

Introduction

To some, this talk's title may smack of anachronism: there is a wide range of books and articles, as you will know, that have assigned "the invention of solitude", along with its frequent companions the invention of the individual, the subject, the self, the love of literature, to their particular epoch of choice, whether Augustinian Christianity, St Benedict's monasticism, the Petrarchan renaissance, Montaigne's scepticism, Coleridge's and Goethe's Romanticism, or 19th century bourgeois society. This proliferation of "invention" tales has led to a new field of meta-analysis represented by, for example, Gabrièle Wersinger Taylor's perceptive 2018 article, "*L'invention de l'invention : archéologie ou idéologie*". Is there, though, a history of solitude, whether framed as a progress of the empowered subject or the alienated individual? as a history of private bedrooms or of silent reading? If so, where to begin? Will such a history be linear, or split in many directions as the winds, driven by political economy, aesthetic ideology, or, in the anthropological terms of Philip Descola or Viveiros de Castro, of distinct ontologies? Alternatively, might "solitude" represent a topological field, a variety of parts and parcels, upon which authors and institutions draw to form their aggregate identities? If the latter, will this topological field be subject to the dictates of inherited tradition—say, à la Ernst Robert Curtius—or to a broader structuralism that might treat solitude like Frobenius' forms, Aby Warburg's serpents, James Frazer's rites? If in such broadly comparative terms, what of languages—between them, like of solitude vs. *solitudo*, *soledad*, *saudade*, *einsamkeit*, *hitbodedut*, and within them, like Greek "erêmos", "autitês", "monôtês"? How, finally, do we reconcile our work as historians, attuned to collective beliefs and practices, with our work as critics, for whom the exceptional or odd or heretical thinker might equally represent an expansion of the horizons of the thinkable?

For a classicist speaking of solitude in the Roman world, this is only the beginning of the problem, for it has been a commonplace from antiquity down to 19th century historiography and today, that, for the Romans, society simply *is* reality. On this view, Roman life is characterized by what the great Roman social historian Ramsay Macmullen termed "publicness" and "verticality": the only life that counted was one that conspicuously reflected, by steps improved, one's standing in a rigidly hierarchical class structure.¹ The denial to the Romans of solitude and its various companions—individuality, subjectivity, irrationality—has gone hand in hand, historically, with a denial to them of imaginative literature, especially when compared with Greeks. In the 19th century, classical historiography tended to agree with Hegel (and Horace) that Romans "remained satisfied with a dull, stupid subjectivity" (2004: 308–9). "Latin scholarship," it has been observed,

“has produced no *Romans and the Irrational* to match E.R. Dodds’ famous lectures” on *Greeks and the Irrational* (1951)—longstanding resistance to Roman solitude shows why, although a full treatment of this question, for which we do not have the time today, would include the history of resistance to the anthropology of the Romans, in part related to a turning away from the comparatist exuberance of James Frazer in Britain, and, on the continent, from the fascist inclinations of such specialists as Jérôme Carcopino.

My own work, and the title of this talk, concerns what I call “the solitary sphere”, which I hope to add to the more common “public” and “private” spheres, in Rome *res publica* and *res privata*. Broadly speaking, what was public transpired in street and forum, what was private among family and home, and controlled by the *paterfamilias*; the solitary was what one said to oneself. Architectural complexes like Pompey’s theater and Augustus’ *campus Martius* allowed an individual citizen in the late first century BCE to inhabit spaces that modelled these grandees’ political, astrological, and mythological portraits; my own work shows how new, grand, and ambitious structures of literature—from Cicero’s letters and organized philosophical project to the *oeuvres* of Virgil, Horace, and Propertius—invited Romans to do the same within the bounded symbolic worlds imagined by their creators.

We can catch a first view of this newly delineated sphere from a writer—engaging, if not especially original—who flourished shortly after the age of Virgil ended. In the preface to the third book of his *Fables*, the Aesopic poet Phaedrus (~15 BCE to mid-1st century CE) tells his work’s addressee, a certain Eutychus, that, if he wants “his mind to be free to feel the strength of my poetry” (*ut liber animus sentiat uim carminis*, 3–4), he “must be free from business” (*uaces oportet...a negotiis*, 2). In what follows, one naturally expects to read a rehearsal of the bipartite structures that ancients and moderns alike so habitually draw in order to define Roman social life: even his own self-confessedly trifling literature, Phaedrus might have said, should be read not in “business” (*negotium* > ‘*nec otium*’ = “not leisure”), but in “leisure” (*otium*). This is not, however, what we find, for Phaedrus springs a ternary surprise: Eutychus, the poet continues, is *also* barred from reading Phaedrus’ poems when he wants to spend time with friends and wife (12), to “give leisure to his body” (*otium des corpori*, 13), and to relax with the utilitarian aim of being more fit for public service; which is to say, these works are meant to be read neither at work (*negotium*) nor at play (*otium*). If, though, these poems’ home is neither in the public forum nor in the private company of one’s own home, then they must appertain to another sphere entirely, and it is this that Phaedrus goes on to suggest: “If you deign to cross the threshold of the Muses,” Phaedrus concludes, “you must change your way of life, and its design” (*Mutandum tibi propositum est et uitae*

genus, / intrare si Musarum limen cogitas, 15–16). Or, as Rilke put it, upon seeing the Archaic torso of Apollo in Paris' Louvre Museum: "Du mußt dein Leben ändern" ("You must change your life").ⁱⁱ

