopher and astrologer Thrasyllus (*Ann.* 6.20.2-21.3, *Suet. Tib.* 14.4, Cassius Dio 55.11.1-3, *Schol. Iuv.* 6.576; see Pérez Jiménez (2008) for Plutarch's account in his fragmentary *Life of Tiberius*).

⁶⁴⁹ Woodman (2017) 174 adds, "The wing of the house required elevation for the purposes of seclusion, inaccessibility and perhaps unimpeded observation of the sky."

his death in the sea below if Tiberius suspected him, so as to retain his secrets. As a number of different authors attest, the astrologer Thrasyllus finally satisfied Tiberius' questions, narrowly escaping death to become the future emperor's longtime companion.⁶⁵⁰

Suetonius writes (*Tib.* 11.5) that near the end of his time on Rhodes, Tiberius became increasingly reclusive, behaviour that he associates with Tiberius' increasingly precarious position at the edge of Roman public life. After Tiberius' tribunician power expired in 1 BCE, he declared that he had retired to Rhodes in favour of Augustus' adopted sons Gaius and Lucius Caesar. Now that they were grown and secure in their position as heirs, Tiberius asked Augustus for permission to return to Rome in order to see his friends and relations only for the emperor to deny his request with a rebuke for having left so eagerly in the first place.

As a result of this deterioration of his position Suetonius relates that Tiberius

"lived not only as a private individual but also in a position of vulnerability and fear, hidden away inland in the countryside, and avoiding the visits of those sailing past who frequently visited him, for no one with any military or civilian command made his journey without diverting to Rhodes" (*Tib.* 12.2 *tunc non priuatum modo, sed etiam obnoxium et trepidum egit mediterraneis agris abditus uitansque praeternauigantium officia, quibus frequentabatur assidue, nemine cum imperio aut magistratu tendente quoquam quin deuerteret Rhodum.*).⁶⁵¹

Upon learning that his relationship with Augustus is more antagonistic than he had anticipated, Tiberius further reduces his profile, already diminished by his virtually apolitical retirement to a Greek island, secluding himself in the backcountry of Rhodes for two years (1-2 CE) to discourage visits from passing Roman officials. At the same time, he seeks to communicate his

⁶⁵⁰ For references to this episode, see note 654.

⁶⁵¹ The Tiberian partisan Velleius Paterculus (2.99.4) also reports frequent visits by travelling magistrates but omits any mention of Tiberius' attempts to avoid such attention. Tacitus writes (*Ann.* 2.42.2) that Archelaus, King of Cappadocia, incurred Tiberius' ire for failing to honour him with a visit, implying that Tiberius expected visits from such local potentates.

non-involvement in military matters and Roman civic life as a whole by quitting his military exercises and shifting from a Roman to a Greek style of dress (*Tib.* 13.1).⁶⁵²

In Suetonius' account, Tiberius' retreat to the yet more pronounced seclusion of his remote new home in the island's countryside combined with his increasingly non-Roman behaviour expresses his attempt to present the most innocuous and apolitical posture possible, a strategy designed to secure his safety amidst the enmity of Augustus' adoptive son Gaius and his mentor Marcus Lollius, accusations that he had tested the loyalties of certain troops, and increasing public contempt for his position (*Tib.* 12.2-13.2), all passively licensed by Augustus' evident displeasure with his stepson. At the time of his retreat and in the following century, some Romans thus made sense of Tiberius' puzzling retirement from his prominent position in public life at Rome to the quiet of Rhodes by associating it with his strained relations with his family or with his broader estrangement from civic society at Rome. Once on Rhodes, Tiberius' friendly association with Greeks, his avoidance of Romans, and his overall reclusiveness from others on the island provide additional support for this latter interpretation.

Suetonius reports that when Tiberius finally returned to Rome in 2 CE, he expressed his continued detachment from public life through adopting a secluded location at the edge of the city as his primary residence.⁶⁵³ Previously, Tiberius had lived in the house that had once belonged to the Republican dynast Pompey, located on the Carinae (*Tib.* 15.1), a neighborhood that contained the homes of a number of politically active figures during the Republic, not least Pompey himself. When Augustus permitted Tiberius to return from Rhodes, Suetonius reports

⁶⁵² Bellemore (2007) 443.

⁶⁵³ For Tiberius' Roman retirement, see Wallace-Hadrill (1998) 5, Gillison (1999), Bellemore (2007) 449-50.

(*Tib.* 13.2) that the emperor included Gaius' stipulation that Tiberius could only come home if he remained in retirement from politics. Accepting this condition, Tiberius returned to Rome, whereupon he moved to the Esquiline suburban estate that had once belonged to Augustus' apolitical friend and advisor Maecenas (*Tib.* 15.1), abstaining from public life for two years, until Gaius died unexpectedly and Augustus, once again lacking an heir, adopted Tiberius as his son and successor in 4 CE. While Maecenas' suburban estate on the Esquiline was not very far from Tiberius' former residence on the Carinae or from Rome's civic centre in practical terms, the Gardens' symbolic location outside Rome's Servian Wall and their association with their famously apolitical former owner conveyed Tiberius' continued detachment from public life while allowing him to remain in close touch with Augustus and events in the city.⁶⁵⁴

Tiberius' propensity for seclusion continued once he became emperor in 14 CE. As we have seen in the second section of this chapter, Tacitus describes Tiberius' penchant for dissimulation and inscrutability while emperor as a spatialized form of self-concealment, creating the sense that he is detached from his subjects even when he is physically present with them, in Rome or elsewhere. Yet such reclusive behaviour as a younger man and early in his reign, whether physical or metaphorical, is overshadowed by his retreat to Capri in 26 after which he never again crossed Rome's formal boundary.

⁶⁵⁴ Op. cit. Gillison (1999). Tacitus reports that in 62, when pleading with Nero for permission to retire from public life, Seneca drew on Augustus' tolerance of Maecenas' withdrawal to his Esquiline estate as precedent in support of his own request, demonstrating the estate's continued association with retirement: "Augustus...granted to Gaius Maecenas retirement abroad, as it were, in the very City" (*Ann.* 14.53.3 *Augustus...C. Maecenati urbe in ipsa velut peregrinum otium permisit*). Luxurious suburban estates generally held connotations of withdrawal (Wallace-Hadrill (1998) 4-6).

The retrospective influence of Tiberius' lengthy retreat to Capri leads Tacitus to characterize an earlier, temporary withdrawal as an ominous prelude to the emperor's permanent departure from the City. At the beginning of 21, soon after Tiberius entered the consulship with his son Drusus, Tacitus reports that the emperor withdrew to Campania, "as if to improve his health...giving gradual thought to a long and continual absence, or in order that with his father removed, Drusus might fulfil the duties of the consulship alone" (*Ann.* 3.31.2 *firmandae valetudini...longam et continuam absentiam paulatim meditans, sive ut amoto patre Drusus munia consulatus solus impleret.*). Although Tiberius alleged that his retreat while holding high office was for the purposes of restoring his health, Tacitus disparages Tiberius with his two alternative, yet complementary motivations. Tiberius was either already plotting to abandon Rome once and for all or he was shunting his obligations as consul onto Drusus, his fellow office-holder,⁶⁵⁵ whose presence in the City was thought to mitigate the seclusion of Tiberius, preoccupied as he was with solitary pleasures and evil concerns (*Ann.* 3.37.2).

Tacitus represents Tiberius' sojourn in Campania as extended in duration, thus giving further emphasis to his absence from Rome and from direct involvement in public life there. After drawing attention to Tiberius' absence from Rome during his consulship in 21, Tacitus makes no mention of any return to Rome until his account of the 22 (*Ann.* 3.64.1), when he records that the poor health of Tiberius' mother Livia compelled him to return swiftly.⁶⁵⁶ The lack of any earlier

⁶⁵⁵ Bellemore (2003) 279-80, remarks "A three-month tenure as consul was hardly long enough for such an exercise, and Drusus had already held a year-long consulship in A.D. 15, with minimal interference from his father."

⁶⁵⁶ Tacitus also draws attention to Tiberius' persistent absence later in his account of 21 (*Ann.* 3.47.3) when he recounts the senate's prayers for his return, singling out the sycophantic proposal of Cornelius Dolabella, who proposes that Tiberius should reenter Rome to an ovation, which the emperor rejects in an acerbic letter, observing that he has accomplished far too much to seek empty recognition for a mere "suburban peregrination", a paradoxical collocation that simultaneously highlights his proximity to and separation from the City in Campania. Early in 22, certain senators reflect that in comparison to Drusus' arrogant decision to accept the tribunician power while absent from Rome, Tiberius at least has an excuse for being "oppressed by the sight of his citizens" (*Ann.* 3.59.4 *gravaretur*

notices of Tiberius' return from his sojourn in Campania begun in 21 creates the impression that the emperor has been absent from Rome from the beginning of Rome until April of the following year.⁶⁵⁷ Yet following Bellemore's reconstruction of Cassius Dio's narrative of the years 21 and 22, as summarized by his later epitomator Xiphilinus, the imperial Greek historian records Tiberius' return to Rome in 21, not 22, soon after the end of his consulship (57.21.1), which lasted three months (Suet. *Tib.* 26.2).⁶⁵⁸

Tacitus thus appears to have conflated two separate journeys by Tiberius away from Rome. This narrative manipulation implies that the emperor was continuously absent from Rome from January 21 to April 22, a sojourn almost twelve months longer than that recorded in Cassius Dio's reconstructed account of this period. This difference makes Tiberius' absence from Rome in Tacitus' narrative much more marked, lending support to his malign suggestions that the emperor's trip to Campania in 21 was a trial run for a permanent withdrawal, or at the very least, temporary negligence of his political responsibilities at Rome while he ruled at a remove from his subjects in Campania.⁶⁵⁹

Tiberius' inclination to retreat from Rome recurs in 25. Initially, Tacitus credits Tiberius' plan to the agency of his malevolent associate Sejanus, though he has already suggested that Tiberius had such a retreat in mind in 21, as we have seen above. Upon failing to secure Tiberius' blessing to marry his niece Livilla and thereby further augment his growing power,

aspectum civium) inasmuch as he is elderly emperor who cites the fatigue of old age and the many toils that he has already carried out.

⁶⁵⁷ For April 22, see Bellemore (2003) 268.

⁶⁵⁸ See Bellemore (2003), who writes (275, 277-78) that Tiberius likely returned to Rome in April 21 due to his son Drusus' ill health.

Tacitus reports that Sejanus resorted to more underhanded means to advance his position while avoiding resentment for doing so. Among his various tactics, Sejanus takes to urging Tiberius "to pass his life far off from Rome in pleasant places" (*Ann.* 4.41.1 *ad vitam procul Roma amoenis locis degendam*) in order to gain control over physical and epistolary access to the emperor. The emperor's increasing age and seclusion in retirement (*Ann.* 4.41.2 *secretoque loci*), Sejanus hopes, will soften him up and lead him to place more and more power in his hands. "In consequence," the historian continues, "Sejanus berate[d] the business of the City, the approaches of the people, the multitude of people streaming up, praising quiet and solitude where nuisances and affronts were absent and the most important affairs, in particular, could be transacted" (*Ann.* 4.41.3 *igitur paulatim negotia urbis, populi adcursus, multitudinem adfluentium increpat, extollens laudibus quietem et solitudinem quis abesse taedia et offensiones ac praecipua rerum maxime agitari.*) In order to secure his own power, Sejanus appeals to Tiberius' love of solitude and his aversion to his own subjects, who constantly stream up to him, an aqueous image that lightly foreshadows the island isolation that Sejanus praises to his master.

Tiberius' antipathy towards the public is matched by his animosity toward the senate. Immediately following his account of Sejanus' self-interested advice, Tacitus reports that at the trial of the senator Votienus Montanus for slandering Tiberius, an overly eager witness heedlessly reported all the insults that Tiberius was being lacerated by in secret, driving "Tiberius, who was already hesitating...to believe that the meetings of the senators were to be avoided and the generally true and oppressive utterances that were being thrust upon him in his

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. Woodman and Martin (1996) 274-75, Bellemore (2003) 279-80.

presence" (*Ann.* 4.42.1 *cunctantem iam Tiberium...ut vitandos crederet patrum coetus vocesque quae plerumque verae et graves coram ingerebantur*). When Tiberius learns that his hostility towards the senate (*Ann.* 3.65.3) is requited, he resolves upon distancing himself from this institution as well.⁶⁶⁰

Tiberius' permanent withdrawal to the Bay of Naples in 26 prompts Tacitus to make further speculation over the causes and significance of this event, drawing attention to his strained relationships with his family and to his alienation from society as a whole. While the superficial occasion for Tiberius' departure in Tacitus' narrative is the dedication of two temples in Capua and Nola, the historian reports that Tiberius' journey was "long planned" (*Ann.* 4.57.1 *diu meditato...consilio*) and that he set out "fixed on living far from the City (*certus procul Urbe degere*).⁶⁶¹

In a moment of methodological reflection, Tacitus continues that he has followed the great majority of past authors by ascribing Tiberius' retreat to the wiles of Sejanus, yet, since the emperor remained in seclusion (*secreto*) for six years after Sejanus' execution, he writes "I am often stirred (i.e. to ask) whether it is more truthfully ascribed to the man himself, concealing his savagery and lust by his location though he made them manifest through his deeds" (*Ann.* 4.57.1 *plerumque permoveor num ad ipsum referri verius sit, saevitiam ac libidinem cum factis promeret, locis occultantem*). Tiberius' moral deviancy, the historian suggests, prompted him

⁶⁶⁰ The combined notices in these two chapters (*Ann.* 4.41-42) that Tiberius seeks to withdraw from senate, people and Rome evoke the ubiquitous formula for the Roman state *Senatus Populusque Romanus*, neatly encapsulating Tiberius' intention to divorce himself from Roman society as a whole.

