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THE MIND IN MOTION:
WALKING AND METAPHORICAL TRAVEL IN THE ROMAN VILLA

TIMOTHY M. O'SULLIVAN

CICERO'S *DE ORATORE* imagines a conversation on eloquence among the leading Roman statesmen of the late second and early first century B.C.E., including L. Licinius Crassus and Q. Lutatius Catulus. As is typical in his early philosophical and rhetorical works, Cicero goes to great lengths to defend his choice of subject matter, and he transfers his anxieties to his characters, who frequently reflect in a rather self-conscious manner upon the form of the dialogue itself. On the morning of the second day of their discussion, for example, Crassus voices a concern that with their Socratic style of question and response, they might pick up some of the bad habits of the Greeks, who are only too willing to debate any point, any time, anywhere, *ad nauseam*.¹ At this point Catulus interjects, disputing the notion that all Greeks behave in this manner; the best Greeks—by which he means politically active Greeks—confined their philosophical disputation to their free time, their *otium*. To strengthen his case, and to allay Crassus' anxieties, he appeals to their surroundings; he draws particular attention to the portico of Crassus' Tusculan villa in which they are walking as an especially appropriate setting for philosophical conversation (Cic. *De or.* 2.20):

ac si tibi videntur qui temporis, qui loci, qui hominum rationem non habent, inepti, sicut debent videri, num tandem aut locus hic non idoneus videtur, in quo porticus haec ipsa, ubi nunc ambulamus, et palaestra et tot locis sessiones gymnasiolorum et Graecorum disputationum memoriam quodam modo commovent? aut num importunum tempus in tanto otio, quod et raro datur et nunc peroptato nobis datum est? aut homines ab hoc genere disputationis alieni, qui omnes ei sumus, ut sine his studiis vitam nullam esse ducamus?

Yes, but even if you find those people rude who take no account of time or place or company—and so you should—surely you don't think that *this* is an inappropriate place [sc. for conversation]? Here, where this portico in which we now stroll, and this palaestra, and so many places to sit evoke somehow the memory of the gymnasia and the philosophical disputes of the Greeks? Surely you don't think that this is the wrong time, in this generous period of leisure, which we are so rarely given and which has been

An earlier version of this article was delivered at the "Redrawing the Boundaries" conference at Yale University (September 2002), and I would like to thank the audience for their feedback, especially Judith Barringer and Corinne Pache, the conference organizers. I would also like to thank Kathleen Coleman, James Ker, Alex Purves, Richard Thomas, and the anonymous readers for *CP* for their comments and suggestions. I owe special thanks to Gloria Ferrari Pinney, who originally suggested the relevance of *theoria* to my project. All translations are my own.

1. Cic. *De or.* 2.18.

given to us just when we wanted it so badly? Surely you don't think that people like us should be strangers to this type of discussion, we who think life is nothing without these pursuits?

Catulus' phrasing highlights the temporal, physical, and social boundaries of *otium*: for a respectable leisure, one must have the right time, the right place, and the right company (*temporis . . . loci . . . hominum*). The right place, of course, is the Roman villa. By the late Republic it was somewhat more fashionable to advertise one's country home as a setting for relaxation and study than as a venue for agricultural production.² As Cicero shows us, certain architectural features in the Roman villa were consciously intended as settings for intellectual conversations, and were even designed to remind the visitor of the physical setting of Greek philosophy. In a sense, therefore, the art and architecture of the Roman villa encouraged the homeowner and guests to transcend boundaries of time and place; the aristocrat at leisure was encouraged to engage in a tourism of the mind as he walked through gardens decorated with busts of philosophers and mythological vignettes, or through his own replica of Greek civic spaces, or even through a landscape designed to resemble the topography of well-known sites around the Mediterranean.³

Such metaphorical travel will be the subject of this essay. In particular, I would like to focus on the popularity among the Roman elite of the *ambulatio*: the contemplative walk that became the foundation of a Hellenized *otium*.⁴ Walking in the upper-class home put both body and mind in motion, transporting the aristocrat beyond the physical confines of his villa; for upper-class Romans, the very act of walking was often just as allusive, just as constructed, as their literature and architecture. The first part of this essay surveys the sources that cast walking in the Roman home as an intellectual activity particularly associated with Greek philosophy. In the second section, I argue that the relationship between Greek philosophy and Roman walking goes beyond a mere historical association, and that the philosophical model of *theoria*, or traveling to acquire knowledge, lies behind the appeal of the *ambulatio*, particularly Plato's metaphorical application of *theoria* to the

2. On the rise of the villa as an intellectual retreat, see Boëthius 1960, 95–103; André 1966, 477; D'Arms 1970, 12–17; Champlin 1982, 106–7; Mielsch 1987, 94–97; MacDonald and Pinto 1995, 3–6; and Zanker 1998, 136–42. The tendency to downplay the economic benefits of villa ownership does not mean that such benefits were nonexistent; Purcell (1995) persuasively argues that productivity remained a fundamental concern, even for owners of luxurious villas.

3. Bergmann (2001) provides an essential guide to these "landscapes of allusion," whereby "directive paths, imported plants, and 'vestiges' of the past in parks integrated the visitor into a simulated, ideal Greece" (155); see also Neudecker 1988, 8–30 (on Cicero and his contemporaries, with numerous examples) and Görler 1990. On the phenomenon of the elite Roman *villeggiatura*, see Casson 1974, 138–48.

4. There is to date no study dedicated to the topic of the *ambulatio*, although several scholars have addressed the topic in other contexts; see especially Grimal 1984, 256–59; Weeber 1995, s.v. "Spaziergang"; MacDonald and Pinto 1995, 189; Scagliarini Corlàita 1997, 119–20; Dickmann 1997, 123; Kuttner 1999, 350–53; and Bergmann 2001, 158 and 162–63. Corbeil (2004, 107–39) has recently explored another aspect of the culture of Roman walking: the intense focus on the gait (*incessus*) as an index of elite male behavior in the late Republic. In this regard, see also Gleason 1995, an essential guide to the demanding world of aristocratic body techniques in the Roman empire (on "how to walk" in particular, see 60–62), and Bremmer 1991, a study of the gait in ancient Greek culture.

wandering inquiries of the mind. The final part brings all of these observations to bear on the decor of the Roman villa, focusing on some examples of how the Roman homeowner could use walking as a vehicle for the contemplation of other places and times.

PHILOSOPHICAL STROLLS

The letters of Cicero bear witness to the value placed on a walk with friends, especially as a setting for conversation. Often Cicero expresses his wish that he could walk and talk with the absent addressee, and the letter becomes a stand-in for the immediacy and intimacy of a walk with a friend.⁵ Indeed the walk was such a standard setting for conversation, and such a standard feature of Roman friendship, that Cicero can even refer to it as a unit of time (Cic. *Att.* 1.18.1):

multa sunt enim quae me sollicitant anguntque; quae mihi videor aures nactus tuas unius ambulationis sermone exhaurire posse.

For there are many things that are worrying and distressing me, and if only I had your ear, I feel I could pour them all out in one walk's conversation.