Phaedrus does not give this new way of life a name, but the birth-story that follows upon this poetic propaedeutic suggests its broad contours: his mother bore him "upon the Pierian ridge, there where Mnemosyne [= 'Memory'], nine-times fruitful, bore to Thundering Jove the choir of the arts [= 'Muses']" (*Ego, quem Pierio mater enixa est iugo, / in quo Tonanti sancta Mnemosyne Ioui, / fecunda nouies, artium peperit chorum*, 17–19).ⁱⁱⁱ As Phaedrus was born, alone with the Muses, so too the reader of his poetry must be alone with "the Muses," in the humanized and textualized sense that Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* gave them: "With the Muses, that is, with liberal art and study" (*cum Musis, id est cum humanitate et doctrina*, 5.66). For Romans, "the work of the Muses" (ἡ μουσική, "arts or letters," LSJ II) was something that could take place in solitude, whence an ancient etymology for Phaedrus' birthplace: "The Muses are called *Pierides* on account of the loveliness and solitude of the Pierian mountain, where they delight in secluded places on account of their liberal studies."^{iv} Festus' etymology may build on a line of thought that one can trace back to Aristotle's *Politics*: that music, unlike gymnastics and nutrition, is something we master for its own sake, and not for external utility, with the justification that "to search everywhere for what is useful least befits great-souled and freeborn people" (τὸ δὲ ζητεῖν πανταχοῦ τὸ χρήσιμον ἥκιστα ἀρμόττει τοῖς μεγαλοψύχοις καὶ τοῖς ἐλευθερίοις, *Pol.* 1338b). As Aristotle's formulation, Festus' etymology, and Phaedrus' story all underline, those pursuits proper to the social station of a free person (*liber*) are made possible by what one does in the solitude of the Muses' home.

As we have seen, the set of binaries we regularly deploy to describe Roman life leave little room for solitude: Phaedrus' Romans were either engaged in *otium* (domestic pleasures) or *negotium* (state business); were immersed in *res priuatae* (matters pertaining to the family-group headed by a *pater familias*) or in *res publicae* (matters pertaining to the aggregate of family-groups, governed by a narrow oligarchy); were surrounded by kin, clients, customers, and slaves *domi* (at home), or by fellow soldiers, commanders, and auxiliaries *militiae* (at war). But this bivalent picture of society, though accurate in its way, elides what even a Roman law like the "Senatorial Decree Concerning the Bacchanalia" (186 BCE) could imagine and fear: what one did neither in public (with many people) nor in private (with some vaguely related people), but, "in secret" (*in oquoltod=in occulto*, 15)—or, in the enigmatic words of the Neronian satirist Persius, with "two or none" (*uel duo uel nemo*, 1.3).

The occlusion of such seclusions has proven increasingly inadequate for accounting for the history of religion and law at Rome; it is inadequate, too, for representing Roman literature in the age of Virgil. To read this literature right, and to gain a clearer understanding of Roman culture, especially under the Principate, and of the culture that this age endowed to posterity, we need to replace our bipartite schemes of Roman life (public and private) with a tripartite division (public, private, solitary).

If we want a model for this tripartite division of spheres public, private, and solitary, we can look to Greek philosophy, but if we want something more tactile, and more immediately Roman, we need look no further than the Roman house. When it comes to the aristocratic *domus*, there are, we have in recent decades come to appreciate, no hard and fast distinctions between public and private spaces; instead, as Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (1994: 17) observed, “We are dealing rather with a spectrum that ranges from the completely public to the private.” Every room in a Roman house was multifunctional, and could be open to use as a public space: as new approaches to the Roman house have taught us, any given space was people made of it, its functions “created by the actions of its inhabitants, rather than being predetermined.”^v This quality extended even to the *cubiculum*, or bedroom, which could be used for receiving friends (Tac. *Dial.* 3.1 and 14.1), conducting trials (Cic. *Verr.* 3.133), listening to the complaints of provincials (Cic. *Q.Fr.* 1.1.25), and even conferring with one’s would-be assassin (Sen. *Clem.* 1.9.7).^{vi}

Yet, despite the multifunctionality of all rooms of the Roman house, including the *cubiculum*, one can still recognize what Andrew Riggsby (1997: 40) has called the tripartite “moral topography” of Roman space: Cicero, for example, reflects a conceptual division of public, private, and solitary in his references to “Syracuse - house - bedroom” (*Syracusas...domum...cubiculo*, *II Verr.* 2.133) or “Tribunal - house - bedroom” (25 *tribunali...domo...cubiculo*, *Q Fr.* 1.1.25).^{vii} This, in turn, reflects the tripartite topography implicit in Varro’s *De re rustica*, with a strong split between the places of order and chaos that, according to Philip Descolla, laid the groundwork for the medieval and modern division of space. Returning the villa itself, though, Andrew Riggsby, though, goes on to show how a separate group of “three concentric circles” is suggested by the sources (pre-eminently Pliny, *Epist.* 7.23.2, 1.22.4), comprised of 1) House (*domus*), 2) Bedroom (*cubiculum*), and 3) Bed (*lectus*); as he concludes (40), “This is a striking model because it would not readily be predicted on an architectural basis.” Andrew Riggsby’s lexical approach to the *cubiculum* identified six basic “patterns of association”—1) Rest, 2) Sex, 3) Adultery, 4) Controlled display of art, 5) Murder and Suicide, and 6) Reception. We must, though, add one function