⁶⁶¹ Suetonius (*Tib.* 39) associates Tiberius' withdrawal with his bereavement at the deaths of Germanicus and Drusus, though the two young men had died in 19 and 23 respectively. Seneca merely observes that Tiberius left many suspicions and grudges in the City (*Ep.* 83.14).

to seclude himself from his subjects. Yet others believed, he writes (*Ann.* 4.57.2), that Tiberius' shame at his revolting physical appearance in his old age motivated his withdrawal, surely a sign of his repugnant character, while still others adduced Tiberius' tense relationship with his mother (*Ann.* 4.57.3; cf. Suet. *Tib.* 51, Dio Cass. 57.12.6), whom he could neither tolerate as a partner in dominion nor successfully dislodge from power.

The multiple possible motivations that Tacitus lists for Tiberius' withdrawal are not mutually exclusive, offering different, equally unflattering perspectives on the source(s) of the alienation that led Tiberius to isolate himself from others. At the same time, the sense of uncertainty created by the different explanations in Tacitus' narrative reinforces this portrait of Tiberius as an outcast. The inscrutable ambiguity of his motivations for his retreat conveys how poorly the secretive emperor was understood by others.⁶⁶²

Tacitus' account of Tiberius' journey southward to Capri places further emphasis upon his physical distance and social estrangement from Rome. Tiberius, he says, set out with a "limited retinue" (*Ann.* 4.58.1 *arto comitatu*) consisting of a single consular senator, one equestrian besides Sejanus, the aptly named Curtius Atticus ('Athenian, Attic Man'), whose presence complements the predominantly Greek intellectuals who form the remainder of the emperor's restricted entourage, raising his mood with their conversation. While Tiberius' withdrawal to Campania provoked widespread speculation, Tacitus reports that no one foresaw that Tiberius

⁶⁶² Cf. Luce (1986) 154-55, Devillers (2014) 288-89.

would willingly be separated from his fatherland for eleven years (*Ann.* 4.58.2), characterizing the emperor's journey as a departure into exile.⁶⁶³

Tacitus' emphasis in this passage - misleading, as we shall see - on Tiberius' accompaniment by a single senatorial companion reinforces this interpretation, for it draws upon a folk-tale motif of a king heading into exile accompanied by a single faithful companion.⁶⁶⁴ Tiberius' journey away from Rome is thus characterized as a departure from participation in Rome's political community. Furthermore, just as with accounts of Tiberius' limited retinue and single senatorial companion on his journey to Rhodes, Tacitus' focus on the emperor's insubstantial number of Roman companions throws into relief the predominantly Greek nature of his company, underscoring how his journey to the most Hellenistic region of Italy separates him from civic society back at Rome.⁶⁶⁵

Tiberius' hostility towards his subjects as he travels south to Capri lends this point further emphasis. Tacitus reports that after dedicating the Campanian temples that had justified his journey, "Caesar (i.e. Tiberius)...although he had warned in an edict that no one was to burst in upon his tranquillity and although deployed troops kept assemblies of townsfolk at a distance, nevertheless he hid himself on the island of Capri, full of hatred for the municipalities, colonies and everything located on the mainland" (*Ann.* 4.67.1 *At Caesar...quamquam edicto monuisset ne quis quietem eius inrumperet, concursusque*

⁶⁶³ Woodman and Martin (1989) 226, Devillers (2014) 290n25. Fulcinus Trio describes the emperor's continuous absence from Rome as a veritable exile (*Ann.* 6.38.2). Cohen (2002) 259-99, discusses Tiberius' withdrawal to Capri in relation to exile from a more historical perspective.

⁶⁶⁴ Champlin (2008) 411, with MI J1634 'To follow the king'.

oppidanorum disposito milite prohiberentur, perosus tamen municipia et colonias omniaque in continenti sita Capreas se in insulam abdidit).⁶⁶⁶ Tiberius seeks a solitary journey to Capri, taking forceful measures to distance himself from his subjects, behaviour whose antisocial nature is especially marked insofar as it overturns the common expectation that imperial travel outside of Rome created opportunities for locals to meet and interact with the emperor, and thereby obtain his favour.⁶⁶⁷

The allusive nature of Tiberius' orders in Tacitus' account characterizes his withdrawal to Capri as a form of civic funeral. Tacitus' language in this passage echoes his description of how Tiberius sought to restrain the public from disrupting Augustus' funeral in 14 through a deployment of troops: "Caesar (i.e. Tiberius) warned the public in an edict that whereas they had once thrown the funeral of the divine Julius into confusion with their excessive passions, they should not prefer Augustus to be cremated in the Forum rather than in the field of Mars, the intended resting-place" (*Ann.* 1.8.5 *Caesar...populumque edicto monuit ne, ut quondam nimiis studiis funus divi Iulii turbassent, ita Augustum in foro potius quam in campo Martis, sede destinata, cremari vellent*.) On the day of the funeral, people mock Tiberius' deployment of a military guard to secure the tranquillity of the dead emperor's burial (*Ann.* 1.8.6 *ut sepultura eius quieta foret*), a precaution as excessive as Caesar was reckless on the day of his assassination, when he incautiously dismissed his bodyguard.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁵ Devillers (2014) 290. For Tiberius' philhellenism, see Rutledge (2008). Tiberius eventually loses even this limited retinue. Sejanus is executed in 31, while the emperor's sole senatorial companion Cocceius Nerva starves himself to death in 33 (*Ann.* 6.26.1-2) and Atticus is put to death at an unknown point by Sejanus (*Ann.* 6.10.2).

⁶⁶⁶ Suetonius (*Tib.* 40) mentions the same edict.

⁶⁶⁷ See Millar (1977) 34-38.

⁶⁶⁸ The words underlined in both passages appear together only here in Latin literature. For this interpretation of *Ann.* 1.8.5-6, see Woodman (2002).

By recalling Tiberius' overly cautious arrangements for Augustus' burial as he recounts the former emperor's withdrawal to the Bay of Naples, Tacitus implies that Tiberius still fears his subjects' passions and exercises a comparably excessive amount of military force to ensure the safety of a ruler whose detachment from his subjects renders this unnecessary. This time, however, the detached ruler is Tiberius himself. Where protecting the body of the dead Augustus was a pointless exercise in the view of many at the time, there was a widespread belief upon Tiberius' withdrawal (Tac. *Ann.* 4.58.2, Suet. *Tib.* 39) that his journey was an omen of his looming death, which was almost brought to pass when he narrowly escaped death from a collapsing cave during a banquet at his villa at Sperlonga (Suet. *Tib.* 39, Tac. *Ann.* 4.59.1-2).⁶⁶⁹ Even though Tiberius defied these premonitions of his death by living in seclusion for another eleven years, the funereal associations of this intratextual echo suggest that Tiberius' retreat to solitude on Capri was a form of civic death, marking the demise of those few social connections with his subjects that he had retained hitherto.⁶⁷⁰ There was little need of military protection from the public, Tacitus implies, for the journey of an emperor who was determined to abdicate the essential responsibilities and obligations of his office.

At the same time as he emphasizes Tiberius' desire for seclusion from his subjects as he travels to his new island home, Tacitus augments readers' sense of the physical distance between Rome and Capri. Comparison with Suetonius' biography of Tiberius is instructive here, for similarities of wording and structure between his account and that of Tacitus strongly suggest that they relied

⁶⁶⁹ Augustus visited Capri a few days before his death (Suet. *Tib.* 98.1).

⁶⁷⁰ For detachment from the Roman political community as a form of burial and death, see, e.g., Sen. *Ep.* 55.4, Plin. *Pan.* 45.1-2, and Stat. *Silv.* 2.2 (pgs. 141-44). Imperial Stoic authors could picture an attitude of spiritual detachment

on the same source.⁶⁷¹ According to Suetonius' straightforward narrative (*Tib.* 39-41), Tiberius departs from Rome, makes his way south to Sperlonga and then proceeds to Capua and Nola where he dedicates two temples. This done, he heads to Capri, but then immediately returns to Rome when a theatre collapse at Fidenae causes mass casualties. After this, he returns to Capri.

Tacitus' version (*Ann.* 4.57-67) resembles Suetonius' narrative at first, up until Tiberius reaches Sperlonga. Here Tacitus breaks off his account of the journey, however, reporting an intervening series of events, including the theatre collapse at Fidenae. Only at the end of his account of the following year, 27, does he return to Tiberius' journey, noting that the emperor has now dedicated the temples in Capua and Nola and reached Capri. The disaster at Fidenae, which appears in both narratives, demonstrates that Tacitus has not merely interrupted his story of Tiberius' journey by adding events that took place while Tiberius was journeying south. Instead, he has reported the theatre collapse at Fidenae out of sequence, inserting it into a series of events that divide the beginning and end of Tiberius' journey.⁶⁷² The narrative's prolongation of the emperor's trip in the *Annales* implies that the journey lasted over a year, creating a sense that Tiberius has travelled a vast distance from Rome.

Alongside his subtle stress on the great length of Tiberius' journey to Capri, Tacitus draws attention to the emperor's distance from Rome by characterizing his new home as an area that is equal parts foreign and uncivilized wilderness, and thus beyond the domain of Roman civilization. Tacitus' decision to describe the island's geography, climate, original inhabitants,

from the community as analogous to death (pgs. 53-54). Tacitus (*Agr.* 3.2) likens the life of silence that many passed under Domitian to a figurative death.

⁶⁷¹ Woodman (1998b) 142-44.

and its contemporary situation, all discussed in further detail below, nods to the conventions of ethnography, adding to the impression that Tiberius has taken residence in another country far off from Rome.⁶⁷³ Classical authors often describe a region's distinctive physical and cultural characteristics when it is likely to be foreign and unfamiliar to their readership, which was not the case for the Capri, an island located on the edge of the Bay of Naples, an area long frequented by wealthy Romans. Tacitus' emphasis upon the island's Greek heritage gives this theme further emphasis, building upon his earlier attention to Tiberius' largely Greek retinue as he travels to the Bay of Naples, well-known as a centre of Italian Hellenism. Neglecting to mention Augustus' acquisition of the island from Naples (Suet. *Aug.* 92.2), Tacitus instead historically contextualizes Capri by mentioning reports that the island's original inhabitants were Greek (*Ann.* 4.67.2)⁶⁷⁴.

Further, Tacitus' description of "the temperateness of the climate (i.e. of Capri)" (ibid. *temperies caeli*) verbally echoes the use of the same phrase a little earlier in the same book (4.55.4) to describe the agreeable weather at Sardis as the inhabitants of that city urge the senate to construct a temple to Tiberius, Livia and the senate in their city. The identical phrasing, appearing nowhere else in Tacitus' works, draws a parallel between Tiberius' new home and a distant city in the eastern Mediterranean that was once a regional capital in the Persian empire, associating Tiberius with pejorative Roman views of Persian autocracy.⁶⁷⁵ Accounts of Tiberius' infamous descent into sexual depravity - however sensationalized - also characterize the reclusive emperor as engaging in behaviour proper to a debauched eastern monarch while secluded on Capri. Tacitus,

⁶⁷² Woodman (1998b).

⁶⁷³ Thomas (1982) 127, Woodman and Martin (1989) 242-43 and Edwards (2011) 1048-49, 1051.

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Houston (1985) 182-83, 192, Edwards (2011) 1055.

for instance, relates that Tiberius indulged in sex with freeborn youth "in the manner of a king" (*Ann.* 6.1.1 *more regio*), highlighting the transgressive, unRoman nature of his behaviour by describing it as characteristic of a *rex* 'king', a charged term that evokes the image of a foreign autocrat.⁶⁷⁶

Tacitus also characterizes Tiberius' new island home as an uncivilized wilderness, conceptually peripheral to civilization and the City in Rome's geographical imaginary, which reinforces Tacitus' earlier suggestion that Tiberius retreated to Capri in order to conceal his savagery (*Ann.* 4.57.1 *saevitiam*), a bestial quality, as we have seen in section 3 of this chapter.⁶⁷⁷ The island's original Greek inhabitants, Tacitus writes (*Ann.* 4.67.2), are said to be Teleboans, a people originally from a group of islands of the western coast of Greece known for being slave-traders (Hom. *Od.* 14.449-52, 15.427-29) and bandits (Str. 10.2.20). Brigandage as an occupation is commonly ascribed in geographical and ethnographical works in antiquity to people who live in distant lands at the world's edge.⁶⁷⁸ At a later point in his narrative, Tacitus mischaracterizes Tiberius as living in a wilderness on Capri, dismissively referring to the island as "rocks and the solitude of the sea" (*Ann.* 6.1.1 *saxa...et solitudinem maris*), while he introduces his description of the island by speculating that its *solitudo* (*Ann.* 4.67.1) - both "being alone" and "wilderness" - was Tiberius' favourite aspect of Capri. Tacitus' narrative of Tiberius' journey to Capri thus

⁶⁷⁵ Edwards (2011) 1052-53.

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. Woodman (2017) 89. Suetonius' accounts of Tiberius' sexual behaviour on Capri associates it with foreignness (Thornburn (2008) 445), recounting (*Tib.* 43) how he stocked his bedrooms with the erotica of the Egyptian writer Elephantis; for sexual antics with young people in Greek mythological costume, see pg. 354. For reports of Tiberius' sexual perversion on Capri, see footnote 708.

⁶⁷⁷ For islands as an image of an individual's personality, see Billig (2015) 17.