The walk was still a unit of time in a life of leisure a century and a half later, at least according to the younger Pliny. In a letter describing the daily routine of the elderly Spurinna we are given a picture of a day strictly punctuated by walks of varying length and intensity.⁶ Elsewhere Pliny gives us a similar picture of his own summertime routine at his Tuscan villa; among the many daily activities of his life of leisure is an after-dinner walk “with members of [his] household, among whom there are men of some learning.”⁷ The second part of that sentence is no mere aside, but rather a way of advertising the intellectual content of the ambling conversations of Pliny and his companions. It is phrased as a qualification, explaining why he would invite members of his household on a walk despite their lower status, and therefore presumes an awareness on the part of the reader that a walk with friends would naturally include an erudite discussion. In this way Pliny's after-dinner *ambulatio* is a natural complement to his solitary morning walk described earlier in the

5. See, e.g., *Fam.* 2.12.2, where Cicero writes that he cannot compare all the benefits of his provincial service with the pleasures of a walk and talk with Caelius. Cicero's addressees evidently felt the same; in *Fam.* 10.31.6 Pollio writes that he envies Cicero's opportunity to walk and joke with a mutual friend, and that he plans to spend his retirement in a perpetual walk with Cicero. Seneca (*Ep.* 55.11) makes a more explicit claim that the epistolary genre establishes a metaphorical space where friends can not only converse, but also dine and walk together: *amicus animo possidendus est; hic autem numquam abest; quemcumque vult cotidie videt. itaque mecum stude, mecum cena, mecum ambula.* On the Seneca passage, see Ker 2002, 151–53.

6. Plin. *Ep.* 3.1. He walks three miles as soon as he rises, another mile midmorning, and another mile (in the nude!) midafternoon. On Spurinna's regimen, and its mix of physical, intellectual, and social activities, see Johnson 2000, 621–24; see also Henderson 2002 for the various ways in which Pliny's portraits of Spurinna and his uncle (*Ep.* 3.5) serve not only as models for behavior but also as contrasting paradigms of his own literary (and political) project. On the “daily round,” see Mielsch 1987, 128–33 (rural), and Laurence 1994, 124–32 (both urban and rural).

7. Plin. *Ep.* 9.36.4: *mox cum meis ambulo, quorum in numero sunt eruditi.* According to Plutarch (*Cat. Min.* 68.1), Cato the Younger was also in the habit of enjoying an after-dinner walk with friends.

letter, which is also as much an intellectual as a physical exercise; he tells us that he composes and dictates while he strolls.⁸

But there was in the Roman imagination a more familiar reason for the association of walking with intellectual activity: Greek philosophers were notorious walkers.⁹ The title character in Plautus' *Curculio* complains about the thoughtless pedestrians who get in the way of the *servus currens*; Greek intellectuals are high on his list (Plaut. *Curc.* 288–91):¹⁰

tum isti Graeci palliati, capite operto qui ambulat,
qui incedunt suffarcinati cum libris, cum sportulis,
constant, conferunt sermones inter se<se> drapetae,
obstant, obsistunt, incedunt cum suis sententiis.

And then there's those cloak-wearing Greeks who walk around with their heads covered, who stroll along stuffed with books and goody-bags. They stand around and talk things over like fugitives; they stop, they stand in your way, they saunter along with their aphorisms.

The stereotype that certain Greeks pay no heed to their surroundings is already familiar from Crassus' complaint in the *De oratore* with which we began. Cicero makes a similar joke about the unhurried pace of philosophers in a letter to Atticus in which he explains why he felt obliged to repeat much of the same information that he had already included in a previous letter; since he had entrusted that letter to a mutual friend who was an amateur philosopher, he suggests that this later one will surely reach Atticus first, given "the way philosophers walk."¹¹ Strolling sages are subject to ridicule in Greek literature as well; a fragment of a comedy by Alexis makes a joke at Plato's expense (Diog. Laert. 3.27 = *PCG*, Alexis frag. 151):¹²

εἰς καιρὸν ἦκεις· ὡς ἔγωγ' ἀπορουμένη
ἄνω κάτω τε περιπατοῦσ' ὥσπερ Πλάτων
σοφὸν οὐδὲν εὕρηκ', ἀλλὰ κοπιῶ τὰ σκέλη.

You've arrived just in time: in my confusion, I've been walking back and forth like Plato, but I haven't been able to come up with anything clever: I have, however, worn out my legs.

Plato's dialogues indeed give us many examples of philosophers on the move, strolling while they argue, perhaps most memorably in the beginning of the *Protagoras*, when Socrates and Hippocrates arrive at the house of Callias

8. Plin. *Ep.* 9.36.3. Seneca (*Ep.* 15.6) also points out that exercise, and walking in particular, need not interfere with one's studies, and can even be an occasion for reading and dictating. Cicero dictated at least two of his letters while walking (*Att.* 2.23.1; *Q Fr.* 3.3.1), although he cites these instances as proof of how busy he is.

9. See Montiglio 2000 for an excellent study of the motif of the wandering philosopher in ancient Greece. Although she is surely correct to insist upon the distinction between walking philosophers (such as Plato and Aristotle) and wandering sages (such as Solon and Diogenes) in the Greek tradition, part of the aim of this article is to show that the leisurely stroll of the Roman aristocrat in the domestic setting incorporates aspects of both traditions.

10. Csapo (1989, 150–54) reads the passage as a Plautine adaptation of a Greek original, in which the joke was aimed specifically at philosophers.

11. Cic. *Att.* 7.1.1: *sed ut philosophi ambulat, has tibi redditum iri putabam prius.*

12. Cited by Montiglio 2000, 94.

only to see Protagoras and his acolytes pacing in flight formation back and forth in the courtyard.¹³ Silvia Montiglio has argued in a recent article that walking in the Socratic dialogues typically serves only as an intellectual warm-up, and that the serious conversations are held while everyone is seated.¹⁴ This is generally true: in the *Protagoras*, for instance, Socrates and Hippocrates converse a little while pacing in the courtyard of Socrates' house, and then while en route to see Protagoras; after watching with some amusement the choreography of Protagoras and his followers, they initiate serious dialogue while everyone is seated.¹⁵ Moreover, Plato also represents the act of concentrated thought as a *pause* in walking: in the *Symposium*, Socrates arrives late to the party after standing for some time lost in thought (*Symp.* 175a–c), while during the symposium itself Alcibiades recalls the time that the philosopher spent a full day and night standing in place, even attracting an audience, while puzzling over a particular problem (*Symp.* 220c–d).¹⁶ But whatever the reality of the situation—that is, whether Socrates and company “really” walked and talked even as much as Plato depicts—it is undeniable that Greek philosophers had a reputation for ambulatory conversation. The Peripatetics, after all, earned their nickname by strolling in the *peripatos* of the Lyceum, an Athenian gymnasium; the Stoics, similarly, were associated with the Stoa Poikile in Athens, another ambulatory space.¹⁷

We have already seen, in the *De oratore* passage with which the article began, that the connection between walking and philosophical dialogue was exploited by Roman authors as well. Although many of his philosophical dialogues also take place while the characters are seated, Cicero in fact uses the motif of the strolling conversation more often than Plato does.¹⁸ This discrepancy may be further evidence for the Roman attempt to “out-Greek” the Greeks in the privacy of their own increasingly Hellenized villas in the late

13. *Pl. Prt.* 314e–315b.

14. Montiglio 2000, 93–95.

15. There are, however, exceptions, as Montiglio notes: the *Laws* takes place while the characters are walking (*Leg.* 625a–b), as does the outer narrative of the *Symposium* (though not, of course, the actual dialogue; *Symp.* 173b). The *Theages* takes place in the Stoa of Zeus Eleutherios (121a), though it is not clear whether the participants are sitting or walking.

