MAPPING SENECA:
COGNITIVE CARTOGRAPHY AND MORAL IMAGINATION
IN THE *NATURAL QUESTIONS*

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by
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MAPPING SENECA: COGNITIVE CARTOGRAPHY AND
MORAL IMAGINATION IN THE *NATURAL QUESTIONS*

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on how Seneca creates a map of the world that defies human limitations and control, thereby instilling within the reader an understanding of self-knowledge. I argue that Seneca “maps” the world from two perspectives (sense perception and cognition) in order to instruct his reader about the faultiness of sense perception, which affects his perspective of himself and his place within the cosmos. Bound by the physical limitations of sense-perception, the reader struggles to shed his misperception and preconceived notions of the world and himself. As he progresses on his philosophical journey through the *Natural Questions*, he is carried away from the sordid, terrestrial realm where natural phenomena are easily accessible to perception (terrestrial waters, for example) to the imperceptible realms (celestial fires) where he must rely upon cognition. In the end, by mapping mankind within the world, Seneca is in effect defining what it means to be human.

INTRODUCTION: *In Itinere*

Just as the title suggests, this dissertation is about mapping. I pose the question: How does Seneca's use of cartographic language and imagery inform the reader about his place within the cosmos? Seneca creates two worldviews (sensory and cognitive) and uses one (cognitive) to break down the other (sensory), because cognitive mapping defies human limitations and control; and I argue that though he is mapping the world, he is actually mapping humanity. The reader gains self-knowledge as he progresses along his journey in the *Natural Questions*, and he learns that to be limited is to be human.

I. Content and Structure

The *Natural Questions* (*Naturales Quaestiones*, hereafter, *NQ*) is a peculiar work in that it lies outside the boundaries of what would be considered "scientific writing"; it is neither fully physical nor ethical, but this is the point of the *NQ*, as it integrates a variety of topics and genres.¹ The work is an eclectic mash-up of genres: tragedy, satire, science, and philosophy. Written sometime towards the end of Seneca's life, the *NQ*, in eight books, inquires into natural phenomena, but it digresses at times from scientific inquiry to describe satirical vignettes in which some sort of moral advice is interlaced. Seneca addresses the book to Lucilius who is identified with us, the readers.

I do not discuss in this dissertation the manuscript tradition of the *NQ*; it is, however, important to discuss the issues associated with its ordering and its effects on my argument. The medieval manuscript tradition of the *NQ* prints the book in the following sequence: 1, 2, 3, 4a,

¹All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

4b, 5, 6, and 7 (Hine 2014:1). This sequence follows the manuscript tradition (Hine 2014), despite discrepancies in this ordering. Another ordering (“*Grandinem*” order) starts with 4b and follows 5, 6, 7, 1, 2, 3, and 4a (Gross 1989). The ordering (3-7, 1-2) that I agree with and use in this dissertation is that put forth by Codoñer Merino (1979) and Hine (1981) and adds to the “force” of the *NQ* (Williams 2012:13).² Although the books are pretty much self-contained, there are a few cross references to other books which scholars arguing for the traditional ordering have ignored or misinterpreted.³ This ordering maintains these references, while also offering a macrocosmic, unifying worldview of the entire work,⁴ which is central to my analysis. In what follows I highlight a few key characteristics (as outlined in Limburg 2007) that support Codoñer Merino and Hine’s ordering before concluding with its implications on this dissertation.

The prefatory characteristics⁵ of Book 3 (discussed below) add to the force of this unifying worldview, and support my argument that the *NQ* is a journey that needs a map. The language in the preface of Book 3 is that of a world traveler who will embark on a great and difficult task, a trope indicative of a preface to an entire work, not just a book chapter.⁶ Seneca claims *magnarum rerum fundamenta ponam* (§1 “how great is the task for which I am laying down the groundwork”). Limburg (2007:114-16) argues that *fundamenta ponere* (“to lay down

²In his analysis of Codoñer Merino and Hine’s ordering, Williams (2012:13) argues that the opening of *NQ* 3 is a more convincing argument because there exists tension, a divergence of lives, between the author and the addressee: Seneca, who is departing from his political career, contrasts with Lucilius who is embarking on his.

³Cross-references occur between the following books: 3 and 4a; 5 and 6; and 1 and 7.