⁶⁷⁸ See Clarke (2001) 104, Edwards (2011) 1055-56, Devillers (2014) 290, with further references. Edwards (1056) suggests that Tacitus' reference (*Ann.* 4.67.3) to Tiberius' possession of twelve villas on Capri may hint at their confiscation from their former owners, behaviour fitting the island's earlier lawless inhabitants.

portrays the emperor as abandoning the City for a distant land that lies outside of civilized, Roman territory.

It is fitting that during his time in such an insular wilderness, Tiberius was sometimes characterized as a goat, an association based on the phonological similarity between Capri (*Capreae*) and 'he-goat' (*caper*).⁶⁷⁹ As part of his sexual perversions, Suetonius writes, the emperor dressed young men and women in the guise of pans and nymphs, respectively, stationing them outside of caves and rocky niches in the woods of the island, to be available for sex, leading people to call such places "the Goat's Den" (*Tib.* 43.2 *Caprineum*), punning on the name of the island. Suetonius lends this theme further emphasis a little later in his narrative, reporting Tiberius' sexual abuse of a woman named Mallonia ('Woolly Female'; μάλλος 'tuft of wool'), who accuses the emperor of lecherous behaviour in terms that liken him to a goat.⁶⁸⁰ As a result of such perverse and abusive behaviour, a line in an Atellan farce performed soon afterwards gained great popularity which stated that "the little old he-goat licks the genitals of she-goats" (*Tib.* 45 *hircum uetulum capreis naturam ligurire*), with the term for 'she-goats' (*capreis*) also interpretable as 'on Capri', once again characterizing the reclusive emperor as a lecherous goat.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁹ Silvestri (1998). The association of goat-islands with seclusion has a long history, stretching from Homer's description (*Od.* 9.116-41) of the island of goats of the coast of the land of the reclusive Cyclopes to the 5th century CE poet Rutilius Namatianus, who commemorates the seclusion of antisocial monks on the goatishly named island of Capraria (*De red. suo* 1.439-52; on the name, see Varro *RR* 2.3.3, Plin. *NH* 3.81).

⁶⁸⁰ "After loudly rebuking the shaggy and malodorous old man's obscene mouth" (*Tib.* 45).

⁶⁸¹ Champlin (2015) 222. For this episode, see Champlin (2015) and Mallan (2016). For Tiberius as beast, see also Santoro L'Hoir (2006) 226-28. Tiberius as lion: Jos. *AJ* 18.228.

In turn, writers such as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Plutarch represent Tiberius' withdrawal to Capri as a retreat to a solitary place. All three authors emphasize Tiberius' inaccessibility on the island. Tacitus' account is the most direct. Hidden away on Capri, he writes, Tiberius was "detached" (*Ann.* 4.67.1 *diiunctam*) from the Surrentine peninsula by a strait, for, he continues, "I believe that it was [Capri's] solitude that he liked most of all, since the sea round about lacks harbours and there are scarcely refuges even for modest boats, nor could anyone moor there without the guard learning of it" (*Ann.* 4.67.2 *solitudinem eius placuisse maxime crediderim, quoniam importuosum circa mare et vix modicis navigiis pauca subsidia; neque adpulerit quisquam nisi gnaro custode*). For Tacitus, Tiberius seeks Capri for its isolation and inaccessibility. Secluded from the mainland by an interval of sea and by its rocky shorelines, the emperor is finally rid of his noisome subjects.

In his treatise *On Exile*, Plutarch writes to his exiled addressee Menemachus of Sardis, praising the peace and quiet that island exile affords. For Plutarch, Tiberius provides a problematic example of such island repose. On the one hand, he writes, Tiberius spent the last seven years of his life on Capri, and, "the world's directive faculty, gathered together as if into a heart, did not change its location for this period of time" (*De Exil.* 9 τὸ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἡγεμονικὸν [ἱερὸν] ὥσπερ εἰς καρδίαν συνηγμένον οὐδαμοῦ μετέστη τοσοῦτον χρόνον). Plutarch asserts - erroneously, as we shall see below - that the imperial power (ἡγεμονικὸν) governing the world remained on Capri during this period with the man who wielded it. Yet the term ἡγεμονικὸν here also evokes the Stoic directive faculty.⁶⁸² Tiberius' island seclusion, Plutarch suggests, is like the retreat of his essential mental faculty in on itself, here located in the heart.

⁶⁸² De Lacy and Einarson (1959) 539. On the imperial associations of the Stoic directive faculty during the early empire, see pgs. 109-11.

Yet Tiberius' physical withdrawal to the solitude of Capri fails to secure the inner tranquility that a psychic retreat would have granted, had he undertaken such a spiritual manoeuvre in accordance with the dictates of Stoic philosophy. Instead, Plutarch's Tiberius resembles those misguided men whom imperial Roman Stoic writers criticize for ill-advisedly seeking a spiritual solution through physical retirement.⁶⁸³ Although he was physically secluded, Plutarch writes, the cares of administration, "flooding in...from all sides, rendered his island repose neither unmixed nor waveless" (ibid. ἐπιχεόμεναι...πανταχόθεν οὐ καθαρὰν παρεῖχον οὐδ' ἀκόμωνα τὴν νησιῶτιν ἡσυχίαν). Once again, Plutarch accords moral significance to Tiberius' physical seclusion through his evocative language. Tiberius' physical isolation on Capri did not relieve him of the spiritual turbulence caused by his continued political responsibilities, here compared to endless waves crashing against the island's coastline. For Plutarch, Tiberius sought relief from his oppressive political responsibilities by physically detaching himself from Rome and its disruptions, yet the burdens of administration followed him on his journey. A spiritual retreat, Plutarch implies, would have been more effective.

Suetonius' account of Tiberius' time on Capri shares Tacitus' emphasis on the island's inaccessibility while drawing greater attention to Capri's natural defenses in language that characterizes its landscape as a natural fortress.⁶⁸⁴ Much as Tacitus, Suetonius reports (*Tib.* 40) Tiberius' especial affection for Capri's isolation, also noting that access to the island was limited to a single stretch of shoreline, yet he continues that Tiberius also liked the fact that the island

⁶⁸³ See sections 1 and 8.1 of chapter 1.

⁶⁸⁴ In his final days, Tiberius considers Capri a place of safety (*Tib.* 73). Pliny the Elder writes that Capri was still famous in his time for the "fortress" (*NH* 3.82 *arx*) of Tiberius, likely a reference to the emperor's villa of Ino

was "enclosed on all sides by sheer crags of boundless height and the deep sea" (ibid. *saepta undique praeruptis immensae altitudinis rupibus et profundo mari*), language that characterizes the island's soaring cliffs and the surrounding sea to a fortress-like enclosure (*saepta*) that separated Tiberius from the outside world.⁶⁸⁵

Later in his biography of Tiberius, Suetonius portrays the emperor as a fearful loner when he discovers in 31 that his longtime companion Sejanus has been plotting against him. After giving Sejanus a false sense of security by granting him a consulship and hope of more substantial forms of advancement, Suetonius reports that Tiberius writes a letter to the senate from Capri, accusing the unsuspecting Sejanus and asking that one of the consuls take a military garrison and escort him "old and alone" (*Tib. 65.1 senem et solum*) from Capri into their presence. Tiberius was so concerned about his safety during this crisis that he "repeatedly kept watch from the loftiest crag for signals that he had instructed to be raised at a distance as each act took place for fear that the messages would be delayed" (*Tib. 65.2 speculabundus ex altissima rupe identidem signa, quae, ne nuntii morarentur, tolli procul, ut quidque factum foret, mandauerat*).⁶⁸⁶

Suetonius portrays Tiberius alone in his clifftop island palace, fearfully employing a system of beacons, an image that reprises the motif of the solitary emperor's unobserved surveillance of his

located on the north-eastern part of the island. Pliny's use of the term *arx* for 'fortress' evokes the seclusion that this clifftop palace afforded Tiberius.

⁶⁸⁵ Tiberius' villa of Ino on Capri, perhaps seven storeys tall, sat atop a cliff over 1000 feet above the sea (Champlin (2014) 224-25). For the participle *saeptus* and imperial fortress-like seclusion, see Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.32 and Plin. *Pan.* 49.3, in section 3 of this chapter.

⁶⁸⁶ Juvenal portrays Tiberius similarly "perched on the narrow crag of Capri with his flock of Chaldaeans" (*Sat.* 10.93-94).

subjects.⁶⁸⁷ The beacon relay permits him to receive messages in an impersonal manner that occludes his feelings from others. At the same time, it allows him to exercise a remote control over political events in a manner that may evoke Aeschylus' famous account (*Ag.* 281-310) of how the wicked queen Clytemnestra uses a relay of beacons to learn of Troy's fall from Argos.⁶⁸⁸ Even after suppressing Sejanus and his conspiracy, Suetonius reports (*Tib.* 65.2) that Tiberius did not venture out of the clifftop villa of Ino for nine months, while Cassius Dio adds (53.13.2-3) that he rejected congratulatory embassies of senate, knights, and people, even driving away the consul Regulus, who had come in response to Tiberius' request for a safe escort to the City.

While Tacitus' account does not include such an image of Tiberius surveilling his subjects from the clifftops of Capri, his narrative of Tiberius' retirement conveys a similar sense that the emperor uses his seclusion to scrutinize others while remaining out of sight, a dynamic that leads to terrifying attacks against his fellow citizens that maroon each man in his own personal solitude.⁶⁸⁹ In his ethnographic description of Capri, Tacitus notes the island's Sardis-like "temperateness of climate" (*Ann.* 4.67.2 *temperies caeli*, discussed above), thanks to a mountain barrier, "by which the savagery of the winds is kept at a distance" (*quo saeva ventorum arcentur*). As Edwards observes, mention of savage winds amidst Tacitus' portrait of Capri as a

⁶⁸⁷ Suetonius also links the villa of Ino's capacities for surveillance and remote signalling when he reports that its lighthouse (*Tib.* 74) collapsed due to an earthquake, an omen of the emperor's death a few days later. Archaeological evidence suggests that this was a 300 ft. tower, standing atop the 1000 ft. cliff on the north-eastern corner of Capri (Champlin (2011a) 95-97, Krause (2014) 144-45). On the panoptic view from the villa itself, see e.g. Champlin (2014) 224-25.

⁶⁸⁸ Rolfe (1914) 403, compares the two scenes. On Aeschylus' beacon-scene as a geographical symbol of political control, see Asper (2017) 68-70.

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. Devillers (2014) 292.

locus amoenus is unexpected and conjures the image of Tiberius venting his savagery on Rome.⁶⁹⁰

Tacitus lends this subtext further emphasis in the following phrase. The island, he writes, used to have a fine view of the lovely Bay of Naples "before that burning mountain Vesuvius changed the complexion of the area" (ibid. *antequam Vesuvius mons ardescens faciem loci verteret*). Tacitus notes here that the lovely nature of Tiberius' new home region would eventually change for the worse, devastated by Vesuvius' eruption in 79. Given the symbolic tenor of the previous sentence, however, Tacitus' notice of Vesuvius' then-latent menace evokes the raging inferno of anger that Tiberius conceals within himself in the *Annales*, ultimately destined to erupt in the form of verbal and physical attacks upon his subjects (see section 2).⁶⁹¹

The brief remainder of Tacitus' account of the year 27 (*Ann.* 4.67.3-4) sustains this theme of the menacing nature of Tiberius' solitude, associating the emperor's island retreat with the covert surveillance of his opponents, here carried out by his subordinates. At the end of his initial description of Tiberius' seclusion on Capri (*Ann.* 4.67), Tacitus describes how Sejanus manipulates the emperor's credulous suspicions about his former adoptive daughter Agrippina and her son Nero Caesar. Sejanus, Tacitus writes, had goaded Tiberius' misgivings in Rome, yet he did so openly now, secure in the concealment afforded by Capri. Shifting his account to Rome, Tacitus describes the regime of surveillance that Sejanus instituted for Agrippina and

⁶⁹⁰ Edwards (2011) 1053. For Tiberius' frequent association with *saevitia* in the *Annales*, see note 636. For the figurative use of wind imagery in Latin literature, see e.g. Quintilian's discussion at *IO* 8.6.48.

⁶⁹¹ See Edwards (2011) 1054-55, 1057, Devillers (2014) 291. Recall also *Ann.* 4.57.1, where Tacitus conveys his belief that Tiberius retired to Capri, "concealing his savagery and lust by his location though he made them manifest through his deeds" (Latin in text above). At *Ann.* 6.1.1, Tiberius returns to the solitude of Capri, "inflamed" (*exarserat*) with wickedness and lust.