to Riggsby's uses of the *cubiculum* as "room for secret activity" (44): literature. Allied with the practice known as *lucubratio*, or "work by candlelight," the isolated *cubiculum* could be construed as the ideal place for literature.^{viii} "When we're up working by lamplight," says Quintilian's *Institutes of Oratory* (10.3.25–6), "may the silence of the night, the closed room and the single course of light keep us upright."^{ix} The *cubiculum*, that is, can be a room of one's literary own, as Pliny the Younger helps us see is as true of morning as of night (9.36):

"You ask me how I plan out my day on my Tuscan villa in summer. I wake up when I please, usually around the first hour, often earlier, rarely later. The windows stay shut; wondrously, then, as a result of silence and darkness, I am withdrawn from things that distract me, I am free and left to himself, and I follow my thoughts with my eyes, rather than my eyes with my thoughts; my eyes thus see what my mind sees, and do not see other things. I devote myself to thought, if I have anything in the works, and I think upon every word as though I were writing or revising, and in this way get through more or less material, depending on whether the matter be difficult or easy to compose and keep in mind. I call for my secretary, and, after letting in the light of day, I dictate to him what I've put together; he goes away, and I call him back again, and again send him away. At the fourth hour, or the fifth—for schedule is neither fixed nor measured out—I take myself, depending on how the weather suits me, to either the terrace or the covered portico, to think about what remains, and to dictate it."^x

In waking alone in his *cubiculum*, Pliny fulfils class expectations: just as one finds in Honoré de Balzac's "Theory of the Bed,"^{xi} any Roman who could afford to sleep alone, did—or at least he would say that he did. Further, although we are often told that slaves were so ubiquitous at Rome that their presence hardly counted, Pliny makes a repeated point of composing in a solitude that excludes even his secretarial slave.

Here, again, a clear tripartite scheme emerges: the public (*ab iis quae auocant*), the private (represented by the secretarial member of Pliny's "family"), and the solitary space "wondrously" guarded by silence and darkness.^{xii} Assumptions about Romans' exclusively public orientation have made this scene difficult to see, even for someone like, Jérôme Carcopino, a scholar (too) highly attuned to Romans' mystical attachments, who can claim, only pages before citing this very passage, that "There was practically no interval between leaping out of bed and leaving the house. Getting up was a simple, speedy, instantaneous process. There is no denying that the bedchamber (*cubiculum*) had nothing seductive to tempt the occupant to linger."^{xiii} Pliny, it seems, would beg to differ, as would Varro, who opposed the *cubiculum* not to the street, but to the *convivium*, "the banquet": "silence must reign, not in the banquet, but in the bedroom" (Varro *Men.* 336 *silentium...non in conuiuio, sed in cubiculo esse debet*).^{xiv}

This anecdote of Pliny invites us to rethink our assumptions about solitary reading and writing at Rome, which, even if exceptional, were still a highly thinkable, and practicable, reality.^{xv} As Emanuele Valette-Cagnac has shown in drawing a distinction between *recitare* (public reading) and *legere* (including *legio tacita*, “silent reading”) in Latin semiotics, the origins of the modern myth of the ancient reader who can only read out loud goes back to Nietzsche, who, for reasons of his own, sought to contrast the “dead,” alienated, weak-willed literary culture of modern Germans with the “live”, socially embedded, strong-spirited sense of literature in what he called *die antike öffentliche Welt*, “the ancient *public* world”:^{xvi} I underline the word *public* here in order to highlight Nietzsche’s question-begging formulation, whereby the adjective “public” (*öffentlich*) here is not distributive (“that part of the ancient world that was public”) but attributive “the ancient world, that was, itself, public.” This, however, is precisely the question: what was the nature of the conception of the public, of the private, and of the solitary in the ancient world, in Virgil’s Rome? In this light, it may not be the idea of solitary reading of ancient literature that suffers from romantic anachronism, but an *öffentlich* reading of ancient literature that is, decidedly, the product of modern prejudices, and Nietzschean (anti-)romanticism.