⁴Understanding how the scientific and ethical discussions fit together and thereby create coherence and a unified worldview has been the topic of discussion for scholars of the *NQ* (see “Existing Scholarship” in this chapter for further discussion).

⁵Limburg (2007) focuses on the prefaces, epilogues, and middle prefaces within the *NQ*. In her analysis of Book 3 (*ibid.*: 111-48), she inventories common prefatory characteristics, and applies them to the *NQ*. These characteristics include: language, tropes, and other programmatic details.

⁶Limburg (2007), see Chapter 4 especially.

groundwork”), an expression found within Seneca’s *Epistles* (cf. *Ep.* 13.16.5), alongside Seneca’s declaration of his subject matter (that is, *mundum circuire constitui et causas secretaque eius eruere* “to traverse the world and uncover its causes and secrets) within the first few lines of Book 3 are indicative of a preface. The statement *quotiens coepti magnitudinem attendit* (§4 “whenever it [the *animus* “mind”] directs its attention to the size of the undertaking”) is also indicative of a preface, with *coepti* meaning undertaking or beginning; if this book were placed within its traditional ordering (manuscript), the restatement of the subject matter would be unnecessary. In addition, the emphasis on the difficulty and magnitude of the task is a common trope found in prefaces (Limburg 2007:119-20). The opening lines (§1) describe the task as covering a lot of material (*tam multa* “so much”), and being spread out (*tam sparsa* “so scattered”) and inaccessible (*tam occulta* “so hidden”). Other descriptions (§3) include “serious” (*seriam*), “difficult” (*grauem*), and “immense” (*immensam*). These lines, placed at the opening of Book 3, lay out Seneca’s objectives, and their content fits better when considered within Codoñer Merino and Hine’s ordering.

Another indication that Book 3 stands as the *praefatio totius operis* is Seneca’s comparison of philosophy with history at §5-6 (Limburg 2007:111). *Comparatio artium*, that is, comparing one’s own subject to others’ is a trope found within prefaces which, Limburg argues, are the places “to defend and praise the work.”⁷ At §5 Seneca elevates his own activity (*Quanto satius est sua mala extinguere . . . Quanto potius deorum opera celebrare* “How much better to extinguish one’s own evils . . . How much better to celebrate the works of the gods”), which is expressed in terms of ethics, above that of historians who, he claims, transmit the evil deeds of

⁷Limburg (2007:129) notes that Seneca elevates ethics above other *artes* in *Ep.* 88 because they lack ethical material and do not lead to virtue (*Ep.* 88.3). See *De Breuitate Vitae* (13) where Seneca also notes that historiography, included among *artes*, is a useless occupation.

man for posterity. From here (§10), Seneca launches into a lengthy discussion about what is important in life, which, instead of contrasting ethics and historiography, contrasts “the historians’ subject, the conqueror . . . to the (aspirant) *sapiens*” (Limburg 2007:131).⁸ While he writes about and praises the moral achievements of those who conquer their vices, historians write about and praise man and his deeds. His criticism of history elevates the superiority of his undertaking, but more importantly it elevates moral achievements over “earthly” ones, and sets up a contrast between those who pursue virtue through moral achievements and see the world in its entirety (the *sapiens*) and those who pursue “virtue” through deeds and conquer the world.

The final prefatory trope that I discuss is important for establishing the ordering of the book, but more importantly the foundation for my own argument, that the *NQ* is a journey that needs a map. The phrase (*mundum circumire*, 3.praef.1 “to traverse the world”) plays upon didactic tropes of the philosopher as a world traveler,⁹ and Seneca likens himself to a world traveler who has begun his journey belatedly (*faciamus quod in itinere fieri solet*, §4 “let us do what is customary on journeys”).¹⁰ Seneca, who in contrast with Lucilius immersed in his *negotium* (“business”) in Sicily, speaks as if he has transcended the boundaries of the earth and surveys¹¹ the world from a theocentric viewpoint (Williams 2012:14).

⁸I explore this contrast in greater detail in this dissertation. See Williams (2012:35ff and 55ff) for his analysis of the contrast between *sapiens* and conqueror (or, as Williams labels, “the anti-*sapiens*”).