Nero: "soldiery attached to them recorded as if in annals their messages, visitors, disclosures, and secrets" (*Ann.* 4.74.4 *quis additus miles nuntios, introitus, aperta secreta velut in annalis referebat*). Tiberius' solitude on Capri occasions the assiduous surveillance of family members whom Sejanus portrays as the emperor's opponents.⁶⁹²

Tacitus' subsequent narrative (*Ann.* 4.68-70) of the equestrian Titius Sabinus' persecution extends his account of the disintegration of society at Rome, indirectly brought about by Tiberius' disengaged style of administration from the seclusion of Capri. Sabinus, Tacitus writes, remained the sole staunch ally of the late Germanicus' family, thus rendering him an emblem of the sociability that Tiberius' solitude threatens and placing him at odds with Sejanus. Consequently, a group of four ambitious senators seeking the consulship endeavour to secure Sejanus' support by inducing Sabinus to say something self-incriminating in an ostensibly secluded location (*Ann.* 4.69.1 *solitudinis facies*) that concealed witnesses will hear, thus supporting an accusation. Consequently, "between the roof and the ceiling, three senators cloister themselves away in a hiding place no less foul than their deception was abominable, and they move an ear to the holes and the cracks" (*Ann.* 4.69.1 *tectum inter et laquearia tres senatores haud minus turpi latebra quam detestanda fraude sese abstrudunt, foraminibus et rimis aurem admovent*). At this point, the fourth senator inveigles Sabinus into joining him in his seemingly private bedroom where he coaxes him into criticizing Sejanus and even Tiberius, securing the accusation and grounds for writing to the emperor about the matter. Even if Tiberius is not directly involved, his detachment

⁶⁹² Agrippina is banished to the island of Pandateria in 29 where she dies in 33 through fasting. Nero is banished, likely in 30, to the Pontian islands where he is compelled to commit suicide in 30 or 31.

from the body politic facilitates the conditions that lead to the covert surveillance of one of his subjects.⁶⁹³

The consequences of this espionage dissolve the bonds of civic society, plunging each man into his own literal and figurative solitude. "At no other time," Tacitus writes, "was the state more anxious and panicked, secretive towards those closest to them: meetings, conversations, and ears familiar and unfamiliar were avoided; even things mute and lifeless, such as roofs and walls were looked at with suspicion" (*Ann.* 4.69.3 *non alias magis anxia et pavens civitas, tegens adversum proximos; congressus, conloquia, notae ignotaeque aures vitari; etiam muta atque inanima, tectum et parietes circumspectabantur.*). News of Sabinus' entrapment isolates each man from his fellows; the only safety lies in solitude, and even this is suspect.

The end of Tacitus' account of Sabinus' persecution reinforces this image of society's disintegration. When he learns of the matter by letter, Tiberius writes back denouncing Sabinus, whereupon the obedient senate condemns the equestrian. In the reader's final glimpse of Sabinus, he is dragged off in bonds, defiantly shouting, yet wherever he turns, "there is flight and desolation, the roads and the fora are deserted" (*Ann.* 4.70.2 *fuga vastitas, deseri itinera fora*). Tiberius' hostility isolates Sabinus as men flee his danger, much as there is "flight and desolation" (Plin. *Pan.* 48.3 *fuga et vastitas*) in Domitian's palace immediately after an audience with him.⁶⁹⁴ Even though Tiberius is only indirectly involved in Sabinus' case, his distant,

⁶⁹³ Tiberius is "cloistered" (*Ann.* 1.24.1 *abstrusum...Tiberium*) and secretive in personality.

⁶⁹⁴ Tacitus draws his phrase from Pliny, cf. Bruère (1954) 174.

solitary style of rule sends a savage wind to Rome,⁶⁹⁵ giving rise to an atmosphere of surveillance and fear there that sets each man on his own. The solitary tyrant, Pliny and Tacitus suggest, turns civic society into an empty wasteland.

Much as Tacitus emphasizes the length of Tiberius' journey from Rome to Capri through narrative manipulation, our authors, Tacitus in particular, augment readers' sense of Tiberius' seclusion on Capri by their selective use and omission of historical evidence. While the physical distance between Rome and Capri and the impediments to timely communication between distant places in the premodern period undoubtedly limited Tiberius' contacts with those back in the City, Tacitus nevertheless downplays or omits how well connected Tiberius was on Capri to his family, friends, subordinates, and the senate.⁶⁹⁶

To begin with, Tiberius had friends and relations present with him on Capri, some living there as residents, others as guests for extended visits.⁶⁹⁷ Scattered literary notices afford a glimpse of the society that Tiberius kept on Capri. The retinue of Greek intellectuals who accompanied Tiberius on his journey south to Capri (Tac. *Ann.* 4.58.1) presumably spent time with him there, likely including his physician Charicles and his close friend and astrologer Thrasyllus, who may be among the 'flock of Chaldaeans' whom Juvenal portrays (10.94) perched on a cliff of Capri with

⁶⁹⁵ Tacitus' description of the beginning of 28 and of his account of Sabinus' persecution characterizes the year's beginning as a gloomy forecast, extending the theme of threatening weather from the previous chapter: "An inclement beginning to the year came on" (*Ann.* 4.68.1 *foedum anni principium incessit*). The savage winds from Capri have reached Rome, occasioning Sabinus' maltreatment. Cf. Woodman and Martin (1989) 248.

⁶⁹⁶ See esp. Houston (1985). For Capri under Tiberius, see Savino (1998) 426-37.

⁶⁹⁷ For friends and relations on Capri, and the dates and sources involved, see Houston (1985) 183-87, and Woodman (2017) 167-69, 275-76.

the emperor.⁶⁹⁸ Likewise, Tiberius' aristocratic companions on his journey, Cocceius Nerva, Curtius Atticus, and Sejanus, lived with him there, at least for a time, as did the future emperor Vitellius during his boyhood and youth (Suet. *Vit.* 3.2).

Among his relatives, Germanicus' son Drusus appears to have lived on Capri for some time until he was sent to Rome in 30 (Cass. Dio 58.3.8); his wife Aemilia Lepida may have joined him there. Drusus' brother the future emperor Gaius travelled to Capri in 30 or 31 (Suet. *Cal.* 10.2), where he apparently spent much of his time over the next seven years until Tiberius' death, likely joined by his wife Junia Claudilla when they married at some point during the early 30s in Antium (Cass. Dio 58.25.2), on which occasion Gaius escorted his grandfather to the ceremonies from Capri (Tac. *Ann.* 6.20.1).⁶⁹⁹

During his time on the island, Suetonius records that Gaius was beset by unnamed courtiers of Tiberius (*Cal.* 10.2 *qui iuxta erant*) who tried to entrap him in incriminating statements but that he proved so obsequious that he was called the best slave and the worst master, a statement that Tacitus attributes (*Ann.* 6.20.1) to the senator and orator Passienus Crispus, implying his presence on the island as well. In the final year of Tiberius' reign, Tacitus records (*Ann.* 6.45.3-46.5) Tiberius' conversations with Gaius and Sertorius Macro, his praetorian prefect, as well as Macro's attempt to cultivate Gaius, including through the agencies of his wife, all of which

⁶⁹⁸ Thrasyllus vacations with Tiberius and Augustus on Capri in 14 (Suet. *Aug.* 98.4) and interacts with Tiberius during his later retirement (Cassius Dio 58.27-28, Suet. *Tib.* 62); Charicles regularly gave Tiberius medical advice late in life and a scene in Tacitus and Suetonius places him across the bay from Capri at Tiberius' villa at Misenum (*Ann.* 6.50.2-3, *Tib.* 72.3). An inscription from Rome (AE (1960) 26 = AJA (1959) 384) also records the Greek Tiberius Iulius Pappus as Tiberius' *comes* and the superintendent of his libraries, likely those of his villas including those on Capri (Houston (1985) 186). For Tiberius' library on Capri, see below.

⁶⁹⁹ Tiberius also presides in person (Tac. *Ann.* 4.75) apparently at Capri over the initial ceremonies of marriage of Agrippina the Younger to Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus in 28 before they complete the wedding at Rome.

evidently transpires on Capri, for Tacitus ends his account of these events by explicitly shifting the narrative to Rome (*Ann.* 6.47.1 *interim Romae*).⁷⁰⁰ An image thus emerges, however obscure, of a circulating group of friends, relations and courtiers who shared Tiberius' company on Capri.

Tiberius' household on Capri as a whole may have numbered in the hundreds.⁷⁰¹ Tiberius' desire for security and solitude necessitated a garrison of troops (*Tac. Ann.* 4.67.2, *Suet. Tib.* 62.2) who also facilitated his vigorous epistolary correspondence (*Ann.* 4.41.2). To satisfy his notorious sexual appetites, Tiberius established domestic brothels on the island, stocking them with prostitutes, while as noted above, he stationed costumed youths of both genders in the woods of the island for the same purpose. Other stories of his time on Capri recount his abuse of little boys, freeborn youths, a sacrificial attendant, a flute-player, an adult woman, and slaves who procured them from their parents or other relatives.⁷⁰²

Four inscriptions provide further evidence for the presence of imperial slaves born and raised on Capri under Augustus or Tiberius before they moved elsewhere. Their occupations (librarian, secretary, hairdresser; unstated) provide a glimpse of the hundreds of slaves and freedmen of manifold occupations required to maintain Tiberius' twelve villas on Capri (*Tac. Ann.* 4.67.3), the largest of which (villa of Ino) was approximately a third as large as the Domus Tiberiana at

⁷⁰⁰ Macro also delivers Tiberius' letter against Sejanus to the Senate from Capri (*Cass. Dio* 58.9.2). Gaius and Tiberius Gemellus on Capri in 37 (*Jos. AJ* 18.205-23).

⁷⁰¹ For this estimate, cf. Booms (2010) 136.

⁷⁰² See *Tac. Ann.* 6.1.1-2, *Suet. Tib.* 43-45, *Vit.* 3.2, with Champlin (2011b), (2015), and Woodman (2017) 90-92.

Rome at 5400 square metres and possessed immense food preparation facilities indicating the presence of a large household staff.⁷⁰³

Clearly, Tiberius was not alone or secluded on Capri in the everyday senses of these terms. As the discussion above has illustrated, however, our literary sources for Tiberius' reclusive behaviour downplay or omit this evidence for Tiberius' interaction with his friends, relations, slaves, and freedmen because, in their view, the emperor's relocation to Capri physically embodied his estrangement from Rome and its civic community, not from his close associates and subordinates. No matter how many people he interacted with on Capri, Tiberius' solitude in these literary accounts makes clear that with respect to the senate and people of Rome, Tiberius was off on his own. A more veristic portrait of the emperor's household on Capri would impede readers from perceiving this lack of a relationship.

It is for a similar reason that our sources downplay Tiberius' continued engagement in imperial administration and connections to social and political life at Rome from the seclusion of Capri. To begin with, Tiberius was well connected with the rest of the empire on Capri. While Tacitus stresses Capri's detachment (*Ann.* 4.67.1 *diunctam*) from the Surrentine peninsula by a sea, other authors draw attention to its proximity to this same part of the mainland, and indeed, contemporary research on Mediterranean islands in antiquity demonstrates that their separation from the mainland brings them maritime connectivity, not isolation.⁷⁰⁴ To wit, Tiberius' villas on

⁷⁰³ Inscriptions: CIL 6.8409, 6.8958 = ILS 1.1784, 10.6638, NSA (1895) 235; cf. Booms (2010). Jos. *AJ* 18.205, 18.211-14 records a freedman used as a messenger, and a pedagogue whose status is not given. Staff: Houston (1985) 187-91. For the villa of Ino, see Krause (1998), (2003), (2005), (2014).

⁷⁰⁴ Strabo writes (5.4.8) that it is only a "short voyage" from the Surrentine peninsula to Capri, while Cassius Dio asserts (52.43.2) that Capri is "not far" from the coast. Island connectivity: Borca (2000) 38, 155n28, Horden and Purcell (2000) 76, 133, 225, 227. On Capri in particular, Parker (2009) 69-70, 72.

Capri were situated across the bay from the strategically important naval base at Misenum, a key hub from which military activities across the western Mediterranean were conducted. From his vantage point on Capri, Tiberius was correspondingly better situated to oversee military activities in this part of the empire and several times our literary sources furnish evidence suggesting that Tiberius was preoccupied with imperial business during his time there.⁷⁰⁵

Numerous accounts of Tiberius' epistolary correspondence with the senate from Capri in Tacitus' narrative provide further historical evidence of the emperor's continued involvement in government, yet Tacitus reconfigures them to call attention to the emperor's continuous absence from Rome and to his covert surveillance of and attacks upon the aristocracy.⁷⁰⁶ In Tacitus' narrative, the absent Tiberius corresponds with the senate or with aristocrats individually on a wide variety of matters that reflect his continued participation in political life at Rome, such as legislation, religious procedure and criminal cases.⁷⁰⁷ Yet for Tacitus, Tiberius' epistolary involvement in state matters is inevitably malign and most importantly for the present argument, repeatedly calls attention to his continued absence and estrangement from the senate. Tacitus' vivid descriptions of the emperor's communiqués being read in the senate and the senators' reactions to them create the dramatic impression that Tiberius is present with them.

⁷⁰⁵ Parker (2009) 69-70, 73-74, Lopez Sanchez (2014). Houston (1985) 182, notes Capri's proximity to the important commercial port of Puteoli and estimates that a trip by sea from Capri to Misenum (29 km) or vice-versa would take between 4-8 hrs. Preoccupation with business: Sejanus urges Tiberius to retire to Capri, promising that there will be peace and quiet for the most important business there (Tac. *Ann.* 4.41.3) and later Tiberius begs off leaving the island to attend his mother's funeral due to the importance of the business that he is dealing with (*Ann.* 5.2.1), an instance of his unending preoccupation with administration while on Capri (Plut. *De Exil.* 9).

⁷⁰⁶ For literary approaches to Tiberius' letters in the *Annales*, see Morello (2006), Galtier (2008), and Devillers (2014) 292-96.

⁷⁰⁷ Tacitus records letters to or from Tiberius after his retirement to Capri at *Ann.* 4.69.3, 4.70.1, 4.70.4, 5.2.1-2, 5.3.1-2, 6.2.3-4, 6.3.1-2, 6.5.1-6.6.2, 6.7.2, 6.9.2, 6.9.3, 6.12.1-3, 6.15.1-3, 6.25.2, 6.27.3, 6.29.2, 6.30.3, 6.39.2.