16. The anecdote is part of a speech by Alcibiades on Socrates' amazing physical endurance, which became part of his popular image; the chorus in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, alluding to Socrates, suggests that you too can be a philosopher “if you don't get tired out standing or walking” (καὶ μὴ κάμνετε μὴθ' ἔστωσ' μήτε βαδίζων, *Nub.* 415).

17. On the connection between the Stoics and the Stoa Poikile, see Camp 1986, 72. The connection between Stoic philosophers and walking persisted; centuries later, Seneca will reminisce about engaging his teacher Attalus in philosophical debates while he walked (*Ep.* 108.3). On the name of the Peripatetics, see *Cic. Acad. post.* 1.17. According to Aulus Gellius (*NA* 20.5.5), *περίπατος*—a word that, like Latin *ambulatio*, can refer either to the act of walking or to a space for it—was used by Aristotle as a metaphor for “discussion” or “lecture.” (Cf. *Ar. Ran.* 952–53, where *περίπατος* seems to mean “topic of discussion,” a reference I owe to Judson Herrman.)

18. In addition to the second book of the *De oratore*, the first book of the *De legibus* recounts a walk on Cicero's property in Arpinum (*Leg.* 1.15, 2.1). Books 1–4 of the *Tusculan Disputations* take place while the characters stroll in the Academy of Cicero's Tusculan villa (*Tusc.* 1.7, 2.10, 3.7, and 4.7); the first book of the *De divinatione* takes place in the same villa, as the characters walk in Cicero's Lyceum (*Div.* 1.8). The first two books of the *De finibus* are set in the *ambulatio* of Cicero's villa at Cumae (*Fin.* 2.119), while the fifth book recounts an afternoon walk in Plato's Academy in Athens (*Fin.* 5.1).

Republic, as parodied by Varro in his *Res rusticae*.¹⁹ For Cicero in particular, the appeal of walking as a dramatic backdrop for philosophy was twofold. On the one hand, the pose of the participants explicitly recalls the popular image (both literary and cultural) of strolling Greek philosophers. On the other hand, walking for leisure was also a regular habit of the Roman aristocracy, as we have seen; by situating these dialogues in the leisure practices of Roman villa culture, Cicero recreates an environment that was recognizable to a certain segment of his readership. By casting his Roman aristocrat-philosophers as strolling and talking, Cicero dramatizes, in the very poses and movements of his characters, his entire philosophical project: the importation and adaptation of Greek philosophical ideas to a uniquely Roman setting.²⁰

It is therefore no accident that the majority of Cicero's philosophical works are set in the Roman villa, where the boundary between Greek and Roman was in constant dispute.²¹ The abundance of colonnaded walkways and garden paths in Roman villa design served to remind the visitor not simply of Greek architectural forms, but of activities, patterns of movement, and styles and topics of conversation that were all marked as Hellenized.²² Walking for leisure was thus not only a privilege of the cultured Roman elite, but also a scene for the Roman negotiation of Greek culture. The intellectual discussion that often accompanied such walks, the spaces in which these walks occurred, even the notion of leisure as a goal to be pursued—all were marked as Greek in the Roman imagination, and were attributed to the Hellenization of Roman aristocratic culture that continued throughout Roman history but was especially associated with the second century B.C.E.²³ But, as I hope to

19. *Rust. 2 praef. 2*. Or, as an anonymous reader for *CP* suggested to me, Cicero's slight departure from the Platonic model in the relative frequency of walking dialogues may reflect his eclectic independence from strict allegiance to any philosophical school (Cicero's philosophical allegiances are somewhat controversial; see Glucker 1988). The ambulatory setting of the second book of the *De oratore* has in fact been read in a similarly metaliterary way by Leeman et al. (1985, 183), who suggest that the pose of the participant speakers reflects the character of the discussion: the Platonic first book is set beneath a plane tree that explicitly evokes the setting of the *Phaedrus* (*De or. 1.28*), while the fact that the second book takes place while the characters walk in Crassus' portico (*De or. 2.12, 2.20*) may evoke the Aristotelian *peripatos*. For a more detailed analysis of the inspiration for the setting of the dialogue, see Görler 1988. On metaphors for philosophical allegiances, see also Cic. *Acad. post. 1.13*, where converting from one philosophical school to another is likened to moving house.

20. See Zetzel 2003 for a more general study of Cicero's attitudes toward Greek culture, using the *De oratore* as a frame.

21. Bergmann 2001, 155–63; for the combination of Greek and Roman elements in the domestic sphere more generally, see Beltrán Fortes 1995 and Wallace-Hadrill 1998, 88–91.

22. The same is obviously true for similar architectural elements in townhouse design. It is impossible to trace an exact history of the mutual influence of urban and rural house design. Numerous references in Latin literature make it clear that the importation of comfort and luxury to Roman farmhouses was in part the result of a desire to bring urban amenities to the country; in his well-known division of the parts of the Roman villa, Columella calls the residential portion the *villa urbana* (*Rust. 1.6.1–2*). For the influence going in the opposite direction, see Zanker 1979 (translated as chap. 3 of Zanker 1998, with slight revisions), a study of the efforts of Pompeian homeowners to reflect elements of villa lifestyle in urban design.

23. It is surely not a coincidence that during this period the Pompeian house began to incorporate the peristyle, a garden area surrounded by porticoes on one or more sides. The importation of this architectural form, under the influence of both Greek civic spaces and Hellenistic palace architecture, and the importation of Hellenized patterns of activity, including walking as an intellectual activity, were no doubt mutually reinforcing. On the Roman domestic peristyle, see Maiuri 1946; McKay 1998, 34–35 and 45–46; Grimal

show in the remainder of this essay, the fascination with walking among the Roman aristocracy was more than a simple tribute to the lifestyle of Greek philosophers. Rather, it was a manifestation of a deep-seated cultural metaphor, also inherited from Greece, that connected the movement of the body and the movement of the mind.

THEORETICAL TRAVELS

In the opening scene of Varro's *Res rusticae*, the author arrives at the temple of Tellus on the Carinae in Rome only to find some acquaintances already there, contemplating a picture of Italy on the wall.²⁴ One of the characters, Agrasius, initiates the dialogue with a question: "Tell me, since you've all traveled through many lands, have you ever seen a place more cultivated than Italy?" (*vos, qui multas perambulastis terras, ecquam cultiorem Italia vidistis? Rust. 1.2.3*). As the opening question reveals, the painting of Italy is not only the inspiration for their conversation, but also a visual metaphor for the entire book, which invites the reader to contemplate Varro's representation of the fertile Italian countryside.²⁵ Agrasius' use of *perambulare* (literally, "to walk through") to refer to his friends' travels is therefore doubly suggestive.²⁶ On one level, the wisdom that Varro and friends have gained on their journeys calls attention to the intellectual associations not just of travel but of walking in particular. On another level, *perambulare* could also be read as a metaphor for the discussion that follows; although the participants sit on a bench in the middle of Rome, their conversation will stroll through Italian farms and fields.