⁹See Volk (2002:20-24) for the use of the journey metaphor in Latin didactic poetry, and also Lavery (1980) for use of the journey metaphor in Seneca’s prose works.

¹⁰ Seneca claims that it is because of old age that he must hasten, as time is short and there is much work to be done (3.praef.2-3). The use of the subjunctive (*urgeamus, sarciat, accedat*, 3.praef.2) and emphasis on shortness of time (*paruo . . . tempore*, 3.praef.3, for example) and expressions emphasize this sense of urgency and shortness of life, thus the need for haste (Limburg 2007:125ff.).

¹¹ *Mundum circumire* can mean “to survey,” and Limburg (2007:115-16) argues that Seneca considers his undertaking to be that of taking a voyage (with the mind, *animus*) around the world. See *De Beneficiis* 7.3 for another example, in a different work, of this “mind journey” motif.

The trope of the world traveler is integral to Codoñer Merino and Hine's ordering because it emphasizes the linear trajectory of the work as a whole; the reader, on his journey, ascends through the three realms of the cosmos (*terrena*, *sublimia*, and *caelestia* "terrestrial, subliminal, and celestial"). Books 3-4b talk about water and move from *terrena* to *sublimia*. Books 5-6 (and parts of 7) talk about air and the region, *sublimia*. Book 7 ("On Comets") to the preface of Book 1 ("On Celestial Fires") take the reader to the realm of *caelestia* where everything is ordered and fixed. The final book (Book 2, "On Lightning and Thunder") returns the reader to the *sublimia*. Here the reader learns that the universe is ordered and that what happens below happens above; he moves beyond the realm of sense perception and depends on reason (cognition). In this realm (*sublimia*), the *caelestia* and the *terrena* come together and interact; there is *unitas* (2.3 "unity").

The world traveler trope also reinforces the elevation of the *sapiens* above conqueror, because the *sapiens*, on his philosophical quest for virtue, surveys the world from this elevated plane where he "consorts with god" (1.praef.6), and he "looks down on the narrowness of ordinary spatial and value distinctions at ground level" (Williams 2012:116). The wise man looks down and surveys the extent of the world, and confronts the smallness of his humanity (3.praef. 10). The journey is not just about surveying the world with one's mind, but rather it is about striving for the attainment of virtue (1.praef.6), and he attempts this even if it results in failure.¹²

¹² This ascent recalls the failed journey of Phaethon who attempts to ascend to the level of the gods and drive his father's chariot but dies (cf. Ovid *Met.* II). This mythical episode is alluded to both at 3.praef.3 (*Tollimus ingentes animos et maxima paruo | Tempore molimur* "We raise our minds to greatness and attempt the greatest deeds in a short amount of time") and 6.2 (*Si cadendum est, inquit, e caelo cecidisse uelim* "If I should fall, he said, I would like to fall from the heavens") in Vagellius' quotes. Mazzoli (1970) connects the two quotes and argues that Phaethon exhibits *uirtus* in his attempt at achieving the "greatest deeds" even if it results in failure. Phaethon serves as a source of inspiration for reader who is attempting the "greatest deeds" even though he may fail. See Williams (2012:228-30) for his take on the Phaethon myth.

In short I maintain in this dissertation Codoñer Merino and Hine's ordering, because the *NQ* lends itself to this linear trajectory: the reader, with his guide (Seneca), on his "mind journey," ascends through the three realms to comprehend the world, and by doing this, he gains knowledge not only of the cosmos but also himself. This sequence supports my thesis, that the *NQ* is a journey for which Seneca has mapped out the world before his reader, but is a unique journey that moves us vertically through the three realms.

II. The *Natural Questions* in Context

i. Senecan Context

Seneca's *oeuvre* is one of eclecticism, and the *NQ* exemplifies his ingenuity as a writer and philosopher. He synthesizes subject matter (philosophy, meteorology, and astronomy) while putting them within a scientific/ethical framework. The *NQ* as a literary work is as diverse as Seneca himself, and it is important to establish how it fits into his other works, particularly the epistles and moral dialogues.