Tacitus does not always mark the epistolary nature of what the absent Tiberius says to the senate, creating the image of Tiberius directly communicating to the senators.⁷⁰⁸

In 32, for instance, when the senator Togonius Gallus proposes that the senate allot the emperor an armed senatorial escort whenever he enters the curia, Tacitus drily remarks that Gallus evidently believed Tiberius' earlier letter in 31 requesting a consular escort from Capri to Rome that he subsequently spurned. Gallus, in other words, credulously believes that Tiberius' return to the City is imminent. Tacitus then fittingly presents Tiberius' sardonic epistolary reply as a direct response, as if he were already present: "Tiberius, accustomed to mix ridicule with seriousness, gave thanks to the benevolence of the fathers..." (*Ann.* 6.2.4), whereupon he asks a series of subversive questions that illustrate the impractical nature of Gallus' proposal.

Tiberius' amusement here seems partially derived from the fact that the senator has misinterpreted his wishes, a situation caused at least in part by the inherently ambiguous nature of his written correspondence. The senator cannot evaluate Tiberius' tone and expression or ask a follow-up question due to the emperor's absence, a situation that could cause the senate manifest unease (*Ann.* 5.3-4). In the same letter, however, Tacitus reports that in response to Junius Gallio, who has proposed a new privilege for praetorian soldiers, "Tiberius issues a violent rebuke, asking him as if in person (*velut coram*

⁷⁰⁸ Morello (2006) 346, 351. As Morello comments (346), "Tiberius's letters, it seems, are now peculiarly effective in achieving one of the main aims of all letters: to bring the isolated, absent writer into the presence of his addressees." Woodman (2017) 109, calculates a delivery time of roughly three weeks for letters between Rome and Capri.

rogitans)" (*Ann.* 6.3.1) what his intentions are in proposing such military rewards, traditionally an imperial prerogative.

Tiberius' letters to the senate in the *Annales* thus reflect his continued concern with political and social life at Rome, yet their simultaneously vivid and baffling nature in Tacitus' narrative renders the emperor a virtual presence in the senate only to call renewed attention to his persistent absence from Rome and to his abiding hostility toward the senate itself.⁷⁰⁹ Precisely when Tacitus has Tiberius appear to speak directly to the senators from his island solitude, his harsh and ambiguous responses highlight his continuing absence and estrangement from that legislative body.

Tiberius' letters to the senate in Tacitus' narrative also contribute to the sense that the emperor's solitude allows him to covertly surveil members of the political community, which eventually leads to outbursts of verbal or physical violence against them from the security of his seclusion. While Tiberius' distance from Rome in Capri prevented him from scrutinizing his subjects himself, we have already seen in the case of Titius Sabinus how his four consular accusers keep Tiberius apprised of their espionage by letter (*Ann.* 4.69.3). More frequent are Tiberius' epistolary attacks. These most often consist of verbal outbursts against an opponent,⁷¹⁰ but they also include what men earlier in his reign call "bloody letters" (*Ann.* 3.44.3 *cruentas epistulas*), imperial dispatches, that is, where the emperor's words lead to material consequences such as exile, suicide, and execution. The most important such letter likely appeared in a section of

⁷⁰⁹ For unmarked epistolary correspondence, see also *Ann.* 3.48.1, 6.9.4, 6.10.2, 6.13.1, 6.16.3, 6.19.1, 2, 6.23.1, 6.24.1, 6.25.1.

⁷¹⁰ Letters with criticism of someone: *Ann.* 4.70.1, 4.70.4, 5.2.1-2, 5.3.1-2, 6.2.3-4, 6.25.2, 6.27.3, 6.29.2.

Annales 5 that does not survive, when Tiberius' letter to the senate in 31 led to the execution of his former associate Sejanus.⁷¹¹

Tiberius' final epistolary correspondence in Tacitus' account encapsulates all of these themes. In 35, the historian writes, Tiberius continued to mete out harsh punishments. During this time, he continues, two senators committed suicide and two were executed, all due to treason charges, developments that Tiberius learns about by letter not from Capri but from nearby, likely Antium.⁷¹²

"Tiberius was learning of these things, not divided as formerly by the sea, nor through long-distance messengers, but next to the City, so that he replied to the consuls' letters on the same day or after the interval of a night, looking, as it were, on the blood billowing through each house or at the hands of the butchers (*quasi aspiciens undantem per domos sanguinem aut manus carnificum*)" (*Ann.* 6.39.2)

Tacitus characterizes Tiberius' continued correspondence with the state's chief magistrates as a heinous crime. Despite corresponding by letter, Tiberius physically scrutinizes his subjects, apparently from an unobserved vantage point, as they are enveloped with blood and slaughter, his own handiwork, as the passage implies. Precisely where Tacitus' account provides historical evidence for Tiberius' close and repeated epistolary correspondence with Rome's political community from near at hand, the historian characterizes him as a solitary tyrant, gazing down upon the waves of destruction that he has unleashed through his bloody letters, another instance of his tendency in Tacitus to surveil and attack his subjects from his seclusion.

This account of Tiberius standing just outside the City corresponding with the consuls also highlights another aspect of the emperor's continued engagement with life at Rome that our

⁷¹¹ See also *Ann.* 6.3, 6.9.2, 6.39.2. On the Sejanus-letter: Cass. Dio 58.9.2-10.8, Suet. *Tib.* 65.2, Juv. 10.71-72, Phil. *Leg. ad Gaium* 37.

⁷¹² For the location, see Woodman (2017) 251.

sources - again principally Tacitus - downplay, omit, or recontextualize in order to create a stark portrait of his physical isolation and the estrangement that it represents. That is, our sources redeploy evidence of Tiberius' repeated trips back to the mainland and to Rome's environs in particular in order to emphasize the emperor's failure actually to re-enter Rome, thus transforming further evidence of Tiberius' continued contact with society at Rome into evidence for the durability of his seclusion.⁷¹³ Despite emphatic statements at Tiberius' departure from Rome that the emperor would never return, all of our sources to a greater or lesser extent obscure the fact that Tiberius made repeated trips to the mainland at least once a year for the last six years of his reign, even coming up to Rome's walls, though he never crossed Rome's *pomerium*.⁷¹⁴

Suetonius, for example, erroneously reports (*Tib.* 72) that Tiberius attempted to return to Rome only twice during the time of his retirement to Capri, emphasizing the paucity of this number, as well as Tiberius' suspicion of the public and his failure to actually re-enter the City.⁷¹⁵ In 32, he writes, Tiberius sailed all the way to Gardens of Caesar at the edge of Rome's formal boundary yet Suetonius supplies no motivation for his journey or for his failure to enter the City proper, only noting that the emperor deployed troops along the banks of the Tiber to keep people from approaching him, drawing attention to his abiding reclusiveness rather than his continued contacts with those in the City. Tiberius' second attempt in Suetonius' account (*Tib.* 72) is dated to 37. Here too, the biographer's account draws attention to the emperor's failure to re-enter the

⁷¹³ For Tiberius' journeys off of Capri from 26-37, see Rogers (1945), Parker (2009) 72-73, Champlin (2008) 423, (2014) 239-40, 'Appendix 1: Itinera Tiberi' (unpublished). The tyrant lurks in his house and is reluctant to travel abroad due to fear of danger from others (Pl. *Rep.* 9.579b-c, Xen. *Hier.* 1.12, 2.8-10).

⁷¹⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 4.57.1, 4.58.2, Suet. *Tib.* 39, Cass. Dio 58.1.1.

⁷¹⁵ On Suetonius' account of Tiberius' returns to Rome's vicinity, see Syme (1983) 23, Thorburn (2008) 446, and Champlin (2008) 422-23, and (2014) 239.

City and his strained relations with those within while omitting a rationale for his journey. Tiberius, he writes, came within seven miles of Rome, sighted the city walls and left in fear without approaching them, because ants had eaten his pet snake, which he took as a cautionary omen to beware the power of the multitude, whereupon he returned south toward Campania, dying soon thereafter at Misenum.

This brief, incomplete account of Tiberius' returns to Rome's vicinity in 32 and 37 neglects evidence (supplied below) that he made similar journeys from 33-36. These omissions render Suetonius' Tiberius more of a 'homebody' on Capri, a portrait that balances his report earlier in Tiberius' biography (*Tib.* 38) that the emperor did not leave Rome for the first two years of his reign and scarcely left the City for some time after that, though he often feigned plans of doing so in order to review the provinces and the armies.⁷¹⁶ In each case, the emperor's reluctance to travel from his primary residence characterizes him as a tyrant,⁷¹⁷ while his two reported returns to Rome's vicinity obscure his continued relations with those in the City, instead drawing attention to his failure actually to re-enter Rome and to his abiding suspicions of his subjects, preserving the link in Suetonius' biography between Tiberius' reclusiveness and his antisocial nature.

Tacitus too either neglects to mention Tiberius' journeys to places near the City (for the years 34, 36, 37) or reports his travel to the mainland (28) or to the Rome's vicinity (32, 33, 35) in a manner that emphasizes Tiberius' failure actually to enter Rome and his enduring alienation from

⁷¹⁶ Also noted at *Ann.* 1.47.3, 3.47.2, 4.4.2.

⁷¹⁷ See note 713 above. Cassius Dio also reports (58.1.1) that Tiberius was always sending messages that he intended to return to Rome from Capri, but never followed through.

those in the City.⁷¹⁸ In 28, Tacitus records Tiberius' journey with Sejanus to nearby Campania to meet delegations of senate, knights and plebs yet he reports the episode in terms that call attention to the two men's continued inaccessibility to and aloofness from civic society at Rome. After the senate sycophantically prays to the island-bound Tiberius and Sejanus that they "make an opportunity for being seen" (*Ann.* 4.74.2 *visendi sui copiam facerent*), Tacitus prefaces his report of the two men's affirmative reaction by first relating that they did not go to Rome or its vicinity. The ensuing encounter is thus reframed as a reluctant half-measure: "it seemed enough to neglect the island and be seen in the nearest part of Campania" (4.74.3 *satis visum omittere insulam et in proximo Campaniae aspici*).

Tacitus describes the meetings in a manner that calls further attention to the two men's continued reclusivity. Senate, equestrians and many plebeians flock to Campania to see them, but they have little luck seeing either Sejanus or Tiberius. At Rome, Tacitus observes, the bustle of Rome's crowds conceals each man's business, but "lying prostrate with no distinction" (*Ann.* 4.74.4 *iacentes nullo discrimine*) over plain and shore their common abasement is all too clear as they all struggle with Sejanus' doorkeepers simply to gain an audience with the emperor's associate who has himself become more difficult to reach (4.74.3 *Seianum cuius durior congressus*).

Sejanus' arrogant inaccessibility, in other words, has erased the proper distinctions of rank, transforming all alike into an indiscriminate mob of slaves camped outside his lodgings (4.74.4

⁷¹⁸ Tacitus reports visits to Campania (*Ann.* 4.74) for 28; to the general vicinity of Rome for 32, to the gardens of Caesar near the Naumachia (*Ann.* 6.1.1, also *Suet. Tib.* 72.1, discussed above); 33, to four miles from the City (*Ann.* 6.15, also *Dio* 58.21.1); 35, near Rome (*Ann.* 6.39.2, also *Dio* 58.25.2). Generalizing statements about visits to places near Rome at *Ann.* 4.58.3, 6.1.1, 6.15.3. Visits not reported by Tacitus: in 33, to Antium (*Dio* 58.25.2, event reported at *Ann.* 6.20.1, but no location mentioned, dated to 35 in *Dio*, 33 in *Tac.*); in 34, to Alba and Tusculum (*Dio* 58.24.1); in 36, to Tusculum (*Jos. AJ* 18.179); possibly in 36/37 in the vicinity of Antium; an inscription found there

foedum illud in propatulo servitium). Tiberius, by contrast, is not specifically mentioned once after receiving the senate's prayers to grant them an audience. Tacitus uses plural and passive verbal constructions to describe the two men's travel to Campania in lieu of Rome before shifting his attention to Sejanus' inaccessibility. After coming ashore, Tiberius thus disappears from the passage, creating the impression that he met no one at all. Tacitus' account of a group of delegations that travelled from Rome in 28 to meet the emperor and his associate in Campania transforms Tiberius into a ghostly presence who wholly evades the attempts of the political community to reestablish contact while Sejanus plays the petty tyrant, keeping the emperor's servile subjects at a distance.

Two representative examples illustrate how Tacitus reconfigures Tiberius' journeys back to Rome's environs in order to support his portrait of the emperor as spatially and socially isolated from the City. First, Tacitus characterizes Tiberius' various returns to the neighbourhood of Rome as a form of siege, transforming Tiberius' enduring relationship with the City into further evidence for the threatening, violent nature of his seclusion. We have already examined the most graphic example of this motif above (*Ann.* 6.39.2), when Tacitus pictures Tiberius overlooking Rome from near at hand, surveying the slaughter that he brought to pass through his letters.

Tacitus provides a more generalized instance of this motif in his initial notice of Tiberius' departure. After willingly going into self-exile, he writes, astrologers were technically correct in their predictions that Tiberius would never re-enter the City, though they were mistaken about everything else, since he passed much his later life in rural or maritime parts of Rome's

(CIL 6.903 = ILS 160) records a dedication to Tiberius for games; in 37, seven miles from Rome on the Via Appia, at Astura and Circeii (Suet. *Tib.* 72.2).

suburbium, "and often sitting before (or 'besieging') the city walls" (*Ann.* 4.58.3 *saepe ad moenia adsidens*). Tacitus uses ambivalent language here (*adsidere*) to characterize Tiberius' visits to Rome's vicinity as a series of hostile attacks,⁷¹⁹ a malign interpretation that appears to date back to Tiberius' reign, when popular verses disparaged Tiberius as a new Marius returned from exile to savage Rome (Suet. *Tib.* 59.2). Behaviour that might be interpreted less pejoratively as maintaining relations with those in Rome instead evokes a sense of deep estrangement.