The intersection of literal and metaphorical journeys at the beginning of Varro's *Res rusticae* nicely encapsulates a cultural metaphor that exerted

1984, 206–16; Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 17–23; Dickmann 1997; and Ellis 2000, 31–35. Mielsch (1987, 97) sees the rise of peristyles in townhouses and of gymnasia and palaestrae in villas as completely independent, which seems unlikely. The inconsistent nomenclature of Roman ambulatory spaces defies such easy categorization; see Dickmann 1999, 35–37, for an overview of the terms and their uses. The most recent treatment of the domestic peristyle is also the most useful; Leach (2004, 34–40) treats the rise of such spaces in townhouses, villas, and even in public buildings (such as the Portico of Pompey) as aspects of the same phenomenon: the "concept of the peristyle as a seat of intellectual self-representation" (40).

24. The painting is often referred to as a map, although the Latin is not so specific; Varro finds his friends *spectantes in pariete pictam Italiam*, "looking at Italy painted on the wall" (*Rust. 1.2.1*). Heurgon (1978, 102) argues that Varro here alludes to a map that happens to be unattested elsewhere; Dilke (1985, 39) has a similar interpretation. Kubitschek (1919, col. 2042), on the other hand, points out that the painting may just be a personification of Italy. Perhaps we are supposed to imagine something in between, a composition more like the bird's-eye Egyptian landscape of the Nile mosaic at Praeneste, which has recently been interpreted in terms of its kinship with ancient cartography; see Ferrari 1999, esp. 376–80, and Moffitt 1997, 233–47.

25. So Reay 1998, 88: "The text puts the country in the city, and the fact that the country is represented as a representation, a wall-painting, foregrounds the dialogue's essential thrust: the representation of agriculture to its readers wherever they may be." The use of a map as an icon of a literary project is strikingly similar to Cicero's assessment of the impact of another of Varro's works, his *Antiquitates*; Romans were wandering lost in their own city, when Varro's greatest work came along and showed them the way home (*Acad. post. 1.9*). See Edwards 1996, 16–17.

26. *Perambulare* is used, e.g., of Hadrian's travels: *avom . . . vestrum [Hadrianum] . . . orbis terrarum non regendi tantum, sed etiam perambulandi diligentem* (Fronto *Fer. Als. 3.5*); see TLL 10.1.1185.64–1186.7, 1186.38–46 (Schmitz). *Ambulare* can also refer to the act of traveling; see Shackleton Bailey's (1968) note ad Cic. *Att. 7.1.1* (cited above), and TLL 1.1873.68–81 (Gudeman).

great influence on Greek philosophical thought and, as I will argue, Roman domestic design: namely, the concept of *theoria*, or traveling to see and learn. The connection between the movement of the body, the traveler's gaze, and the acquisition of knowledge—already present in the third line of the *Odyssey*—was a cornerstone of Greek thought.²⁷ In its specialized meaning, *theoria* referred to the act of sending ambassadors, or going as ambassadors, to witness a festival or other ceremonies in a *polis* that was not one's own.²⁸ The word comes to be used more generally for traveling to see and learn about other places and people; famous *theoroi* include Solon and Herodotus, whose inquisitive journeys are both the cause and the result of their wisdom: they travel to learn, but they also travel because they are wise.²⁹ The most famous episode in the tradition surrounding Solon's travels is recounted in the first book of Herodotus (1.30.2), where the Lydian king Croesus takes advantage of the wisdom Solon has acquired in his *theoria* around the Mediterranean, and asks him who he thinks is the most blessed man on earth. Indeed, the Herodotean narrative is a likely influence on the Varro passage just mentioned; when asking his friends whether they have ever seen a more cultivated land than their own Italy, Agrasius evokes not only Croesus' self-satisfied pride, but also his implication that travel results in the accumulation of wisdom.³⁰

The conversation that follows Agrasius' question actually rambles over places where they could not possibly have been, such as the Arctic (*Rust.* 1.2.4). In this sense, traveling to foreign places and reading about such places are analogous activities. Such a metaphorical application of travel and the experience of travel is not inconsistent with the notion of *theoria* either. As Andrea Wilson Nightingale has shown, the civic activity of traveling ambassadors is appropriated by the philosophers of the fourth century B.C.E.—by Plato and Aristotle in particular—as a metaphor for the activity of the philosopher, who “gazes with the ‘eye of the soul’ upon divine and eternal verities.”³¹ It is the *mind* of the philosopher, rather than the philosopher himself, that travels through time and space to arrive at truth; Plato recasts the philosophical mission as a “*theoria* of all time and existence.”³² The

27. On the influence of the opening lines of the *Odyssey* on subsequent interpretations of Odysseus, see Hartog 2001, 36; the entire book is a meditation on the theme of travel and Greek identity.

28. On *theoria*, see Rausch 1982, 12–37; Dillon 1997, 1–26; Rutherford 1998, 131–35; and Rutherford 2000.

29. The intellectual nature of Solon's *theoria* is especially emphasized by Herodotus; other ancient accounts provide additional motives for his time away from Athens, such as business (*Arist. Ath. Pol.* 11.1) or politics (*Plut. Sol.* 25.5); see Rutherford 2000, p. 135, n. 15. On the temporal paradox presented by the voyages of the wise (the model for which is Odysseus, who is wise before his travels, but also because of them), see Hartog 2001, 90–91.

30. Furthermore, the visual emphasis of Agrasius' question (*ecquam cultiorem Italia vidistis*) may remind the reader of the visual nature of Solon's travels (*theoria* literally means a “seeing”), and the visual emphasis of these sorts of travels in general in archaic and classical Greece; see Rutherford 2000, 134–38. It may be just a happy coincidence that the setting of the dialogue, the temple of Tellus, recalls the name of Solon's most blessed man, the Athenian Tellos, although Varro does show a similar love of linguistic (and onomastic) play elsewhere in the text, especially in the names of the characters (e.g., *Rust.* 3.2.2).

31. Nightingale 2001, 23.

32. *Pl. Resp.* 486a: θεωρία παντὸς μὲν χρόνου, πάσης δὲ οὐσίας. Cf. Nightingale 2001, 36. See also Monoson (2000, 206–37) for Plato's metaphorical use of the *theates* (theatergoer) and the *theoros* as models of philosophical inquiry in the *Republic* and *Laws*.

result is a withdrawal into the life of the mind, and a distance between the philosopher and the physical world around him, with occasionally humorous results: Socrates takes as the model of the contemplative man the philosopher Thales, who fell into a pit while studying the stars.³³ The Hellenistic philosopher Pyrrho was similarly oblivious to the physical world around him (Diog. Laert. 9.62):

ἀκόλουθος δ' ἦν καὶ τῷ βίῳ, μηδὲν ἐκτρεπόμενος μηδὲ φυλαττόμενος, ἅπαντα ὑφιστάμενος, ἀμάξας, εἰ τύχοι, καὶ κρημνοὺς καὶ κύνας καὶ ὄλους μηδὲν ταῖς αἰσθήσεσιν ἐπιτρέπων. σώζεσθαι μέντοι, καθά φασιν οἱ περὶ τὸν Καρύστιον Ἀντίγονον, ὑπὸ τῶν γνωρίμων παρακολουθούτων.

His life was consistent with his philosophy; he never avoided or paid attention to anything, accepting whatever he might encounter—carts, cliffs, dogs—and on the whole entrusting nothing to his senses. Yet he was protected, according to Antigonus of Carystus and his followers, by his friends, who tracked him closely.

The walk of the philosopher, absorbed in the wanderings of his mind, was fraught with peril. This may explain the appeal of pacing back and forth in stoas and other well-defined walkways: there was little chance of getting lost or hurt.