There are many similarities in subject matter to Seneca's other works. Philosophical discussions about the immortality of the soul and death, for example, are frequented topics in his epistles.¹³ In one of his moral dialogues, *De Brevitate Vitae*, we find that the theme of the exploitation of nature also appears in Seneca's work: *At alium insatiabilis tenet avaritia, alium in supervacuis laboribus operosa sedulitas* (2.1 "But insatiable greed possesses one man, laborious devotion holds another to useless tasks").¹⁴ Such ethical discussions appear in the *NQ*; at 5.15,

¹³ Seneca frequently discusses death in his philosophical works. For a list of those works that deal with death, see A. L. Motto (1970:59-62). On dispelling the fear of death, for example, compare *NQ* 6.32 with the following (this is not an exhaustive list): *Epistles* 4, 22, 24, 30, 36, 58, 101, 104; *De Brevitate Vitae* 16.2; *De Ira* I 13.4.

¹⁴ See also *De Beneficiis* 2.29.1-6; *De Brevitate Vitae* 1.1-4.

for example, Seneca emphasizes mankind's inherent greed (*avaritiam* "greed") and his need to exploit Nature for his own selfish purposes. In *De Otio*, there are several parallels with the *NQ* and his merging of physics and ethics. Starting at the end of chapter 4, Seneca states: *qui sit deus; opus suum spectet an tractet; utrumne extrinsecus illi circumfusus sit an toti inditus; immortalis sit mundus an inter caduca et ad tempus nata numerandus* (*De Otio* 4.2 "What is god; whether he looks at his work or directs it; whether he encompasses it without or whether he pervades all of it; whether the world is immortal or it should be considered among those things that perish or born for a time"). The previous statement calls to mind the preface to the *NQ* (1.praef.3): *cum disco quae universi materia sit, quis auctor aut custos, quid sit deus, totus in se tendat an et ad nos aliquando respiciat, faciat cotidie aliquid an semel fecerit . . .* (" . . . when I am learning what the material of the universe is, who is its creator or guardian, what god is, whether he is totally focused on himself or sometimes takes notice of us too, whether he creates something every day or has created it once and for all . . ." trans. Hine 2014:136). Not only is Seneca a moralist but also a tragedian, satirist, and rhetorician. His use of diatribe, for instance, which is found in his other works,¹⁵ is found in Book 1 where his description of Hostius Quadra exemplifies many of these aspects: Hostius is portrayed as a tragic figure who is consumed with externals and overcome by his passions and perceptions. In short, the *NQ* exemplifies many of the same metaphors, rhetorical devices, and imagery that appear in Seneca's other texts, and to some extent shows his versatility as a writer. For the purpose of my analysis, putting the *NQ* within the framework of Seneca's other works, particularly his philosophical works, allows for a greater understanding of his philosophical ideas and moral teachings. Comparison across genres

¹⁵ Characteristics of the diatribe include pervasive metaphors, apostrophe, satirical vignettes, and dark humor. In his philosophical writings (*Dialogues* and *Epistles*) Seneca makes use of diatribe. For example, in *Ep.* 7 Seneca reacts to the brutality of the games and executions, referring to them as pure murder (§3).

aids my analysis of how Seneca blurs boundaries: for example, in Book 6 how he blurs scientific topics (earthquakes) into discussions about ethics (death).

ii. Ancient Meteorological Context

The topics discussed in the *NQ* are what we would consider geography, astronomy, and seismology, but in the ancient world such topics would be characterized as meteorology (*meteorologia*). Today when we think of meteorology, we often think of weather forecasts; ancient meteorology, however, encompassed a wide range of topics.¹⁶ Ancient meteorology grew out of the need to explain natural phenomena not as anthropomorphic deities but as a rationally ordered universe. Superstition and religion gave way to reason as philosophers probed the world looking for these explanations.

Aristotle's *Meteorologica*, which first defined and demarcated meteorological knowledge, was instrumental in scientific inquiry and influenced later writers; in the *NQ* Aristotle's influence on Senecan physics is clear, both in terms of similar subject matter and references to his theories.¹⁷ Aristotle's classification of meteorology naturally includes atmospheric phenomena but also other natural phenomena that reside outside the atmosphere, but all occur because of the same physical forces. For example, earthquakes occur when subterranean "breath," which also

¹⁶ Taub (2003) provides a survey of ancient meteorology, discussing ancient approaches to and understanding of phenomena. Though Taub dismisses the ethical component of the *NQ*, she does offer an interesting discussion about the tension between authority (power) and scientific knowledge.