Second, in 32, Tiberius journeys to the gardens of Caesar near the Naumachia by the Tiber, yet in Tacitus' account (*Ann.* 6.1.1), the emperor's visit appears to be a sham.⁷²⁰ After desultory attempts to visit the vicinity of the City that keep everyone in suspense and with no mention of any action performed or meetings held during his stay, Tiberius scuttles back to his lonely island. An event that appears to be based on Tiberius' continued contact with the aristocracy in Rome is instead marshalled to reflect the emperor's preference for solitude and his ingrained penchant for dissimulation, in other words, his social distance.

Tacitus' masterful phrasing reinforces this effect. In the second sentence of his account, Tiberius' visit to Rome's vicinity is reduced to two participial phrases (*saepe in propinqua degressus, aditis iuxta Tiberim hortis*) while the single verb of the main clause (*repetiit*) announces Tiberius' flight back to Capri, marking his retreat from Rome as the most important event in this account of the emperor's journey. There follows a dependent relative clause that explains that the lusts and crimes that compelled Tiberius to return to Capri in shame were then so unbridled that

⁷¹⁹ Houston (1985) 183, Woodman and Martin (1989) 226-27, Woodman (1998b) 150, Champlin (2014) 240n92, Devillers (2014) 290n26. For the imagery of the tyrant's 'war' on Rome in the *Annales*, including Tiberius, see Keitel (1984) 307-12.

⁷²⁰ Cf. Suetonius' account of the same visit (*Tib.* 72.1), discussed above.

he thereupon sexually violated some freeborn youth. The phrasing of Tacitus' account thus twists his report of Tiberius' return to Rome's environs in order to imply that the most important part of it was the emperor's retirement back to "the rocks and the solitude of the sea" (*saxa et solitudinem maris*), while the result clause relates that the consequence of these events was Tiberius' return to debauchery after a brief break.

Evidence for Tiberius' connections to the outside world on Capri, including his correspondence with those in Rome, as well as his repeated journeys to the neighbourhood of the City is liable to undermine the image of Tiberius as isolated and solitary. Such information demonstrates that our sources were not compelled to portray the emperor's relocation to Capri so starkly as a withdrawal to solitude and a rupture with society in the City. By reappropriating this evidence, however, to lend further emphasis to Tiberius' isolation on Capri and his failure to enter Rome, our sources prevent such information about the emperor's continued contacts with Rome and the mainland from obscuring a deeper truth. Tiberius was a tyrant who lacked a meaningful relationship with civic society Rome.

It is fitting then that in some accounts, just as with Domitian several decades later, Tiberius' life ends in solitude. Among the various accounts of the latter emperor's death, Suetonius reports (*Tib.* 73) that as he returned to the Bay of Naples from his final abortive trip to Rome, Tiberius was forced by poor weather and his declining health to divert from his intended destination of Capri, stopping instead at the villa of the Republican dynast Lucullus at Misenum, where he soon died. Suetonius reports several different accounts of the emperor's final moments, the last of which he draws from Seneca. In a scene rich with symbolism, Seneca recounts that, when he

sensed that he was dying, Tiberius took off his ring and stretched it out as if to give it to someone, but then put it back on his finger and clenched his left hand into a fist, lying still for a long while. Finally, he suddenly called for his servants, and when no one responded, he got out of bed and soon collapsed, this time for good. While this momentary glimpse of Seneca's narrative prevents certainty, the richly symbolic nature of the scene may offer insight into Tiberius' style of rule. For a moment, he is ready to hand over the symbol of his power before deciding to keep it for himself. But when the selfish emperor calls for assistance, there is no one to help him.

Tacitus identifies a similar form of physical and social solitude in the final period of the Tiberius' life as a whole. In his obituary of the emperor at the end of *Annales* 6 (*Ann.* 6.51.3), Tacitus marks the stages of Tiberius' life by the tenure of the prominent associate or associates whom he relied upon most to rule. Each period ends with the demise of the emperor's partner(s) in power, inducing a progressive decline in Tiberius' character as he loses another associate. After an exceptional life and reputation during Augustus' reign, Tacitus writes, the beginning of Tiberius' own period of rule was marked by concealment and deception in the formation of his virtues, while he relied on Germanicus and Drusus. After they died and his mother Livia became his most prominent associate, Tiberius was a mix of good and bad. Upon her demise and the rise of Sejanus, Tiberius' savagery increased, yet he still repressed his lusts out of fear and affection for his friend and helper.

Yet in the final phrase of the sixth book, Tacitus concludes, upon Sejanus' execution, Tiberius at last erupted into wickedness "when, with his shame and fear removed, he had only himself to

rely on" (*postquam remoto pudore et metu suo tantum ingenio utebatur*).⁷²¹ The reclusive emperor's life course in Tacitus' obituary of him is one of progressive decline and increasing isolation as he loses one partner in power after another to death and treachery until he is left alone, both physically in his island-based seclusion on Capri and socially, in his inability to find and retain reliable partners to share power with. As Woodman has observed of the Tacitean Tiberius, "it is therefore the bitterest of ironies that despite his best efforts, Tiberius spent the last period of his life in the solitariness which he had dreaded at the start".⁷²² In the view of many Romans during his lifetime and afterwards, Tiberius had never truly been a part of Roman society, an interpretation no doubt brought on in part by his penchant for seclusion. In turn, the belief of some that Tiberius did not meaningfully participate in civic society at Rome led them to see his reclusive habits as a symbol of this issue, prompting them to downplay evidence of his continued proximity and relations to others as immaterial to this larger truth.

5. Conclusion

This chapter has examined accounts of the reclusive behaviour of the emperors Tiberius and Domitian that construe the emperor's psychic or physical seclusion in a variety of settings in and outside of Rome as a symbol his detachment from its civic society. The first section analyzes the aristocratic ideal of imperial accessibility, which was often thought to express - however speciously - the emperor's status as a citizen ruler whose authority and legitimacy were derived from his fellow citizens. By contrast, an emperor's reclusive behaviour could suggest that he did not consider himself to share such a lowly status with his subjects. Section two addresses figurative instances of imperial seclusion, when the emperor's inscrutability and aloofness are

⁷²¹ This follows Woodman's (2004) 194, translation of this sentence, based on his interpretation of Tiberius' obituary, which is followed here. See note 590 for references.

⁷²² Woodman (2017) 315.

described as a spatialized form of self-concealment within a private self-space inaccessible to interlocutors. Physical withdrawal and solitude at Rome and the Bay of Naples form the subjects of sections three and four. They identify the reclusive behaviour of both emperors in a variety of physical settings while analyzing how authors sometimes reconfigure evidence of the emperor's continued engagement with society in order to fit their portraits of imperial solitude. Many of the accounts of imperial self-seclusion examined in this chapter, psychic and physical, favourable and hostile, link the emperor's retreat to solitude to his scrutiny of his subjects from an unobserved position. In the negative portraits, such solitary surveillance prefigures verbal or physical attacks that harm individuals and dissolve the bonds of civic society as a whole, stranding each man in his own personal solitude.

The various accounts of imperial seclusion examined in this chapter demonstrate a shared belief that these two reclusive emperors did not meaningfully participate in Rome's political community as citizens among fellow citizens and, indeed, that they scarcely participated in civic life at all. Instead, they portray Tiberius and Domitian as ruling alone, drawing their authority and legitimacy from themselves or from the gods rather than from the society that they ruled. Yet the diverse passages cited in this chapter provide sharply contrasting perspectives on the nature and significance of this imperial detachment. They raise the question of whether the emperor's detachment from civic life rendered him, to use Aristotle's dichotomy again (*Pol.* 1253a), a god or a beast, or in other words, whether his self-separation from his fellow citizens illustrated his greatness or his depravity. In Statius' laudatory poetry, Domitian's physical remoteness is associated with his status as a god-like monarch who consorts with other divinities and whose magnificence renders him unapproachable and scarcely visible to his subjects. In the unfavorable

portraits furnished by the post-Domitianic writers Pliny, Tacitus, and Suetonius, however, the propensity of both Tiberius and Domitian for solitude characterizes them as tyrants whose inaccessibility and isolation physically express the mutual antipathy that exists between them and their subjects.

However, the solitary emperor's unobserved surveillance of his subjects demonstrates that his detachment from civic life should not be confused with a lack of interest in society. Indeed, it expresses a form of unaccountable power, whether this is construed as benign or nefarious. Such concealed visual scrutiny subjects individuals to the emperor's gaze, while those subject to his gaze cannot always be sure if or when they are being watched. Further, they cannot reciprocate his watchful scrutiny and, implicitly, wield the power that comes from such visual access. Such unwatched watching need not be malign. In the *Silvae*, for instance, Domitian's gaze over the City or its amphitheatre from a place that is unseen or that cannot be visually mastered expresses how he benevolently regulates his subjects' freedoms and orderly behaviour as a god-like figure. In hostile accounts, by contrast, the emperor's use of his solitude to mount verbal and physical attacks on others vividly illustrates the abuses of such unaccountable imperial power.

The diverse representations of Tiberius and Domitian's reclusive behaviour examined in this chapter reveal close attention to the emperor's reserve and inscrutability as well as to his concentration of power apart from the aristocracy and Rome's traditional civic institutions, issues of no little saliency during the first and early second centuries CE. Tacitus writes that secrecy and concealment were essential features of the principate as a whole, using terms such as *arcanus* ('secret') that are subtended by metaphors of physical seclusion, a verbal and conceptual

association that allows readers to link the emperor's psychic and physical isolation with the atmosphere of secrecy that characterized his reign as a whole.⁷²³

Similarly, while the association between seclusion and concentrated political power dates back to Greek literature and beyond to the court of the Great King of Persia, the image of the reclusive autocrat has a renewed relevance in literature of the early imperial period.⁷²⁴ Over the course of the first and early second centuries CE, Rome had become a monarchy in all but name that vested increasing power in the emperor, whose court society gradually displaced the functions and authority of Rome's traditional civic institutions. While much like the upper classes, in practice Rome's emperors sought seclusion and solitude for a variety of reasons, this chapter has illustrated how an emperor's reclusive behaviour was sometimes associated with the independent, unaccountable nature of his superior power, a trait that prompted a variety of responses from aristocratic authors ranging from worshipful awe to scorn and condemnation.

These accounts from Statius' *Silvae*, Pliny's *Panegyricus*, Tacitus' *Annales*, and Suetonius *Vitae Caesarum* use the image of the solitary emperor to reveal two sharply contrasting perspectives on the nature of imperial power during the reigns of Tiberius and Domitian. At the same time however, these portraits of imperial solitude and seclusion reveal a shared sense that these two emperors ruled Roman society from an inaccessible outside position, endowed with a unique

⁷²³ For statements about the secrets (*arcana* vel sim.) of empire, see *Hist.* 1.4.2, *Ann.* 1.6.3, 2.36.2, 2.59.2. For the association of *arcanus* in ancient authors with *arx* 'citadel' or *arca* 'safe', *arcere* 'to enclose, keep at a distance', see Maltby (1991) 46-47. A similar connection might be made for adjectives such as *abstrusus* 'cloistered, concealed', *abditus* 'hidden away, secret', and *secretus* 'secret, secluded'. Cassius Dio (53.19) characterizes secrecy as endemic to the early imperial period as a whole.

⁷²⁴ On the Greek and Persian background of the image of the secluded tyrant, see Hdt. 1.98.2-100.2 and Plato *Rep.* 579B-C, and Braund (1996) 45, Asheri et al. (2007) 150-51, and Hulls (2014) 181-82.

status that separated them from their citizen subjects. Whether they were beasts or gods, our authors imply, these emperors exercised supreme authority over Roman society on their own.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1. Summary of Findings

As stated in the introduction to this project, contemporary scholarship on the early Roman empire and its literature recognizes how certain spaces such as city houses or villas viewed as set apart from more communal spaces including Rome's civic centre or the City as a whole were sometimes thought to help express the independent personal identity of the person who occupied such spaces. The present project has sought to expand on this by examining an especially marked form of spatial separation in early imperial literature, namely self-seclusion, and how it is sometimes thought to express non-conforming types of individual identity by expressing the secluded individual's profound estrangement from a group or community that he has withdrawn from. At the same time, this project has expanded this inquiry into a broader array of spaces ranging from the metaphorical space of the self, bedrooms, and courtrooms, to urban and suburban residences, to villas located along the Bay of Naples.

The different chapters of this project have identified this socio-spatial stance in a variety of social and spatial contexts. Seneca and other imperial Roman Stoics envision aligning their thoughts and actions with their moral convictions as a retreat to a secluded inner space of the self that will protect them from the temptation to accord moral value to the outside world, a stance they saw as a superior solution for coping with distressing circumstances, political and otherwise (chapter 2). Statius employs imagery drawn from Epicureanism and epic poetry in order to recontextualize the retirement of the Campanian magnate Pollius Felix from local politics to a villa-bound life of luxury and intellectual pursuits, reframing it as a heroic ascent to wisdom that matches Rome's imperial mission in its significance (chapter 3). Tacitus and Pliny portray poets

and advocates in secluded spaces including bedrooms, courtrooms, and the forest as these two authors debate whether the intellectual's position on the edge of cultural and political life at Rome expresses an empowering form of independence or a humiliating failure to integrate himself into society's networks of obligation and exchange (chapter 4).