Such a disavowal of the real world was, of course, anathema to a level-headed Roman aristocrat; this is the point of the *De oratore* quote with which we began. Yet there is ample evidence that the notion of a theoretical life, if I may use “theoretical” in its original sense, still held some appeal in a Roman context, albeit in an altered guise. In particular, the notion persisted that the intellectual or creative thought process involved metaphorically traveling in the mind to the object of one’s inquiry. We have already seen Varro’s use of *perambulare* to evoke literal and metaphorical journeys at the beginning of the *Res rusticae*; in the remainder of this section, I would like to focus on a more elaborate development of the motif by the younger Seneca.³⁴

The philosopher Seneca spent eight years in forced exile on the island of Corsica during the first part of the emperor Claudius’ reign, and among the works he wrote there was a short essay consoling his mother Helvia for her son’s fate (*Dial.* 12). The work essentially consists of a series of reasons why exile is supposed to be so unpleasant, and Seneca’s point-by-point philosophical refutation of these arguments. One selling point of exile, to which Seneca returns on more than one occasion, is the complete freedom to pursue one’s intellectual pursuits, particularly the contemplation of the physical world; as long as he lives Seneca cannot be deprived of his physical surroundings, nor of his mental powers (*Dial.* 12.8.4–5):

33. Pl. *Th.* 174a: ὡσπερ καὶ Θαλῆν ἀστρονομοῦντα, ὃ Θεόδωρε, καὶ ἄνω βλέποντα, πεσόντα εἰς φρέαρ, Θράκτᾳ τις ἐμμελῆς καὶ χαριεσσα θεραπεινὴς ἀποσκῶψαι λέγεται ὡς τὰ μὲν ἐν οὐρανῷ προθυμοῖτο εἰδέναι, τὰ δ' ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ καὶ παρὰ πόδας λανθάνει αὐτόν. ταῦτόν δὲ ἄρκει σκῶμμα ἐπὶ πάντας ὅσοι ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διάγουσι (“When Thales, looking up to study the stars, fell into a well, a witty and clever Thracian servant is said to have mocked him, saying that he was so eager to know about the heavens that he didn’t notice what was right in front of his own feet. The same joke applies to all those who live a philosophical life”). Cf. Nightingale 2001, 25.

34. For an analysis of Seneca’s use of travel metaphors, see Lavery 1980, 151–55.

mundus hic, quo nihil neque maius neque ornatus rerum natura genuit, <et> animus contemplator admiratorque mundi, pars eius magnificentissima, propria nobis et perpetua et tam diu nobiscum mansura sunt quam diu ipsi manebimus. alacres itaque et erecti quocumque res tulerit intrepido gradu properemus, emetiamur quascumque terras.

Nature has created nothing greater or more magnificent than the universe, and the human mind, which contemplates and gazes in wonder at the universe, is its most extraordinary part. Both the universe and the human mind are our eternal property and will remain with us as long as we ourselves remain on this earth. And so wherever life takes us, swiftly and with heads held high we should hurry on with fearless steps, whatever lands we may traverse.

I cite this passage not merely because of its nice walking metaphor for human existence, which is of course a cliché, but because of Seneca's description of the human mind as *contemplator mundi*: *contemplatio*, with its combination of visual and mental purview, is virtually a Latin translation of *theoria*.³⁵ Seneca continues by enumerating the sorts of celestial phenomena he delights in, and although the metaphor for his intellectual investigation of the stars and planets is to this point purely visual, he hints at space travel in his concluding remark (*Dial.* 12.8.6):

dum cum his sim et caelestibus, qua homini fas est, inmiscer, dum animum ad cognatarum rerum conspectum tendentem in sublimi semper habeam, quantum refert mea quid calcem?

and so long as I am among these phenomena and—so far as it is humanly possible—mingle with heavenly things, and so long as I always have my mind up above, keeping to the contemplation of human knowledge, what does it matter where I tread?

Seneca's statement can be read as a defense of the philosophical pose lampooned by comedians (head in the stars, with no account taken of the immediate world around him); one man's absentmindedness is another man's studied indifference to his physical environment.³⁶ The notion that studying the stars involves figuratively traveling to them is only hinted at here, and qualified by the phrase *qua homini fas est* ("so far as it is humanly possible"). Seneca saves his most explicit development of the motif for the final paragraph of the work, which beautifully combines the philosophical precursors of a metaphorical *theoria* with his specific situation as an exile on a remote island. Seneca explains to his mother why, despite his life in exile, he is content (*Dial.* 12.20):

qualem me cogites accipe: laetum et alacrem velut optimis rebus. sunt enim optima, quoniam animus omnis occupationis expers operibus suis vacat et modo se levioribus studiis oblectat, modo ad considerandam suam universique naturam veri avidus insurgit. terras primum situmque earum quaerit, deinde condicionem circumfusi maris cursusque eius alternos et recursus; tunc quidquid inter caelum terrasque plenum formidinis interiacet

35. In his version of the famous story of Pythagoras' definition of philosophy, Cicero uses the word *contemplatio* (*Tusc.* 5.9) where Iamblichus uses *θεωρία* (*VP* 58); see Sassi 1991, 17.

36. It hardly needs saying that this is a convenient stance for an exile, who has been forced into such a situation precisely *because* of his involvement in the political world. Cf. Ferrill 1966, who reads Seneca's embrace of philosophical thought in the work as an attempt to secure a return to Rome by publicly renouncing his political ambitions.

perspicit et hoc tonitribus fulminibus ventorum flatibus ac nimborum nivisque et grandinis iactu tumultuosum spatium; tum peragratis humilioribus ad summa perrumpit et pulcherrimo divinatorum spectaculo fruitur, aeternitatis suae memor in omne quod fuit futurumque est vadit omnibus saeculis.

Nonetheless this is how you should think of me: as happy and as upbeat as in the best of times. In fact, these *are* the best of times, because my mind is totally free from every concern and is left alone to its work. At times, it takes pleasure in less serious studies, and at other times, eager for truth, it stands up to contemplate its own nature and the nature of the universe. First it investigates the lands and their physical setting, then the state of the surrounding ocean, and its alternation of ebb and flow. Then it takes a look at all the terror that lies between heaven and earth, and this expanse of sky that seethes with thunder and lightning and blasts of wind and rain and the attack of snow and hail. Then, once it has rambled over these lower areas, it breaks through to the heights and enjoys the most beautiful spectacle of all that is divine, and, conscious of its own immortality, it moves through everything that was and will be through all the ages.