¹⁷ See Hall (1977) for Seneca's meteorological knowledge and reliability as a source for his predecessors, especially Aristotle and the Pre-Socratics. Hall concludes by stating that Seneca is a more reliable and important source for later thinkers.

occurs in the atmosphere, is forced out through narrow apertures (*NQ* 6.12.2).¹⁸ Hence, the classification of earthquakes as meteorology.

Ancient meteorology has its roots in other philosophical traditions, for example, Epicureanism, which attempt to combat the fear associated with religion and superstition. Epicurus, for example, discusses τὰ μετέωρα (“things in the sky”) in order to give peace of mind and firm conviction.¹⁹ Inquiry into the physical mechanisms of the earth alleviated fear and provided security in a world of uncertainty. In the proem of *De Rerum Natura*, the Epicurean Lucretius depicts Epicurus as a philosopher-warrior who defeats the monster of religion and superstition with his philosophy,²⁰ and Lucretius discusses similar topics (earthquakes, *De Rerum Natura* Book 6, for example) to those in the *NQ*. Further, Lucretius synthesizes physics and ethics, providing relief from fear incited by religion and superstition.²¹ These aspects clearly had an impact on the *NQ*, especially if we consider it within the context of meteorological writing—though Epicurean meteorological thought creates an atmosphere of competition between Epicureanism and Stoicism (Graver 2000).

iii. Stoic Context

Within his own philosophical school there are other writers who integrate physics and ethics. Manilius’ *Astronomica*, for example, paints an image of the world as a living, interconnected,

¹⁸ Cf. Diogenes Laërtius (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.154, 155).

¹⁹ Epicurus, *Letter to Pythocles*; see Taub’s analysis (2003:127-31, 160) of Epicurus’ meteorological studies.

²⁰ See Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* Book 1, especially lines 62-79 for how a Greek (Epicurus) crushed religion.

²¹ Overcoming the fear of death is a central topic of *De Rerum Natura* Book 3.

and divine organism, and shows the intimate relationship between the world and man.²² As a Stoic, Manilius claims that man must transcend the visual, moving beyond his senses and using reason to understand the world, because *ratio omnia vincit* (4.932 “Reason conquers all”). Reason is man’s highest capacity in comprehending the world, and this is an integral part of Seneca’s argument in the *NQ*. Pliny, in his *Natural Histories*, catalogues the world through an exhaustive encyclopedic format (thirty-seven books!). He discusses a wide range of scientific topics, and though there is cross-over in subject matter between the two works,²³ the *NQ* departs from the tedious classification found in the *Natural Histories* and focuses on the personal study of natural phenomena (Williams 2012:20).

The *NQ* incorporates topics from the meteorological tradition but does so within the framework of Stoic physics.²⁴ This means that the world is regarded as a living organism (*NQ* 3.29.2)²⁵ that is made up of four elements²⁶ (earth, wind, water, and fire) (*NQ* 3.10) and governed by a divine “force” known as “reason” (*logos/ratio*) which pervades and orders the cosmos (*NQ*

²² *Astronomica* (4.10): *se quaerit in astris* (“he seeks himself amongst the stars”). Volk (2014:103)

²³ See De Nardis (1989) on Pliny and Seneca’s accounts of the Neronian expedition into Ethiopia. Williams (2012, especially pp. 37-48) for a more in-depth discussion on the differing worldviews of Seneca and Pliny.

²⁴ There is no shortage of scholarship on Stoic physics. David Hahm (1977) lays out the origins of Stoic physics and cosmology despite the lack of sources for early Stoic philosophy. Sambursky’s *Stoic Physics* (1987) provides a concise, yet thorough survey of Stoic physics. The *Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (2003), edited by Inwood, offers several essays on various components of Stoicism: White’s chapter “Stoic Natural Philosophy (Physics and Cosmology)” proves useful in fleshing out Stoic natural philosophy, and Gill’s chapter, “The School in the Roman Imperial Period,” on Stoicism during the Roman empire provides insight into how the effects of the empire shaped Stoicism. These barely touch the surface of scholarship on Stoic physics, but are a “starting-point” for understanding the basic tenets of Stoicism and provide concise surveys and analyses of the surviving sources. Inwood’s *Stoic Reader* (2008) is also a useful reference for and translation of Stoic philosophy.