These same two authors, as well as Statius and Suetonius, also highlight the reclusive tendencies of Tiberius and Domitian both in figurative, psychic terms as well as at their residences in and around Rome and the Bay of Naples. They emphasize this trait as part of their arguments, implicit or explicit, that these emperors did not meaningfully participate in the civic societies that they ruled, but instead derived their authority and legitimacy from themselves or from the gods, a sign of their supremacy or deviance depending on the author (chapter 5).

However, the purpose of these arguments is not to imply that these secluded individuals had no physical or social interaction with others. This project has shown how authors sometimes minimize the spatial presence of others as they represent their subjects as isolated in order to create a spatialized portrait from which readers can derive the desired interpretation. Tacitus, for instance, elides the presence of Tiberius' court on Capri so as to highlight the emperor's isolation from society in Rome. Likewise, even within these tendentious literary portraits of spatial isolation, the secluded person is not necessarily entirely alone. Tacitus' Maternus emphasizes the modern-day advocate's solitude as he pleads before a judge and a paltry audience of 'one or two' individuals (*Dial.* 39.4). For Maternus, advocates of the imperial period are secluded insofar as they are deprived of the large majority of the vast audiences that orators enjoyed during the Republic. In the case of metaphorical space, the Stoic sage can even enjoy spiritual solitude as he

stands amid the crowd that he is alienated from. Seclusion is a subjective interpretation of an individual's spatial positioning that can accommodate the proximity of others, provided that the person who makes this interpretation believes that the individual he observes is spatially separated from a sufficient number of others by a meaningful amount of spatial distance. The conceptual parameters of what counts as seclusion from others depend on the interpreter in question.

Likewise, these accounts of solitary estrangement do not suggest that the isolated individual was wholly without social attachments to others or, at times, to Roman society as a whole. Instead, they often reveal complex forms of engagement with others from the recluse's position on the physical and social margins of society. In *Silvae* 2.2, for instance, Pollius entertains Statius on his secluded estate, though his friend and client's ambitions of achieving literary prominence in society clash with Pollius' philosophical quietism. In the *Dialogus*, Maternus converses with his friends in his bedroom, rhapsodizing about the poet's psychic retreat from society, yet the dialogue opens with a notice that Maternus has caused a city-wide controversy by reciting his poetry and those present at the debate suggest that their private conversation will reach a broader audience, statements that are realized by the publication of the *Dialogus* itself. Likewise, when imperial Stoics imagine the sage withdrawing into himself, this facilitates his interaction with a community of like-minded individuals spread out over space and time. Much as with spatial seclusion, a lack of close affiliation with the cultural or political domains of society is a subjective quality that need not be absolute.

6.2. Broader Implications

Beyond the varying relationship between voluntary spatial seclusion and social estrangement identified in each of the four chapters, this project contributes more broadly to our understanding of Roman literature and cultural history in several ways. First, the spatial positioning identified in this project as seclusion appears in a wide variety of spatial contexts and scales of space in early imperial literature. At the smallest scale, imperial Stoics and at least one contemporary Epicurean are imagined to retreat into an inner psychic self-space, away from the world around them. On the broader canvas of physical space, we have seen other reclusive individuals retreat to city houses and bedrooms therein, suburban estates, groves and forests, as well as villas farther removed from Rome. Even spaces more typically associated social interaction such as recitation halls and courtrooms function as sites of spatial isolation. The broad range of spaces associated with this spatial relationship illustrates the point stated above that seclusion is a subjective interpretation that can be linked to different scales and types of space.

At the same time, the presence of physically and socially marginalized individuals in these varied spaces illustrates the degree to which a shared spatial orientation links them across spatial categories such as spatialized metaphor, the city house, or the villa, that are often studied in isolation from each other. That is, literary accounts of behaviour in one or another type of space may be understood more fully by examining them in a broader context that includes other accounts of behaviour that share the same spatial orientation. For the reader of Tacitus, for instance, Tiberius' self-concealment on Capri appears as an extension of his visual inscrutability when he interacts with the senate. By describing them in similar spatial language, Tacitus conveys to the reader that both types of behaviour are linked. Tiberius was inaccessible to the senate long before he left Rome. Likewise, by describing Stoic self-scrutiny as a retreat into the

self, Seneca and certain other Stoic contemporaries are better able to parallel this mindset to physical withdrawal. Both are attempts to distance ourselves from turbulent, unreasoned emotions, yet spiritual withdrawal - adopting a Stoic mindset - is a safer, much more effective solution. Future scholarship could profitably study other spatial orientations across a wide variety of physical and metaphorical contexts.

Second, self-seclusion appears as a symbol of social estrangement in a wide variety of literary and social contexts. This socio-spatial relationship appears in many different non-fictional genres of imperial Latin literature. This project has shown its presence in occasional poetry, satire, dialogue, oratory, letters, history, biography, as well as philosophical writing.⁷²⁵ Likewise, self-separation is not associated with a particular ideology or school of philosophy during the imperial period. Chapters 2 and 3 illustrate how both Stoicism and Epicureanism could employ this stance to represent an individual's rejection of unrestrained emotions and irrational behaviour, as well as society as a whole, insofar as it is largely constituted of unenlightened individuals who lack a cogent plan for moral self-improvement. Somewhat similarly, Maternus (chapter 4) portrays the poet retreating away from a conflict-ridden vision of society to a hallowed literary utopia characterized by its superior morality. Chapter 5 shows how an emperor's physical reclusiveness was sometimes associated with his unwillingness or inability to engage with his subjects as a fellow member of the society that he ruled.

Self-seclusion could even be associated with continued participation in community life, though this stance calls attention to the fact that such engagement exists in tension with the secluded

individual's estrangement from the community. Stoics and inscrutable emperors could withdraw into themselves to avoid spiritually engaging with others, even as they continued their ostensive participation within a community whose values they did not fully share. On the other hand, in Aper and Maternus' depressing visions of the imperial poet and advocate, respectively, these intellectuals practice their chosen vocations in a society that sees no value in their professions and thus shuns public demonstrations of their eloquence. In Aper and Maternus' view, these figures do not actively seek out solitude for its own sake, but by continuing to practice occupations that are irrelevant to the public, they isolate themselves as a result of their life-choices. As this project has shown, self-isolation is often associated with retreat to the domains of leisure-time and private life, but it is not restricted to them.

Due to the variety of social contexts that self-seclusion is associated with, even within the narrowed parameters of this study's focus on its relation to estrangement, self-seclusion is not a static value. Its meaning in one context does not necessarily determine its context in another, even if two instances of this socio-spatial behaviour are related. For instance, in chapter 4, figures within the *Dialogus* and Pliny and Tacitus debate the significance of solitude, typically at cross purposes. Likewise, while scholarly debate is merited over the degree to which Statius subtly tempers his praise of Domitian in the *Silvae*, it is premature to conclude that parallels between Domitian's reclusive portrait in the *Silvae* and in accounts written after his death count as evidence that the former bears a similar meaning to the latter, which associates the emperor's secretiveness with his tyranny.⁷²⁶ Such a statement is an interesting hypothesis in need of

⁷²⁵ As stated in the introduction, this project has restricted itself to non-fictional literature. Future studies could take a similar approach to fictional Latin literature. See, e.g. Manioti (2017) for a similar reading of Ariadne's island isolation in Catullus 64.

⁷²⁶ See e.g. Malamud (2007) 243-44, McCullough (2008/9).

evidence, not itself evidence. The significance assigned to an individual's seclusion is subject to personal interpretation, which will be influenced but not determined by a variety of factors.

Third and more broadly, this project provides insight into the priorities and security of privileged elite men who were nevertheless not thought to be firmly integrated into Roman society's cultural and political hierarchies. Many of the instances of self-seclusion examined in this project reveal the isolated individual's sustained interest in achieving traditional cultural ideals ranging from wealth to recognition by oneself or by one's peers for qualities such as leadership, independence, or one's overall importance as an individual.⁷²⁷ Often, the withdrawals examined in this project reflect a belief that these objects can be more easily met outside of society, in a more intimate, personal domain of life that is less subject to competition by elite peers or dominance by the emperor. Stoics, the Epicurean Pollius and Maternus all withdraw to physical or psychic refuges that afford them the heightened autonomy that allows them to achieve their goals. In the former two cases, the empowerment derived from these withdrawals serves as a substitute for achievement within society's traditional venues for achievement such as public life or military service.

In the latter instance, however, Maternus optimistically hopes that the prestige he accumulates by withdrawing to the groves and thickets and producing fine writing will also afford him a comparably eminent position within society as a whole.⁷²⁸ By contrast, in the case of Aper and Maternus' respective representations of contemporary poets and orators, these figures hope to

⁷²⁷ On proxy discourses, see pgs. 106-7.

⁷²⁸ In letters 1.6 and 9.10, Pliny also hopes to achieve posthumous fame within society through his solitary writing, though he does not manifest any comparable sense of estrangement from society.

achieve material and reputational compensation for their efforts from society directly. Their isolation illustrates their failure to fulfill these objectives.

At times some of these instances of self-isolation reveal a certain vulnerability, reflecting the hazards that members of the upper classes faced who were thought to be poorly integrated into Roman society's networks of exchange. For Aper's poet, this vulnerability is material: poets lack friends and must do everything on their own, revealing their helplessness. Yet in other cases, self-isolation reveals more serious forms of susceptibility to ill fortune. Maternus discusses eloquence in the security of his bedroom and fantasizes about a spiritual retreat that is untainted by the destruction that he attributes to forensic oratory. At the same time, however, the *Dialogus* contains premonitions that Maternus' end is near, possibly due to some sort of powerful opponent, and his description of the groves and thickets contains allusive hints that it contains precisely the sort of violence and pollution that Maternus seeks to avoid. Somewhat similarly, in his *Panegyric*, Pliny asserts that Domitian's hopes for finding security in the seclusion of his palace were misguided, for it did nothing to protect him against the resentment of his subjects. The Stoics also characterize hopes for security through seclusion and retreat as misguided. By suggesting spiritual withdrawal as a solution to feelings of vulnerability, they advocate making one's spiritual peace with the potential that our bodies and everything else in our lives may suffer harm from a powerful opponent such as the emperor. For Stoics then, advocating for spiritual retreat over its physical counterpart helps illustrate their belief that the only way to deal with one's vulnerability is to accept it.

Fourth and finally, this project has shown that self-seclusion reflects and informs its historical context, in particular the growth of imperial power during the period under examination and the increasing attention among elites to cultural pursuits and private life. As the study of imperial reclusiveness in chapter 5 helps to illustrate, the emperor's ever-growing power and preeminence during the early imperial period led some to conclude that for good or ill, the emperor did not meaningfully participate in the civic society that he ruled, but governed it from an unaccountable, outside position. In turn, as chapters 2 and 4 discuss indirectly, these changed political circumstances under the principate contributed to limited but real declines in the social prospects of traditional public careers such as politics or advocacy.

In consequence, some withdrew from public life altogether (chapter 2), an ennobling, attention-grabbing pose that certain others of comparatively lesser prestige adopted to augment their status (chapter 3). Some Stoics, by contrast, sought to continue participating in public life under all but the worst of rulers by refocusing their priorities away from a sphere of life that they had little control over (chapter 2). Even among those elites who were not upset by these changed political circumstances, as chapters 2-4 illustrate, cultural pursuits such as declamation, philosophy and writing acquire an increasing importance for elite male identity, supplementing rather than replacing traditional venues for achievement like public life. Through its close study of self-seclusion in the literature of the early empire, this project contributes to our understanding of a limited but real loss of vitality for the public sphere under the early empire as some elites turned their attentions elsewhere and emperors were thought to conduct matters of greatest importance in private.

6.3. Possibilities for Further Research

This project has addressed a number of issues that would benefit from further research. For instance, Roman withdrawal to villas and the countryside more broadly has received treatment at various points throughout this project, yet further compelling case-studies remain that would enrich this project. Chapter 2 addresses Stoic attitudes towards withdrawing to the countryside as an unhelpful strategy for quelling spiritual tumult, which could justify a study of Seneca's two detailed letters (*Ep.* 55 and 86) on the villa seclusion of two men who were alienated from political life, as well as the reception of the former letter in Pliny's own epistolary portrait of his own self-seclusion at his Laurentine villa (*Ep.* 2.17).⁷²⁹ Such an extension to the current project could also study the rural retreat of the Stoicizing poet Persius in *Satire* 6 as a culmination of growing signs of his social alienation across the *Satires*, as well as Tacitus' accounts of the politicized withdrawals of the Stoics Thrasea Paetus and Seneca.⁷³⁰

Beyond further case studies, this project could also benefit from diachronic contextualization. The phenomenon of self-seclusion is not unique to the early imperial period. In the late Republic figures such as Cicero associate this spatial stance with their alienation from society while this behaviour becomes much more culturally prominent in late antiquity with the rise of monasticism.⁷³¹ Situating withdrawal and retirement under the early empire in a broader chronological context would help give further clarification about what is distinctive about this phenomenon in the early imperial period.

⁷²⁹ On the exaggerated seclusion of the Laurentine villa in this letter, see Gibson and Morello (2012) 231-33. In a future project, I hope to trace the influence of Sen. *Ep.* 55 on Pliny's portrait of his villa seclusion in *Ep.* 2.17.

⁷³⁰ Braund (1996b) 14, briefly observes this trajectory in Persius' poetry. Fuller study of Juvenal's portrait of Umbricius' withdrawal from Rome in *Satire* 3 is also warranted.

⁷³¹ See note 7.