Seneca concludes his essay in full crescendo, with a powerful defense of the life of the mind. For, in Seneca's formulation, the landscape of the mind is limitless; notice his effortless collocation of the human mind and the universe (*ad considerandam suam universique naturam*). Seneca is content, despite his exile, because his studies offer his mind a freedom of movement unknown to anybody, exiled or free; his mind is free to survey the entire known world, and, having traveled there, it leaps into the sky, the heavens, and even back and forward in time.³⁷

Seneca's enthusiastic adaptation of Greek philosophical models for thought may seem completely ordinary, until we remember that his situation is entirely contingent on the political realities of exile and punishment that Seneca is trying so hard to play down. His insistence on the boundary-defying powers of the mind *almost*, but not quite, makes us forget about the very real limitations on his exiled body, confined to the outskirts of the Roman empire. This lingering presence of the political behind Seneca's defense of intellectual activity is very Roman; it reminds us of the similarly ambiguous status of *otium* in the aristocratic imagination, which depended upon political engagement for respectability.³⁸ Seneca in fact directly addresses this ambiguity in the *De otio*, where he defends the *vita contemplativa* by appealing to the Stoic notion that the cosmos constitutes a "second republic" of which we

37. The idea of the mind soaring through the universe is a philosophical commonplace. For other instances, see Jones 1926, 97–100, and Russell 1964, 165–66. On "the view from above" as a philosophical topos, see Hadot 1995, 238–50. Lucretius' memorable passage (1.72–74, echoed by Cic. *Fin.* 2.102) on Epicurus' heroic shattering of boundaries with his thoughts is certainly relevant: *ergo vivida vis animi pervicit, et extra / processit longe flammantia moenia mundi / atque omne immensum peragravit mente animoque*. ("The lively power of his mind overcame and proceeded far beyond the flaming walls of the universe and he rambled through the infinite whole with his thoughts and his mind"). For the wanderings of the mind, Lucretius, Cicero, and Seneca all use *peragrar*, another word that, like *perambulare*, can refer both to walking (esp. rambling over country fields) and traveling; see *TLL* 10.1.1182.61–1183.22, 1183.64–1184.15 (Schwind). Cf. Sen. *Ben.* 5.12.2, where Seneca uses the experience of walking through varied terrain as a metaphor for the efforts of the mind to untangle problems of differing levels of complexity.

38. The notion of an honorable leisure was an obsession for Cicero in particular, as we have already seen in the *De oratore* passage; see André 1966, 281–90. On Seneca's views about *otium* and political engagement, see Griffin 1976, 315–66.

are all citizens; by retiring to a life of contemplative leisure, we turn from active participation in our local republic and opt for a universal citizenship.³⁹ The contemplative life is therefore not a total rejection of the active life, but rather the embrace of an active life of a different sort: the curiosity to see and learn may call us to literal action (for example, travel across the seas), or to metaphorical action, such as the “unraveling of antiquities” by reading or the journey of our mind through the cosmos (*Dial.* 8.5). Seneca’s defense of the contemplative life therefore brings together the two strands of *theoria*—the physical and the mental—that we encountered earlier in this essay: according to Seneca, nature has not only made us curious to explore her hidden mysteries with our minds, but she has also constructed our bodies so that we may more easily gaze upon her beauty, standing upright, necks craned to the skies.⁴⁰

Seneca’s reverie is one paradigm for the continued relevance of *theoria* in a Roman context; like the absentminded Pyrrho, Seneca hopes to convince us that the pleasures of mental inquiry can overcome the mundane reality of physical experience. It is not, however, the only possible paradigm. In the final part of this essay, I would like to argue that the practice of walking for leisure in the Roman villa builds upon the notion of intellectual activity as mental travel and reunites it with the bodily movement and experience of space prominent in the original definition of *theoria*. The aristocratic *ambulatio*, and its combination of physical and mental activity, brings together the two competing meanings of *theoria* to create something that is, paradoxically, uniquely Roman.

“WALKING IN HISTORY”

The fifth book of Cicero’s *De finibus* takes place in Athens, as the interlocutors stroll in Plato’s Academy. As the characters begin to reflect on the satisfaction gained from seeing the actual places once traversed by their cultural heroes, it becomes clear that the inspiration for and pleasure derived from their travel is *intellectual*. Lucius Cicero, a young cousin of the author’s, and apparently a fan of Athenian oratory, caps the conversation with the following observation (*Fin.* 5.5):

quamquam id quidem infinitum est in hac urbe; quacumque enim ingredimur, in aliqua historia vestigium ponimus.

In any case that sort of experience is endless in this city; for wherever we walk, we set foot in some history.

Cicero and his friends are not only retreading ancient ground (walking *on* some history), but also walking *in* it, adding themselves to some old story, reliving the past. These latter-day *theoroi* are quite self-consciously modeling

39. Sen. *Dial.* 8.4. On the development of the Stoic idea of two republics, see Williams 2003, 5–6, 11, and 79–80, and Schofield 1991, 64–74.

40. Sen. *Dial.* 8.5.4: [*natura*] *nec erexit tantummodo hominem, sed etiam habilem contemplationi factura*. The idea that our bodies were specifically constructed for contemplation is not original to Seneca; see Williams 2003 ad loc.

their travels after the intellectual journeys of past philosophers, but with added benefit; they not only acquire the sort of knowledge that naturally accrues when traveling away from home, but they also are able to retrace the steps of previous philosophical walks.⁴¹

Although the previous four books of the *De finibus* (and indeed virtually every Ciceronian dialogue) take place in the confines of Italian villas, the move from Italy to Athens at the beginning of Book 5 is not as dramatic a change in scenery as it might first appear.⁴² I would like to argue that the consistent attempt in Roman domestic design to evoke faraway places and times (also in evidence in the *De oratore* passage) relied on the cultural metaphor of *theoria*, traveling to acquire knowledge, and the connection it offered between walking in the real world and traveling in the mind.⁴³ The somewhat more secluded confines of the country estate encouraged the homeowner to engage in flights of fancy that he might pretend to denigrate among friends. Or at least that is what Cicero seems to do: in the beginning of Book 2 of the *De legibus*, he does not disagree as Atticus pokes fun at villa owners for the habit of calling a water channel a “Euripus” (after the strait between Euboea and Boeotia) or a “Nile” (*Leg.* 2.2):

magnificasque villas et pavimenta marmorea et laqueata tecta contemno. ductus vero aquarum quos isti Nilos et Euripos vocant, quis non, cum haec videat, inriserit?

I disapprove of luxurious villas and marble floors and paneled ceilings. Really, the water channels that they call “Niles” and “Euripuses”—who wouldn’t laugh when they saw them?

Yet Cicero is himself a shining example of the Roman elite practice of simulating foreign spaces within the private confines of the villa; he even went so far as to design replicas of both the Lyceum and the Academy on his Tusculan grounds.⁴⁴ Elsewhere in Cicero’s letters we get the impression that in building such spaces he may have been simply keeping up with his contemporaries. According to a letter to Atticus (15.9.1), Caesar’s assassin Brutus had an estate at Lanuvium that included a Eurotas and a Persike Porticus, named respectively for the river and a famous stoa at Sparta. Another letter seems to suggest that another property of Brutus’ boasted a Parthenon, prompting Shackleton Bailey to remark that “presumably he had an ‘Athens’

41. The *vestigia* are therefore not simply traces, but also, quite literally, footprints; Cicero and friends add their own *vestigia* to those of their departed heroes, and by walking the same ground they connect with them on both a metaphorical and a metonymic level. Cf. *Or.* 12, where the walks of the Academy are referred to as the places where Plato left his first footprints; or *Leg.* 2.4, where Atticus reflects on the fact that visits to the actual grounds of one’s heroes are all the more moving because of the presence of their *vestigia*. On the power of place in Cicero’s philosophical and rhetorical works, see Vasaly 1993, 26–33.

42. *Fin.* 1 and 2 are set in Cicero’s villa at Cumae, while Books 3 and 4 are set in the library of Lucullus’ Tusculan villa.

43. Bergmann (2001, 155) makes a similar connection: “Just as the *theoria* of pilgrimage combined vision with mental inquiry to reach a path of reasoning and eventually revelation, Romans at home cultivated their minds by creating, and then inhabiting, zones of learning.”