For Pliny as for Quintilian as for many Romans, a *cubiculum* could, to conclude our spatial excursus, be a room of one’s own, but also a room with a view, even when one’s windows stayed firmly shut. Take, for example, the exceptional, but suggestive, *cubiculum* of Quintus Fabius Synistor at the Villa Boscoreale. One can experience this bedroom in something approaching its original framing by entering the Roman wing of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. There, one finds *topiaria opera*, “landscape paintings,” of the kinds pioneered “in the age of the divine Augustus by Studius” (Pliny, *HN* 35.116–7), but where these paintings as a class can include images of people strolling, sailing, traveling donkey-back or carriage-drawn to villas, fishing, fowling, hunting, or collecting grapes, the ones we find on Synistor’s walls in the Met are remarkable for their emptiness.^{xvii} Look around that room: on the rear wall you see birds perched by shaded fountains, overlooked by grottos, balustrades, and arbors; on the symmetrical side walls, you find townscapes of building layered upon building, look unto temples within temples paradoxically open to the sky. Or, as the hostess of the Virgilian *Copa* hymns her locale, “Here are garden-scenes, cells, drinking ups, roses, flutes, harps, and a pavilion cool with shadowed reeds” (*sunt topia et calybae, cyathi, rosa, tibia, chordae, / et triclia umbrosis frigida harundinibus*, 7–8).

What you don’t see on Synistor’s walls are people: indeed, it cannot be an accident that the Second Style wall painting here represented, and which developed just as the city of

Rome was set to achieve the highest levels of population density the world would see until 19th century Industrialization, and the Romanticism to which it would give rise, should here depict the built-up cities of the painter and patron's day as one might wish to find them: empty. In the city painted on these walls, one strolls at ease, with as much peace, serenity, and freedom from surveillance as one would have in bed in the bedroom of one's villa. A theatrical backdrop against which any *personae* might be introduced, one is free to impose upon these sacro-idyllic landscapes and urban scenes whomsoever one chooses: many, or none, or few. With these wall paintings, with one's books, with one's *musica*, one can live in teeming Rome or in the busy Bay of Naples, responsible to one's *pater familias* and supervised by the *princeps* as *pater patriae*, but still dream alone. It is this, the dreamy imaginative quality of second-style Pompeiian wall painting, that the solitary sphere can help us perceive not only in the life, but also in the literature, of Virgil's Rome.

Terms for Solitude

Despite the momentary transport afforded by Boscoreale, though, if we want to discuss history, or literature, terms matter a great deal. Our own word 'solitude', of course, derives from Latin *solitudo*.^{xviii} In workaday Latin, *solitudo* often connoted places "deserted, empty, uncultivated" places either untouched by human hands (Curt. Ruf. *Hist. alex.* 7.3.12), or, on the contrary, *too touched*: so Cicero blames the rapacious governor of Sicily Verres for "what desolation (*solitudo*) now is in Sicily's districts, what devastation, flight of cultivators, how deserted, how uncultivated, how desolate is every place" (*Verr.* 2.4.114). Like Greek ἐρημία, *solitudo* slides from topographic to personal isolation: Cicero's *On Invention* (1.109) advises eliciting pity by demonstrating "helplessness, infirmity, solitude." Hence, too, solitude as synonym for childlessness, orphanhood, and widowhood.^{xix} Perhaps the most famous use of the word *solitudo* in Latin literary history is that of the British leader of a late first century CE revolt against Roman power, Calgacus, who warns his "crammed multitude" about what *pax Romana* actual entails (*Agr.* 30.6)—"to robbery, slaughter, plunder they give the false name 'Empire'; they make a solitude (*solitudinem*), and call it Peace."

As a concomitant of "solitude" as a form deprivation from others, ancient Romans had inherited the interest of Aristotle, or the Aristotelian Peripapetic tradition, in solitude's connection to melancholia, a connection at the heart of Saxl and Panofsky's famous study of *Saturn, or Melancholy*. The mythical prototype for this tradition was Bellerophon: he had attempted to scale the heavens on the back of Pegasus, until Zeus' lightning bolt frightened Pegasus, sending Bellerophon crashing down. As Homer writes, "And since of all the gods he

was hated, truly over the Wandering Plain alone he would wander, eating his own heart, wandering far from the pathways of mortals.” This, the most clearly allegorical moment in Homer's poems, was picked up by the "Problems" attributed to Aristotle, where Bellerophon is said, like all melancholics, to have "sought out solitudes" (ἐρημίας ἐδίωκεν). He then went on to claim, as Cicero noted in his *Tusculan Disputation*, that "All geniuses are melancholy"; hence, Aulus Gellius can call melancholy the "heroic disease" (20.18.7). More famous still, though, and in its way as reflective of the paradox of solitude as both affliction and resource, is Aristotle's famous definition of man as a political animal: "Whatsoever is delighted in solitude," wrote Francis Bacon's Aristotle, "is either a wild beast or a god."^{xx} Less famous, though, is the same philosopher's confession as transmitted by Demetrius' *On Style*: "The more of a solitary and lonely man I am, the more I become a lover of myths" (ὅσῳ γὰρ αὐτίτης καὶ μονώτης εἰμί, φιλομυθότερος γέγονα, 144).^{xxi} To express this correlation, Aristotle coined a new word—*autitês* (αὐτίτης)—meaning not only "by oneself, alone," as it is often translated, but, etymologically, "the state of being one's own self" (>αὐτός, "self"). When this confession is run together with the philosopher's more famous postulate, a strange plot emerges: as Aristotle grows more solitary, more himself, and more a lover of myths, he also turns all the more into a beast or a god.