These and other avenues for further research will help this project answer one of the underlying questions that has animated it, namely, how did the spatial practices of upper-class Romans inform and express their identity as discrete individuals under the Roman empire? This dissertation has examined one aspect of this larger question, analyzing in early imperial literature how some Romans associated occupying spaces considered to be secluded with a variety of unconventional forms of individual identity. Throughout all the accounts of voluntary seclusion examined in this study, we encounter a shared interest in analyzing certain elite men as discrete individuals, acting on their own without the support of friends, relations or supporters; these accounts question how they relate to the cultural and political hierarchies around them as distinct individuals. Whether the goals of such men were power, fame, wisdom, or something else, these accounts of voluntary withdrawal illustrate that society did not have or would not easily grant what they were looking for. In this respect, for better or for worse, they were on their own.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: STOIC MORAL COGNITION

Stoic thinkers recognize four sequential stages in the process of moral cognition.⁷³² In the first stage, the soul physically perceives something external to it. In the next stage, these physical sensations are translated into a mental representation within the mind's directive faculty (τὸ ἡγεμονικόν). This is an involuntary, unprejudiced reaction to the physical sensation. Next and third, the mind's directive faculty interprets the mental representation that it has perceived. For instance, the recognition that, say, an enemy has cut us may induce us to fear for our bodily integrity and for our life, while slander may provoke anger at the offending party and a sense of aggrieved injustice that false information about us has been circulating.

Yet, the Stoic's goal is to judge his perceptions, and thus reality, objectively, that is, in accordance with universal Nature, without any additional subjective and hence false value-judgement on his part. Stoics conceived of the universe as rationally ordered for the general good, and hence as synonymous with terms such as god, Fate, and Nature (not Fortune, however; see section 6). The individual Stoic must willingly live his life in accord with the Reason that governs the universe, thus contributing to its proper functioning. He does so by aligning his thoughts and actions with the perspective of his own inner reason and by rejecting all other points of view, judging as good only what is morally good, and judging as bad only what is morally bad. From this perspective, everything that is not morally good or bad is to be judged as indifferent and thus as external to our moral judgements: as the discussion in section 2 illustrates, this category ranges from our physical bodies to our position within the community and much

⁷³² For the distinction between the Stoic theory of moral cognition and the Stoic theory about the physical location of the soul in the body, see section five of this chapter. For the following account, see esp. Hadot (1998) 101-27.

else.⁷³³ Thus, from the moral point of view, fear and anger in the examples above attach a false value to experiences such as physical injury or slander.

The proper Stoic response in these cases would be to view these sensations as indifferent to the individual concerned: physical injury and harm to one's reputation are not impediments to living a moral life, and in fact, they are part of the greater good. In his seventy-fourth letter, Seneca describes this same attitude as the figurative walls that fortify the Stoic's secluded spiritual refuge: "do you wish to know what the material (i.e. of the inner wall) is? (*Quod sit hoc instrumentum scire desideras?*) Let a man consider nothing that happens to him as unworthy and let him know that the very things which seem to injure him are involved in the preservation of the universe and lead to those things that fulfill the world's course and function" (*Ep.* 74.20).

However, even the Stoic sage will not always initially interpret his perceptions in an objective manner.⁷³⁴ What truly matters is the moral assent that his directive faculty gives to or withholds from his subjective inner perceptions, and this *assent* forms the fourth and final stage of the Stoic process of moral cognition. When the directive faculty accepts only those interpretations that judge reality objectively and willingly submits to the course of events as Nature has directed them, the Stoic lives a happy and virtuous life (Diog. Laert. 7.88), free from all disappointments.

⁷³³ In practice, however, the sage still often shows a preference among those things that are morally indifferent, insofar as in normal circumstances some things are generally worth preferring (ex. health, wealth, high social status), while other things are typically worth avoiding (ex. sickness, poverty, social obscurity). Nevertheless, they are all classified as morally indifferent, both because they are not morally valuable for their own sake, since by their natures they do not contribute or detract from our moral progress, and because there will be unusual circumstances when moral considerations may require the Stoic to value these things differently, such as rejecting a political office so as not to be complicit in a tyranny that harms one's fellow citizens. As this chapter illustrates, however, the imagery of retreat into the self does not highlight this doctrinal nuance, for psychic retreat portrays the wise man's inner withdrawal from all externals, preferable and dispreferable, thereby demonstrating the preponderating importance of the moral approach to life over everyday priorities.

⁷³⁴ Cf. Graver (2007) 85-108.

By contrast, when he assents to mistaken judgements that attach a false value to the outside world, such as fear and anger in the examples above, such a mindset constitutes vice. However, such an account does not authorize a distorted image of the Stoic sage as void of emotion, for while he suppresses passions from contaminating his reasoning, he nevertheless experiences positive emotions such as joy that are engendered by his objective value judgements about the world.⁷³⁵

APPENDIX 2

A letter from Fronto to Lucius Verus also contrasts the security of physical and psychic strongholds and is the only instance of the mental fortress-metaphor to celebrate its sack and the triumph of worldly values. Fronto writes this letter to Lucius in Syria, congratulating him on recent victories in 163 in Armenia as part of Rome's war against Parthia, on which occasion Lucius had taken the title *Armeniacus* "conqueror of Armenia". Fronto then praises the eloquence of Lucius' letter to the senate in the following year relating these victories, contrasting Lucius' storming of several Armenian cities with his persuasion of his step-brother Marcus to share the honorific title *Armeniacus*, which Marcus had initially resisted. As he does so, Fronto describes Lucius' act of epistolary persuasion as a figurative storming of the citadel of Marcus' mind:

"Dausara, Nicephorium and Artaxata were stormed under your leadership and auspices, yet that fortified, unconquered and impregnable citadel located in your brother's heart, who other than you assaulted, over his assuming the name of *Armeniacus* which he had refused, and with what other forces than those of eloquence? You summoned an army as your companion in winning your case, yet a vocal army that fights with speech." (*ad Ver.* 2.1.5 *Dausara et Nicephor<i>um*

⁷³⁵ On positive emotions in Stoicism, see, for ex., Graver (2007) 283, s.v. *eupatheiai*.

et Artaxata ductu auspicioque tuo armis capta sunt, sed arcem munitam et invictam et inexpugnabilem, quae in fratris tui pectore sita est, ad nomen Armeniaci quod recusaverat sumendum, quis alius quam tu, aut quibus aliis tu quam eloquentiae copiis adortus es? Comitem tibi ad impetrandum adscisti exercitum, sed loquentem exercitum oratione pugnantem.)

In this passage, Fronto uses the language of retreat into the inner citadel in order to express Lucius' persuasive victory in Stoic terms that evoke Marcus' perspective on the matter. Following his Stoic convictions, Marcus had initially rejected an honorific title that he had not even had a role in earning. Accepting such an honour would have been a surrender to ambition, to valuing something that had no role in his moral progress. Yet Fronto's letter claims that Lucius has marshalled an army of arguments to sack Marcus' inner citadel, persuading him to see enough value in the honorific title that he set aside his renunciatory attitude and accepted it.

Just as with the *exemplum* of Seneca's Stilpon, Fronto contrasts the security of physical and psychic strongholds in order to liken the *virtus* of intellectual activity to military valour, albeit with a different aim in mind. By describing Lucius' rhetorical victory over Marcus as a sacking of his inner citadel, Fronto sets Lucius' act of persuasion on the same level as the military victories achieved in his name. Such an equivalency is surely self-interested in Fronto's case, for while he cannot take credit for the recent conquests in Armenia, as Lucius' former teacher of rhetoric, he can consider himself to have had a hand in Lucius' rhetorical victory over his Stoic step-brother.

APPENDIX 3

Lucretius' and Horace's descriptions of erratic travel offer a similar critique of misused *otium*, although they differ from Seneca insofar as their solution of psychic, not physical self-distancing

from the source of discontent is a less elaborated version of Seneca's mental journey into the self. Lucretius' description of a wealthy man manically driving back and forth between his city and country properties implicitly condemns such preoccupation with material diversions. If such a man should come to his senses and recognize the real source of his dissatisfaction, then 'forsaking his affairs' (3.1071 *rebus...relictis*), he turns to study natural philosophy. *Res* ('affairs') also frequently refers to material possessions, such as the wealthy man's urban and rural estates in this passage.⁷³⁶ Consequently, one may interpret the suffering man here to put aside his mania for indulging himself in his various properties (*rebus...relictis*), and instead turn to what will truly bring him pleasure, Epicurean philosophy.⁷³⁷ Likewise, if we infer that Horace's friend Bullatius is off sight-seeing in Greece and Asia Minor, then the poet's letter to him (*Epi.* 1.11) may be interpreted as a gentle critique of the use of one's leisure time to travel farther afield, in the eastern Mediterranean. According to such a reading, Horace's advice that happiness is available in Rome or even in a backwater like Ulubrae suggests that it would be better for Bullatius to spend his free time at home, engaged in moral self-improvement rather than flitting from one exotic locale to another, across the sea.⁷³⁸

APPENDIX 4

According to another longstanding reading of *Epistles* 1.11, Horace's critique of Bullatius' distant Mediterranean travels favours psychic rather than physical self-distancing from a unfavourable *political* situation, though as noted in Appendix 1, Horace does not advocate the more developed

⁷³⁶ Leonard and Smith (1965) 517, OLD *res* 1.

⁷³⁷ This interpretation gains further strength from Lucretius' echoes in this passage of a scene in Ennius' *Iphigenia* in which Agamemnon's soldiers sing that not knowing how to use one's *otium* is the greatest *negotium* (Kenney (2014) 225). Such an aporia leads to restless travel hither and yon: "we go here and there, and when there has been reached, it pleases to leave from there. The soul wanders on an uncertain course..." (F 84.7-8 TrRF *imus huc, hinc illuc; cum illuc uentum est, ire illinc lubet. incerte errat animus*)

⁷³⁸ McCarter (2015) 174-75, 177-78. See Appendix 2 for a different interpretation of this poem.

image of retreat into the self, championed by Seneca and others. Beginning with Walckenaer in 1858, many continental scholars have interpreted Horace's comment that travel to Greece is useless for one who is *incolumis* (*Epi.* 1.11.17, literally "unharm") as a reference to someone who still has their civil rights, with the implication that Bullatius does not have his civil rights, due to exile.⁷³⁹ Kilpatrick provides a conjectural reconstruction of the background to the poem based on such a reading, claiming that Bullatius may have belonged to the Republican opposition to Augustus and that Horace's poem obliquely encourages him to take advantage of the amnesty established in 30 BCE so as to return home.⁷⁴⁰ Under such an interpretation of the poem, Horace's advice has a political bent. Bullatius need not remain abroad to retain his equanimity in the face of an unpleasant political reality back home. If he attains inner tranquility, he can be happy at Rome, even if this requires living under a regime that he objects to. Ultimately, however, the claims underlying this interpretation remain conjecture.

APPENDIX 5

The cautiously hopeful attitude that Pliny expresses toward his legacy as a speech-writer through his allusion to Tacitus' character Aper in letter 9.10 corresponds with our understanding of Pliny's persona outside of this letter. Pliny's belief in literary immortality is well attested throughout his corpus of letters, and the interpretation of his speech revisions advanced in chapter 4 section 4 is consistent with the particular prominence of his concern with lasting renown in book 9, as well as with his statement at letter 5.8.6-7 that he undertakes such post-performance speech-revisions in order to ensure that his speeches continue to be read by future

⁷³⁹ Walckenaer (1858) 1.469; see Skalitzy (1973) 320.

⁷⁴⁰ Kilpatrick (1986) 80-83.

generations.⁷⁴¹ In addition, this more optimistic understanding of Pliny's speech revisions in letter 9.10 parallels the unusually confident tone that Pliny often takes when contemplating his future reputation in book 9.⁷⁴²

APPENDIX 6

The shift from the pursuit of fame as a leisured activity at the beginning of the letter-collection in letter 1.6 to its pursuit as a laborious endeavour near the end of the private letters in book 9 corresponds to a similar narrative arc that scholars have identified at other points of contact between books 1 and 9. See Bodel (2015b) 80-81 on *Ep.* 1.3 and 9.3, and Gibson and Morello (2012) 238-39, who contrast *Ep.* 9.40 with book 1 more generally. In light of this connection between the first and last books of the private letters, letters 1.6 and 9.10 may also have a metaliterary function within the context of the letter collection. In letter 1.6, Pliny is in the early stages of composing something on his writing-tablets, and experiences this as a pleasant, undemanding process, whereas in letter 9.10, Pliny is now hard at work on revisions, a task he finds disagreeable. Given their antipodal positions within the collection, such a shift of themes between the two letters may suggest that revising the letter collection for public consumption is a more challenging, disagreeable task than was its initial composition.

⁷⁴¹ On Pliny's belief in posthumous literary fame elsewhere than book 9, cf. *Ep.* 1.3.3-4, 2.10.4, 3.7.14-15, 5.5.4-7, 5.8.6-7. On Pliny's preoccupation in book 9 with obtaining a lasting reputation through literary production, see *Ep.* 9.3, 9.6.4, 9.8, 9.11, 9.13-14, 9.18-19, 9.20.1, 9.23, 9.25.1-2, 9.27, 9.28.3, 9.31, 9.35.2, on which cf. Syme (1985) 183, Whitton (2012) 355-59, 363-64, and Bodel (2015b) 76.

⁷⁴² *Ep.* 9.8, 9.11, 9.13.1, 9.13.25, 9.14, 9.18, 9.20.1, 9.23.5-6, 9.25.2, 9.28.3, 9.31; cf. Bodel (2015b) 83.

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