44. Cicero mentions his Academy (either by name or by indirect reference) in a number of early letters to Atticus (see *Att.* 1.4, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11); he even notes that he wrote *Att.* 1.10 while sitting there (1.10.3). On Cicero’s Tusculan villa, see Schmidt 1899, 466–72; and Neudecker 1988, 11–14.

as well as a 'Lacedaemon.'"⁴⁵ The most notorious example of such an impulse is of course Hadrian's Villa, where the *Historia Augusta* tells us that Hadrian tried to emulate various famous natural and man-made landmarks from around the Roman empire (SHA *Hadr.* 26.5):

Tiburтинam villam mire exaedificavit, ita ut in ea et provinciarum et locorum celeberrima nomina inscriberet, velut Lyceum, Academicum, Prytaneum, Canopum, Poicilen, Tempe vocaret. et, ut nihil praetermitteret, etiam inferos finxit.

His villa at Tivoli was a marvel of construction, such that he inscribed upon it the names of the most famous provinces and locales; for instance, he called one part the Lyceum, another the Academy, the Prytaneum, the Canopus, the Stoa Poikile, and the Vale of Tempe. And, so that he wouldn't leave anything out, he even fashioned an underworld.

Even though we have no assurance of the veracity of this claim—it could well be, for example, a parody of the emperor's penchant for travel—modern scholarship on Hadrian's Villa has been dominated by this one little passage, testifying that the fascination with the evocation of famous monuments and topography holds as much power over our imagination as it did over that of wealthy Roman aristocrats.⁴⁶ But before we imagine that these aristocrats were building exact replicas of famous monuments from around the world, in an ancient version of the Epcot Center, we must remember that the connection that these spaces strove for was intellectual as much as physical.⁴⁷ Cicero's Academy and Lyceum need not *look* like the real ones, but they should *feel* like them; the point, in other words, is not imitation but evocation, or what Bettina Bergmann terms a "landscape of allusion."⁴⁸ Hence the importance of the act of walking itself, for the connection between villa design and the places it evokes is not simply physical or even intellectual, but experiential. It is the *experience* of the place that is meant to be analogous, how one's Academy looks and feels as one strolls through it with friends. Cicero's literary representation of Plato's Academy in the *De finibus* and his architectural representation in his Tusculan villa work in very much the same way, transporting the visitor or reader to distant lands in order to stimulate conversation or reflection.

Nor need we imagine that this impulse was necessarily an exotic experience, focusing on the landscapes of Greece or Egypt. The villa, and the countryside in general, could also be employed as a moral landscape, reminding visitors of an idealized *Roman* past. The walk through a villa therefore afforded the visitor the opportunity to travel in his mind not only to other spaces, but to other times. This metaphorical time travel hinges on the Roman perception of domestic space as a repository of memory. I refer to the well-known

45. Shackleton Bailey 1966, 388. On Brutus' "Lacedaemon," see Cic. *Att.* 15.9.1; on Brutus' "Parthenon," see *Att.* 13.40.1.

46. MacDonald and Pinto (1995, 189) connect the "time-honored villa activity" of strolling conversation with the fashion for naming villa buildings for foreign spaces as both an advertisement of culture and as a stimulus for conversation.

47. On the intellectual connection made by naming parts of the villa for famous topographical features, see Görler 1990, 170–71.

48. Bergmann 2001, 155.

ancient mnemonic device whereby the art of memorization is imagined as the placement of images in various parts of the house, and the art of remembering is the act of walking through this imaginary house, and retrieving the images as one passes.⁴⁹ We might also think of the display of ancestor masks in the atrium as further evidence of the relationship of the home to memory.⁵⁰ Similarly, the connection between the villa and the memory of a particular individual has been explored in an article by John Bodel; there was a tendency for a villa or house to keep the name of a previous owner even after he had died and it no longer remained in his family.⁵¹ The villa of Scipio Africanus still attracted visitors centuries after his death, and Seneca the Younger in a well-known letter (*Ep.* 86) relates for us just such a visit. Lying in the modest baths of the villa, he engages in the sort of mental *theoria* that we saw him espouse earlier in response to his exile, shuttling back and forth between Scipio's time and his own. Unlike in the *Consolatio ad Helviam*, however, the object of his *contemplatio* is human behavior, not the natural world: he takes pleasure in "contemplating Scipio's ways and our own" (*Ep.* 86.5: *magna ergo me voluptas subiit contemplantem mores Scipionis ac nostros*).⁵² The modest remains of Scipio's villa transport Seneca (and his readers) to simpler times; but in another letter (*Ep.* 12), the decrepit state of Seneca's own suburban villa forces the philosopher to deal with the present, and with his own advancing years. The deteriorating condition of the estate (including the buildings, grounds, and slaves) mirrors the aging of Seneca's own body, and inspires his contemplation of the nature of old age, and of time in general.⁵³

Seneca's villa letters offer valuable insight into the metaphorical time travel that the villa setting could encourage, but they also take us somewhat further away from the theme of this essay; after all, in the letter about Scipio's villa, the pose that evokes his leisurely contemplation is the act of reclining, not walking, and Seneca's walk through his suburban villa with his *vilicus* recalls the walk of an inspector, not a philosopher.⁵⁴ For a more explicit development of the idea that a stroll through a country estate could inspire philosophical reflection about other times and places, we come full circle to Cicero. In the prologue to the second book of the *De legibus*, Cicero walks with his brother Quintus and his friend Atticus near his villa at Arpinum.⁵⁵ The setting

49. The classic study is Yates 1966; for its relation to domestic design, see Bergmann 1994.

50. Flower 1996, 185–222.

51. Bodel 1997, 13–14.

52. On *Ep.* 86, see Ker 2002, 157–73, and Henderson 2004, 93–157. Seneca's *contemplatio* may also evoke the idea of *theoria* in its original meaning, since the visit is cast as a religious pilgrimage of sorts (see Ker 2002, 157–60); he composes the letter after having venerated the shade and the altar of Scipio (*Ep.* 86.1: *adoratis manibus eius et ara*). Cf. Henderson (2004, 94–95), who adduces the tale of the pirates who treat Scipio's villa (and Scipio himself) as objects worthy of veneration (*Val. Max.* 2.10.2).

53. The metaphor of the mirror is from Ker 2002, 94–97. On *Ep.* 12, see also Henderson 2004, 24–27.

54. The point is made by Ker (2002, 91–92), who notes that Seneca's visit corresponds to the "inspection routine" recommended by Cato in the *De agricultura*. On Seneca's reclining pose (*Ep.* 86.1: *In ipsa Scipionis Africani villa iacens haec tibi scribo*), see Henderson 2004, p. 53, n. 1.

55. The preposition "near" is deliberately vague; it is unclear whether or not the countryside they walk through is part of Cicero's estate.

for this walk is somewhat different from many of the others we have encountered so far; Cicero and his companions walk not in the built environment of a portico or peristyle, but in the natural setting of the Italian countryside, along the river Fibrenus. The passage is frequently cited as one of the rare instances in Latin literature where there is a clear appreciation for the beauty of a natural landscape; but as Cicero explains to Atticus, he cherishes the spot for more than just its natural beauty, for they are walking on the very grounds where he was born and raised (*Leg.* 2.3):

si verum dicimus, haec est mea et huius fratris mei germana patria. hinc enim orti stirpe antiquissima sumus, hic sacra, hic genus, hic maiorum multa vestigia. quid plura? hanc vides villam, ut nunc quidem est lautius aedificatam patris nostri studio, qui cum esset infirma valetudine, hic fere aetatem egit in litteris. sed hoc ipso in loco, cum avus viveret et antiquo more parva esset villa, ut illa Curiana in Sabinis, me scito esse natum. quare inest nescio quid et latet in animo ac sensu meo, quo me plus <aequo> hic locus fortasse delectet, <nec sine causa> si quidem etiam ille sapientissimus vir, Ithacam ut videret, immortalitatem scribitur repudiasse.