When it came to an aesthetic ideology of solitude, for Romans, at least, the association of solitude with artistic genius must have had something to do with the sense that 'solitude' was not only a way of being away from other people, but also a way of being with oneself. It was, that is, what Aby Warburg has called a *Denksraum*, a place for thought. Reflexivity, in fact, may be built into the Latin word *solitudo* itself. For the great scholar of Indo-European, and of Latin etymology, Emile Benveniste, the Latin word *solitudo* expresses a strong paradox, or internal contradiction: it comes from the word *swe, Latin *suus*, meaning "one's own", thus giving us both the word *sodalitas*, the group of humans that is "one's own people", as well as those words, like *solus* and *solitudo*, that, in Benveniste's words, help a Roman to "delimit himself as an individual and to refer to 'himself'." So, although *solitudo* could be achieved through *secessus*, by taking a physical retreat away from crowds and into self-chosen company, or into one's own isolated retreat, at its heart, *solitudo* meant a turn towards one's own self. As Ernst Kantorowicz aptly put it, solitude is "certainly not always an external departure from the world." Famously, Cicero has Cato the Elder attribute to Scipio Africanus the riddling phrase, "I am least alone when most alone, least idle when most idle," a statement that led Hannah Arendt to claim that "The Romans, in contrast to the Greeks, discovered solitude and with it philosophy as a way of life in the enforced leisure which

accompanies from public affairs"; as she later paraphrases Scipio's comment, "Though alone, I am together with somebody (myself, that is). . . I am two-in-one." To those who, in recent years, have assigned the birth of the love of literature, of companionate reading, of the personal relationship with the text, to the 19th century, Cicero's description of the deserted brooklands of his natal Arpinum as the place where, "Here, I am accustomed to disport myself most freely, whether I have something to think about with myself, or whether I have something to write or something to read." So, too, will his notice on the solitude one can find within crowds:

Who, then, would not believe that those men are more lonely who, though in the crowded forum, have no one with whom they would wish to speak, as compared to those who, with no one else present, either speak with themselves or with, as it were, the gatherings of the most learned men, delighting themselves in their discoveries and their writings?^{xxii}

Case study: Propertius

In the brief time that remains, I would like to focus on a case-study of a poem that exemplifies many of the aspects of the solitary sphere I've adumbrated, and that helps to justify this paper's chronological focus on "the age of Virgil" rather than, say, the late Republic, the early Principate, or the Roman world as a whole. "When the gods ceased to be, and Christ had not yet come, there was, between Cicero and Marcus Aurelius, a unique moment when man was alone."^{xxiii} Or so wrote Flaubert to E. Roger des Genettes, in a letter cited by Margeurite Yourcenar as the origin of her work on the *Memoirs of Hadrian*: "A large part of my life has been passed in attempting to define, then to depict, this man that is both solitary and connected with everything."^{xxiv} Rome's gods had not, of course, disappeared, but there was a sense in which the age of Virgil saw changes in the relationship of the self to others and to the state. Scholars of religion like Clifford and Ando and Jorg Rupke have pointed to the flourishing of elite religious individuation and individualization during this period, something that one can see in sites generally ignored by Anglophone scholarship, like Varro's aviary at Casinum (Sauron 2007) or in the underground basilica at Porta Maggiore (Carcopino 1943, 1968), now finally open to the public. As to the broader question—why solitude in the age of Virgil—we can paint with a very wide brush, which gives exaggerated but revelatory outlines.

In the age of Virgil, the Roman world became much larger, and simultaneously a great deal smaller. On the one hand, Rome's territory was almost as expansive as it would ever be. Citizens of Rome could see this for themselves on the massive map built by Augustus' right-hand man, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, on the *Campus Martius*. Right next to this map of empire-without-end, *imperium sine fine*, over most of what Greeks called the "oikoumene," the "inhabited world," stood an *horologium*, a massive obelisk sun dial, that may have been placed so as to cast a shadow on Augustus' *Altar of Peace* on a particularly fateful day of the year: the *princeps*'s birthday, the 23rd of September. Meanwhile, signs of the zodiac on the floor made clear that Augustus' empire, and Rome's power, was written in the stars. Conquest of time and space come together in this complex of cosmos and imperium made concrete. Recall that it was Julius Caesar who, in 46 BCE, reformed the calendar, to be corrected by Octavian in 8 BCE. Meanwhile, the city of Rome itself had reached a level of population, and of industry, that would not be reached again in Europe until industrialization. According to one recent analysis (De Ligt 2004), Rome's population may have grown from ~200,000 to ~400,000 between 201 BCE and 133 BCE and from ~400,000 to ~900,000 between 133 BCE and 28 BCE. Recent ice-core analysis in Greenland has shown that the Augustan period ramped up to the highest level of lead pollution the world would see until the 19th century, coming to a close only with the drastic economic reduction caused by the Antonine plague that raged from 165 to 193 CE, killing upwards of five million people.