²⁵ See Diogenes Laërtius for an ancient survey of Stoic philosophy; Diogenes Laërtius is an invaluable source for Stoicism (7.132-60 for his survey of Stoic physics, especially 7.143 for Stoic take on “the world as an animal”). See White (2003) for a modern analysis of Stoic principles and elements.

²⁶ Cf. Diogenes Laërtius (7.136): πῦρ, ὕδωρ, ἀέρα, γῆν (“fire, water, air, earth”).

1.praef.14)²⁷; everything happens for a reason and nothing happens by chance (determinism).²⁸ God, according to the Stoics, is synonymous with providence, reason, fate, and Nature,²⁹ and everything, including god, is corporeal (Hahn 1977). All things are interconnected because “breath” (*pneuma* or *spiritus*) creates tension which, according to Williams’ thesis (2012), lends itself to Seneca’s unifying worldview in the *NQ*.³⁰

The Stoics held that natural phenomena were causally related to a set of propositions which allow a man to plan his life in accordance with Nature.³¹ The ordered-ness of the cosmos carried over into ethics, because every rational being has a moral capacity for goodness.³² Reason allows man to see beyond the limitations of his humanity and look to Nature, and life then becomes free from distress, pain, and the fears and worries of this world.

²⁷ Cf. Diogenes Laërtius (7.135).

²⁸ For a discussion on Stoic determinism, see Frede (2003).

²⁹ At *NQ* 2.45.2-3, Seneca launches into a discussion about the nature of god; he equates god with fate, reason, and providence. See Diogenes Laërtius (7.134, 135, especially 147) for a general definition of the Stoic god.

³⁰ Williams (2012) claims that tension and interconnectedness of the universe caused by *spiritus* is the reason that the ordering sequence must end with Book 2. *Spiritus* is the pervading force that ties everything together in the *NQ*. See Cicero’s *De Natura Deorum* (2.19).

³¹ Diogenes Laërtius (7.87).

³² Diogenes Laërtius (7.88, 94).

iv. Sociopolitical Context

Significant changes in the literary world, both in genres and subject matter, coincided with both the political and social conditions of the early empire.³³ Written sometime in the early 60s,³⁴ the *NQ* served as a balm to soothe minds during the hostile socio-political environment. Discussions about the instability of the earth shore up the readers' minds,³⁵ as they realize that everything, including life, is unstable. Comfort and solace are found amidst growing sociopolitical tensions through the contemplation of Nature and self-scrutiny.³⁶ The "navel-gazing" (*in se recedendum est*, 4a.praef.20 "one should withdraw into oneself") tendency of Stoicism, which thrived in this period, offered an escape from changing social and political structures.³⁷

Ethical digressions in the *NQ* hold up a mirror to humanity, and address and thus speak to the ethical dilemmas of the early empire. Greed, luxury, and other vices are prevalent themes and point to issues that may have arisen out of the empire's imperial project (Hine 2006). The

³³ Gordon Williams (1978:7) outlines three explanations for the "decline" in literary world: 1) change in morals, 2) change in the political environment, and 3) the inevitability of growth and decline. Literature became means to escape from reality and into a world of irrational thought that provided some "instant emotional stimulus" or created a sense of spiritual stability and calmness (*ibid.*:192; see Williams 1978:280-81, espec. for escapist literature in the Julio-Claudian period). Seneca himself reflects on the causal relationship between changing literary styles and morality in *Ep.* 114 (Williams 1978:13). In the *NQ* (7.31-32), he mentions that the decline in scientific investigation is influenced by the decline in morality.

³⁴ References to natural disasters and to Nero as emperor within the *NQ* help date it to the early 60s (Griffin 1976; Hine 2006 and 2014). Hine (2006:51) notes that Seneca frequently hints at the politics of his time and uses the Roman Empire "to illustrate both physical and moral arguments." His analysis demonstrates the complexity of Seneca's treatment of Rome in the *NQ*. Rome's presence is persistent throughout the *NQ*. Physical events cannot be separated from the contemporary Roman context; for example, when Seneca discusses the Nile's annual flooding, he mentions its importance for Rome's grain supply (4a.1.1). Hine (2012:10) also notes that at times Seneca attempts to distance himself from Roman politics (cf. 3.praef.9-10, 5.18.12, 1.praef.8-10), yet the "gravitational pull of his Roman context" is inescapable. Manolaraki's (2013) analysis of *NQ* 4a also considers the political implications of Rome's imperial pursuits in Egypt.