To tell the truth, this [sc. Arpinum] is my and my brother's real homeland. We grew up here, from very ancient roots, our sacred rites are here, our family is here, many traces of our ancestors are here. What more need I say? You see that villa—as it stands now, it has been built up in a more lavish fashion by the efforts of my father, who, since he was of ill health, practically spent his life here, in his books. But you should know that I was born on that very spot, when my grandfather was alive and when the villa was small in the ancient fashion, like the villa of Manius Curius in Sabine country. So there remains for me an indescribable feeling deep in my mind and in my heart, and this place pleases me perhaps more than it should, though not without reason, since even that wisest of men is said to have rejected immortality so that he might see Ithaca again.

In spite of the beauty of the natural setting, it is the presence of human culture that makes this place so appealing to Cicero.⁵⁶ This human presence is conveyed not only by the metaphorical footprints of ancestors who are long dead but also by the villa itself, which serves as their memorial. As with Seneca's villa, the state of their homestead mirrors the state of Cicero and his *gens*, but in this case, the villa has improved with age, having expanded and acquired decorations as its famous son has risen through the ranks of Roman society. When Cicero asks Atticus to look beyond the present villa and to imagine the villa as it once was, he takes him back in time as they walk through this ancient ground and retrace the steps of his ancestors.⁵⁷ But we should not forget the fact that this walk evokes other *places* as well as other times. After all, the model for this dialogue, Plato's *Laws*, takes

56. See Vasaly 1993, 30–33; Farrell 2001, 18–27.

57. Compare Pliny's claim (*Ep.* 5.6.5–6) that a visit to his Tuscan villa is like a visit to an earlier age: *aetatis mira clementia: semper aer spiritu aliquo movetur, frequentius tamen auras quam ventos habet. hinc senes multi: videas avos proavosque iam iuvenum, audias fabulas veteres sermonesque maiorum, cumque veneris illo putes alio te saeculo natum* ("The summers are amazingly mild: there is always a breeze that keeps the air moving, more often a breeze than a full wind. For this reason there are many elderly people in the area: you might see grandparents and great-grandparents of those who are no longer children; you might hear old stories and tales of those who have passed away, and when you arrive there, you might think that you were born in another generation").

place as the speakers walk to see the cave of Zeus on Mount Ida in Crete, while the stroll along the river Fibrenus recalls the walk by the banks of the Ilissus outside the walls of Athens in the beginning of the *Phaedrus*.⁵⁸ Despite the natural setting, in other words, their environment is no less constructed than Crassus' Tusculan portico in the *De oratore*, and despite the careful focus on Roman (and Italian) identity, the Greek precedents for both their walk and their conversation form a constant subtext.⁵⁹

Cicero provides a clue to unraveling this nexus of associations by his allusion to Odysseus, who is the symbol for everything that is at stake in this scene: intellectual curiosity, homecoming, travel, *theoria*, philosophy, and even Greek identity itself.⁶⁰ Cicero's love for Arpinum recalls Odysseus' love for Ithaca, and the intensity of their affection is directed not only at their fatherlands but also at their *fathers*: the lingering image of Cicero's father reading in his refurbished villa is a sign that we too should read this scene a little more closely. For in the famous epilogue to the Homeric *Odyssey*, Laertes too lives out his life removed from politics; when father and son reunite, Odysseus finds him digging in his garden.⁶¹ Once again, the natural spaces of the Greek world are transformed into the constructed, intellectual space of the Roman villa: we find Cicero's father not in his garden, like Laertes, but in his study.⁶² And the same holds true for their sons: unlike Odysseus, the original *theoros* (*ille sapientissimus vir*: that wisest, or perhaps most *philosophical* man), Cicero and his companions do not travel around the Mediterranean, but rather walk leisurely through a space that is at once Greek and Roman, at once natural and man-made, at once real and imagined.

CONCLUSION

I have limited my observations in the final section of this essay to those that are relevant to the Roman domestic setting, but one could easily find supporting evidence elsewhere in Roman society and Latin literature. There was an abundance of ambulatory spaces in the city as well, and these spaces often had similar intellectual associations; libraries, for example, inevitably included porticoes in their design, where visitors could converse while walking, or

58. Atticus will explicitly evoke the *Phaedrus* later in this scene (2.6), when he is reluctant to dip his toe in the Fibrenus as Socrates had in the Ilissus. On the correspondences between the *De legibus* and the *Phaedrus*, see Görler 1988, 218–20, and Dyck 2004, 20–22. The idyllic setting of the *Phaedrus* had a long literary afterlife; for a selection of ancient citations and allusions, see Hardie 1998, 238–39. The dramatic setting of Plato's *Laws* is mentioned by Cicero at *Leg.* 1.15; it is perhaps relevant that Atticus' estate at Buthrotum was nicknamed the Amaltheum (cf. *Leg.* 2.7), named for a reconstruction of the cave where Amalthea suckled baby Zeus: see Bergmann 2001, 155.

59. Moreover, in the passage that immediately follows the one cited above, Atticus compares Cicero's love for his ancestral estate to his own love for his adopted *patria*, Athens: there too he is moved by the *vestigia* of his adopted ancestors (Greek philosophers), at whose graves he performs a *contemplatio* (*studiose eorum etiam sepulcra contemplor*, *Leg.* 2.4).

60. Cf. Hartog 2001, 25: "The *Odyssey*, with its poetic anthropology, provides the basis for the Greeks' vision of themselves and of others."

61. *Od.* 24.226–42. On the function of the garden setting in the Homeric passage, see Henderson 1997.

62. Cf. Seamus Heaney's early poem "Digging," in which the son's literary activity picks up where the father's farming leaves off: "Between my finger and my thumb / The squat pen rests. / I'll dig with it."

simply meditate upon their readings.⁶³ Similarly, in the memorable scene in Book 8 of the *Aeneid* where Evander takes Aeneas on a tour of the future Rome, the act of walking is used to generate a narrative, to explain monuments, and ultimately, to animate history; Romans walking through an urban landscape dominated by the monuments, inscriptions, statues, and buildings of their past were similarly encouraged to think beyond the here-and-now.⁶⁴ The common thread that runs through all these examples is of course walking itself; far from being incidental or ancillary to the intellectual process, walking played an essential role in the Roman imagination, putting both body and mind in motion.

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63. See Callmer 1944, 186; Plutarch, for example, twice makes mention of the walkways (περίπατοι) surrounding the libraries of Lucullus (*Luc.* 42.1–2), implying that such spaces were an essential part of the experience of an ancient library. Kuttner's (1999) article on the Portico of Pompey is a model for the cultural metaphor of walking as travel extended beyond the setting of the Roman villa. Cf. Vespasian's Templum Pacis, which Josephus tells us was filled with so many works of art that a visit could take the place of a sightseeing trip around the world (*BJ* 7.5.7 [158–60]).

64. See Favro 1996, *passim*; Edwards 1996, 27–43.

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