At the same time, the age of Virgil saw the world had grow much smaller. First, in terms of the compression of space: as we can see with the help of Orbis, Stanford's Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World, one now had a variety of options for traversing, with some degree of security, the whole of the Mediterranean littoral and of Western Europe. This meant, too, the power to surveil, to interpellate and to punish: so Cicero could write to the exiled M. Claudius Marcellus in 46 BCE that was foolish to think that one could try and escape its reach through flight, for the whole world was under its control. Augustus added a vertical dimension to this horizontal power by bringing even the inner workings of "one's own home", even and especially an aristocrat's home, under his own family's control: the *Leges Iuliae* (18-17 BCE) saw public law take over from individual families even the power to regulate and punish perceived offenses against familial codes of conduct: who married whom, and how adultery would be punished, were now in the hands of the *res publica*, which is to say, in the *potestas* of its ruling power. In this new dispensation, the state could reach into a home in order to enforce its rules upon all of its members directly, theoretically bypassing any mediated powers. In this sense, when it came to the enforcement

of sexual mores, one can, for the first time, speak of an “individual subject” at Rome, personally subject to direct interpellation by the state. In terms of the power to “discipline and punish,” therefore, the end of the 1st century BCE can be seen as ushering not so much the invention of private life, as has often been asserted, but, instead, its end: the state has now replaced family units as part of a “civilizing process”—everything belongs to whomsoever holds *imperium* over Rome, the city (*urbs*) that governs and metonymically represents the world (*orbs*).

Against the backdrop of this territorial consolidation, population explosion, and the universal State's increased power to discipline and punish, there comes a new fashioning of the solitary sphere of which I have spoken. Examples could be drawn from the works of Virgil, who turns Homer's objective narration into a subjective style that gives us access to a character's thoughts and outlook; or from Horace, who taught Romans how to sublimate social conflict into internal self-contradiction; instead, today, we will look to Propertius, the great writer of erotic love-elegy. Although he situates much of his lovelorn poetry in the city of Rome, throughout his oeuvre, we find people, places, and things that are, for better and worse, alone. Taking just his first book of poems, the so-called *Monobiblos*, we find “deserted and empty” (*desert-*, *vac-*) shores (1.3.2, 1.8.5), heart (1.10.30), waves (1.15.10), bed-chambers (1.15.18), halcyons-birds (1.17.2), places (1.18.1), woods (1.18.2), rocks (1.18.32) trees (1.19.36); we have “lonely” (*sol-*) caves (1.1.11), rocks (1.18.4), ship-wrecked and spurned lovers (1.18.30); and we have a “singular” (*un-*) man (1.2.26), grace (1.2.29), and girl (1.10.29). Whole poems are set in solitary, non-responsive, or funereal scenes: in the *Monobiblos* alone, a train of such solitude-themed poems brings the book to a close, putting foreword an excluded lover before a seemingly deaf (but actually very painfully attentive) door (1.16); a poet-lover alone with waves speaking, alone, to lonely birds (1.17); a poet-lover alone in solitary groves and listening to the echoes cast back by lonely and deserted rocks (1.18); a poet imagining himself into death (1.19); Hylas snatched away by the nymphs amid solitary trees (1.20); a speaking grave (1.21); a poet speaking as a man from a land of graves (1.22). No wonder Petrarch found this book so rich a resource for his *Rime Sparse*.

Propertius wants only his beloved, Cynthia, who will be his first, and his last, love; his love being unreciprocated, the poet finds himself alone. His solitude is all the more intense because his love, he writes in his first poem, is a form of madness that divides him from all male companions, too, and that consumes all of his nights and days. These loves, of course, are the matter of his poetry, making his poetry, too, a form of madness: in this sense, his love, like his poetry, like his solitude, is a kind of pathology, in the terms of this series. Propertius'

final poem, *Elegy* 4.11, is also known as the "Queen of the Elegies" or as the Cornelia elegy, after its speaker, a deceased Roman blue-blooded matron, who returns from the dead to speak with her surviving husband, Paullus Aemilius Lepidus, suffect consul 34 BCE. She has a request for him: "Cease, Paullus, to burden my grave with your tears." Crying, of course, is just what elegy *does*, but this is Propertius' last poem, so his elegies, along with his tears, will come, it seems, to an end. Or, at least, that's what we're *meant* to think. Cornelia's speech goes on:

"Now, Paullus, I commend to you the common pledges of our love: branded upon my very ashes this care lives on in me. You, their father, must play their mother's part: all that little band of mine must now be borne upon your shoulders. When you kiss them as they weep, add too their mother's kisses: the whole house now begins to be your charge. And if you are about to grieve, do so when your children cannot witness it; when they come, deceive their kisses with cheeks that are dry. Be the nights enough for you to wear out with thoughts of me, and the dreams which oft by faith assume my features: and when in secret (*in secreto*) you speak to my images (*simulacra*), utter every word as though I would reply." (trans. Goold).