³⁵ *nihil stabile* (3.praef.7, 3.27.6 "nothing is stable"); *stabile non* (6.1.15 "it is not stable").

³⁶ Seneca's writing causes the reader to reflect inwardly on his behavior and outwardly on his interaction within the social world (Bartsch 2006:191-92): "His readers are to turn their gaze upon themselves; to hunt out their own weaknesses; to set in motion a set of self-administered corrections that will render them true *proficientes*, that is, practicing Stoic acolytes."

³⁷ See Williams (1978, espec. pp. 177-80).

characters in the digressions—“Mullet Man” (3.17), for example—are motivated by what lies in their gaze (luxury in this example), and even historical exempla (Philip of Macedon and Alexander, 5.15 and 6.23 respectively) are motivated by their desire to master the physical world, not themselves, which is antithetical to philosophical mastery (cf. preface of Book 1).³⁸ His denunciation of history (3.praef.5-6) is, in fact, an implicit challenge to Rome’s imperial project. Historians transmit the deeds of those, like Philip and Alexander, who expanded their empires through military conquests; Seneca, however, diminishes these earthly kingdoms by comparing them to the immensity of the cosmos (3.praef.8-10). Although Seneca only mentions Rome³⁹ once, there are implicit references to Rome’s imperial project. For example, when he discusses the fragility of spatial boundaries, he sets them within a Roman context (cf. 1.praef.8) and refers to them as *ridiculi* (“ridiculous”); if mapped, these boundaries would in fact be near to or within Rome (Hine 2006:45). The fragility of space translates to the fragility of Rome’s power, and diminishes her image as *imperium sine fine*. As Hine (2006:50) argues, the *NQ* “cuts [the Roman Empire] down to size, in comparison with the vastness of the cosmos, and traditional Roman pursuits, both military and historiographical, are disparaged in contrast to philosophy and its benefits.” The reader realizes that the boundaries of the empire are easily dissolvable and that the acquisition of lands, wealth, and fame can easily be destroyed; what is most important is to seek an understanding of Nature and the one who orders it (3.praef.11).

³⁸ See Nicolet (1991, espec. pp. 85ff) for his study on how Roman expansion under the empire led to the survey of lands, both unknown and unexplored.

³⁹ The noun *Roma* (“Rome”) appears only once (4a.21.6) and the adjective *Romanus* (“Roman”) six times. Hine notes (2006:43) that four of the references are within the context of the military (3.praef.6, 4a.21.6, 1.1.14, 5.16.4), one is about boundaries (1.praef.9), and one is in a philosophical context (7.32.2).

III. Existing Scholarship

There exist many different approaches and analyses of the *NQ*, but I narrow my focus here to those that are most pertinent to my research. The lack of the work's cohesion has baffled scholars and some forgo discussing it by simply analyzing individual books, topics, or most often the moral components. But here I want to draw attention to those scholars who do consider the *NQ* as a whole because creating *unitas* is central to Seneca's methodology, and my analysis. By merging and blurring boundaries, he creates a unified worldview, one that breaks down boundaries, and that is interconnected and cohesive.

Previous analyses have considered how the social and political environment appear in the *NQ*. Griffin's study (1976) examines the relationship between Seneca's career as a politician and a philosopher, though the *NQ* is not her focus. Gordon Williams (1978) claims that the hostility of the external world at this time increased interests in isolation. Seneca "preaches" on themes of individualism—themes of death, suicide, a "personal" god—as a reader could achieve freedom from the external world by turning inward (*ibid.*:177-80). Hine (2006) argues that by emphasizing the vastness of the cosmos, Seneca shrinks Rome and her imperial project down to size. Other approaches include Inwood's (2002) theocentric analysis which takes physics to be the study of the divine; he argues that the *NQ* is a work that explores the relationship between humanity and the divine.