Scholars have taken a wide variety of stances on this scene of secret soliloquies, seeing it as "close to bathos," or as a form of insulting and misogynist "tragic banality," or as a "triumph of textuality." What has not been emphasized, however, is the way in which this image of the lover's, not soliloquy, but soliloquizing demi-dialogue, represents a new way of posing the problem that had been important for Propertius' work since his very first poem: what does it mean to think of love, and of literature, as a form of solitude? Or rather, of solitude as form of reflexivity, all within the confines of the house's secret place, of the poet's *cubiculum*? In the future, Paullus will not speak with Cornelia: he will speak with the Cornelia that he conjures for himself, through what the ancients called *sermocinatio*, the dialogue of one. Paullus, a grandee of political life, will keep his relationship with the conjured Cornelia a secret not only from the street, but even from his family. It will be, that is, a matter not for the *res publica*, nor for the *res privata*, but for his *secretum*, for what I have called his solitary sphere. And this will persist, as the poem's continuation suggests, even when he remarries: his emotional attachment to his previous wife will be kept hidden from the newly empowered gaze of the State, which thought to police what went on even in an aristocrat's bedroom. In the end, only dreams will remain to him as a place of solitude people by his own creative imagination, and fuelled by what the Romans called *desiderium*: the desire for that which was not there, the sense that the stars were not aligned, and that, in Wallace Steven's phrase, "we

live in a place that is not our own, and much more, not ourselves, and hard it is in spite of blazoned days." The complexities of this poem, though, do not stop there, nor, as the last of his elegies, the implications for Propertius' corpus as a whole. On the one hand, given that Cornelia in the future will be the product of Propertius' own projections, we might wonder whether this Cornelia, too, is also the creation of Propertius' dreams. Alternatively, we might note that Cornelia is this poem's only speaker, and Paullus but one of the figures she calls forth. Paullus, that is, is but one shade, one *imago*, in a much larger cabinet of *imagines*, and, although Paullus may have an *imago* of Cornelia, the Paullus that this poem gives us is, himself, but the *imago* of Cornelia, with a complex inversion of the polarities that Propertius had expressed by way of the myth of Protesilaus in poem 1.19: "I shall always be called," Propertius had told Cynthia, "your *imago*."¹ Cornelia represents yet another instance of Propertius' ability to, not only dream others, but to create a world of powerful dreamers, a world in which the male lover, or the elegiac poet, might be, not only the producer of dreams, but the product of others' dreams. Cornelia, in this sense, represents an ideal endpoint for Propertian elegy, and a culmination of trends that we have observed throughout the writers of this period, because she is made the author of the fiction of her own fictionality.

We cannot, in the end, know whether Paullus' "secret" conversations embody victory or defeat for Propertius' elegy of absence. On the one hand, Paullus' *secretum* is a celebration of elegy's creative power to evoke figures of love and perform the work of longing and desire in a perpetuity independent of normal social pressures and obligations, hidden away from family, kept a practice of the concealing night, and distinct from the world's more public offices, declaring that even, in this, the most Roman of Propertius' poems, the world of politics cannot eradicate the sensibility of someone who prefers imaginary conversations with a dead beloved to the recovery of Caesar's lost standards. But, on the other hand, Paullus' *secretum* is a kind of relegation of love and poetry to the irrelevancies of solitary predilection, an admission that the kind of relationship that Propertius had with Cynthia must always be kept within the realm of the solitary sphere, a kind of private madness expressible only within Propertius' strained idiolect, and one that has no place in the light of Roman law or family virtue. The solitary sphere may, thus, be a *Denskraum* where thoughts can be free and rebellious: on the other hand, one is reminded of the story concerning the pantomime actor Pylades: when criticized by Augustus for causing too much noise throughout the city,

¹ 1.19.11 *illic quidquid ero, semper tua dicar imago*.

the actor is said to have retorted that "It is to your advantage, Caesar, that the people should devote their spare time to us." Of the solitary sphere, one might say something similar.

Had I more time, I would show turn our attention to certain solitude "case-studies", where Roman authors of this period took passages, scenes, and speeches from Greek literature and turned them solitary. I would show how Propertius' concluding dream-scene represents a rehearsal of the paradox of solitude with which Roman literature was supposed to have begun, with Ennius' dream of Homer. With the help of Petrarch's *De Vita Solitaria*, Montaigne *Essai sur la solitude*, Marvell's "Garden" and *Hortus*, Richard Bentley's Milton, and others, I would show how what I have called the solitary sphere of Roman literature played a crucial role in the development of the discourse of solitude in later periods, while at the same time being put on the fringes as inappropriate to the way one talks about the Roman, as opposed to the modern, world. That, though, will wait for questions, or for another time, and, for now, I thank you for your attention, and look forward to our further discussion.

ⁱ Macmullen (1974: 112).

ⁱⁱ See Rilke's "Archaischer Torso Apollos." My thanks to Leon Grek for this connection. This is not to say that Rilke and Phaedrus are saying the same thing, even if the words, like those of Cervantes and Borges' Pierre Menard, seem to coincide: Phaedrus' *genus* is redolent with the archetypal registers of style (*genera dicendi*),ⁱⁱ Rilke's with notions of conversion inherited from Christian but filtered through post-revolutionary cleavages in bourgeois self-expression. For Phaedrus' exceptional collocation, *uitam mutare*, compare Lucr. 5.167–8 (of gods), Sallust's *Oratio Philippi* 7 (of mercenaries "trading" their life for gold), Cic. *Sull.* 69 (of a man's moral development).

ⁱⁱⁱ Phaedrus chiastically returns to his rejection of *negotium* and *otium* at the end of his birthstory: although he was practically born into the Muses' *schola* (20)—meaning "school" but also the Greek word (σχολή) for Latin *otium*—and also turned away from business, he is still kept in isolation from entering "into the gathering" (*in coetum*, 23), presumably of the poets.

^{iv} Lindsay (1913: 214 l. 12) *Pierides Musae propter amoenitatem ac solitudinem Pierii montis dictae uidentur, quo eae secretis locis propter studia liberalia delectentur*.

^v Tuori and Nissin (2015: 7).

^{vi} This last is the source of Corneille's famous apothegm, pronounced by Augustus within his *cubiculum*: "Prends un siège, Cinna, prends" (*Cinna, ou la Clémence d'Auguste* 5.1.1); cf. Montaigne, *Essais* 1.29 ("et ayant faict sortir tout le monde de sa chambre" < Sen. *Clem.* 1.97 *dimissisque omnibus e cubiculo*).

^{vii} Riggsby (1997: 48): "The tribunal where trials and levies were held is a traditional symbol of the state."

^{viii} For *lucubratio*, see Ker (2004), Keane (2013).

^{ix} On this, see Rimell (2015: 2 n. 5).

^x Quaeris, quemadmodum in Tuscis diem aestate disponam. Evigilo cum libuit, plerumque circa horam primam, saepe ante, tardius raro. Clausae fenestrae manent; mire enim silentio et tenebris ab iis quae avocant abductus et liber et mihi relictus, non oculos animo sed animum oculis sequor, qui eadem quae mens vident, quotiens non vident alia. Cogito, si quid in manibus, cogito ad verbum scribenti emendantique similis, nunc pauciora nunc plura, ut vel difficile vel facile componi tenerive potuerunt. Notarium voco et die admisso quae formaveram dicto; abit rursusque revocatur rursusque dimittitur. Ubi hora quarta vel quinta — neque enim certum dimensumque tempus —, ut dies suasit, in xystum me vel cryptoporticum confero, reliqua meditor et dicto.

^{xi} See his *Physiologie du mariage* (1829), Meditation 17.

^{xii} There may, here, be a play on the addressee's name: to be protected by "darkness" (*tenebris*) is also to be protected by Fuscus, whose name means "blackness" or "darkness."

^{xiii} Carcopino (1940: 152).

^{xiv} Cf. Varro *Men.* 319 *in cubiculo dormire mallet, scilicet potus uinum meum cibarium, quam ego dominus cubarem*; *TLL* 4.0.1267.48–68.

^{xv} Parker (2009).

^{xvi} Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), ch. 8, aphorism 247; see Valette-Cagnac 2005.

^{xvii} On Studius, see Ling (1977), Bergmann (1991: 50–1); on the relationship of the *ars topiaria* to the *ars poetica*, see Myers (2005).

^{xviii} Bacon, *On Friendship* (pub. Latin 1638 (posthum.)).

^{xix} e.g. Ter. *Andr.* 1.5.55; Cic. *Verr.* 2.1.58; Quint. *Inst.* 6.1.18; Cic. *Caecin.* 5.13.

^{xx} Francis Bacon, *On Friendship*, adapting Aristotle's *Politics* (ὁ δὲ μὴδυνάμενος κοινωνεῖν ἢ μὴδὲν δεόμενος δι' αὐτάρκειαν οὐθὲν μέρος πόλεως, ὥστε ἢ θηρίον ἢ θεός, 1253a).

^{xxi} =Arist. fr. 668 Rose; Demetrius brings this as an example of humor—it combines a common word for solitude (μονότης) with a sophisticated neologism (αὐτίτης)—and because the statement expresses a correlation, we cannot tell whether Aristotle was in fact growing more solitary (and therefore more a lover of myths), nor what Aristotle would have thought about such a development. Although the extent of Aristotle's own mythmaking is unknown, and despite his doubts about myths' truth-value, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* see a direct link between philosophy and philomyth: "He who is perplexed and is in wonder thinks that he is ignorant, wherefore even the lover of myths is in a sense a philosopher, for a myth is compounded of wonders" (ὁ δ' ἀπορῶν καὶ θαυμάζων οἶεται ἀγνοεῖν (διὸ καὶ ὁ φιλόμυθος φιλόσοφος πῶς ἐστίν: ὁ γὰρ μῦθος σύγκειται ἐκ θαυμασίων, 952b18–20).

^{xxii} quis autem non magis solos esse, qui in foro turbaque, quicum conloqui libeat, non habeant, quam qui nullo arbitro vel secum ipsi loquantur vel quasi doctissimorum hominum in concilio adsint, cum eorum inventis scriptisque se oblectent?

^{xxiii} "Les dieux n'étant plus et le Christ n'étant pas encore, il y a eu, de Cicéron à Marc-Aurèle, un moment unique où l'homme seul a été" (*Correspondance* t. III.: 191 Gustave Flaubert, *Correspondance*, Paris, Gallimard, « Bibliothèque de la Pléiade », 1973-2007).

^{xxiv} Une grand partie de ma vie allait se passer à essayer de définir, puis à peindre cet homme seul et d'ailleurs relié à tout. » (Carnets de notes de *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, *Oeuvres romanesques*, Bilbl. de la Pléiade, 519, Gallimard, 1982).