Another approach which influences my analysis is an "integrating approach" as Williams (2012:11) terms it. This approach looks at the *NQ* as neither scientific nor ethical but rather a balance between the two. Other scholars analyze the work in such a way as to reconcile the moral digressions with the scientific discussions. Berno (2003) focuses on this reconciliation,

and argues that the vices presented in the moral digressions correspond to the scientific topic under discussion. She also notes similarities between the digressions and Seneca's tragedies. Gauly (2004) also takes a holistic, integrating approach; he agrees with the ordering of Codoñer Merino (3-7, 1-2), arguing that the upward trajectory of the *NQ* has significance. However, he notes what previous scholars have discussed—the lack of cohesion between the scientific topics and the prologues, digressions, and epilogues—and claims that this “tension” creates a dialogue between Greek scientific inquiry and Roman ethics. Limburg's doctoral thesis (2007) builds on Berno and Gauly's “integrating approach,” and focuses on the prologues and epilogues, treating them as separate from the digressions. Williams (2012) furthers this research by integrating *all* aspects (prologues, digressions, and epilogues) into the scientific discussion. He argues that Seneca's objective is unity and cohesion—tenets of Stoic physics. Williams' analysis is thorough and persuasive, and is essential to this study. I do not take aim at his research but rather build upon his approach.

IV. My Approach: Theoretical Background and Definitions

My approach is based upon spatial theory. In the second-half of the twentieth century critical theory shifted its focus from time and history to space. Termed the “spatial turn,” this shift gave rise to an interdisciplinary approach to geographic space in literature (Tally 2009). Within the framework of this critical approach, texts could be analyzed in a manner similar to maps (literary cartography and literary geography): “All writing partakes in a form of cartography, since even the most realistic map does not truly depict the space, but, like literature, figures it forth in a complex skein of imaginary relations” (Tally 2009:134). Robert T. Tally Jr. argues that practices

of literary cartography, how writers map their space, and literary geography, how readers read that work, enable ways to think about space, place, and mapping (2013:3). Texts possess the capacity to situate the reader (or listener) within space, creating a mental image drawing on the reader's imagination and experience of the world.

What people think about and how they experience the world is the emphasis of Yi-Fu's *Space and Place* (1977) in which he searches for the meaning of space and place. Space is a location with no social connection for humans; it has no meaning added to it by human beings (1977:4-6). Place, on the other hand, is a location that has meaning ascribed to it by human experience (1977:6). Questions of "where am I?" can then translate to "who am I?" What we think of ourselves is tied to where we are, and vice versa (McInerney and Sluiter 2016:1): "Our physical orientation is one of the defining characteristics of our embodied existence." For the Stoics the interaction and relationship between man and his environment (Nature) is essential, and therefore, studying how Stoic texts describe space and place opens the door to understanding how ancient people experienced and understood the world.⁴⁰ And how they experienced and understood the world is what Denis Cosgrove defines as landscape. For him (1998 [1984]:13) landscape is "the external world mediated through subjective human experience in a way that neither region nor area immediately suggest. Landscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world."⁴¹

Recently, Classical scholars have turned their attention to analyzing texts from this spatial perspective. Claude Nicolet (1993:8), though not recent, considers the relationship between texts

⁴⁰ Reading geographic descriptions provides a way to understand how ancient people saw and understood the world because the ancient world was constructed based upon myths and empirical data.(Romm 1992:9).

⁴¹ Cosgrove (1998 [1984]) builds his definition upon the work of Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) who claims that space is a human construct that is produced by human activity and is an active force in shaping society. Lefebvre's work is highly influential on literary critics.

and geography, arguing that “all literature is open to a geographic reading.” Jeremy McInerney and Ineke Sluiter’s *Valuing Landscapes in Classical Antiquity* (2016) analyzes texts within this framework; this collection of essays attempts to flesh out how texts help us understand the relationship between human beings and their physical environment. Kate Gilhuly and Nancy Worman’s edited collection of essays, *Space, Place, and Landscape in Ancient Greek Literature and Culture* (2014), also considers spatial theory within the Greek world. Richard Jenkyns’ *God, Space, and City in the Roman Imagination* (2014), though not as theoretical as the other works, deals with topics related to space, perspective, and Roman experience and identity. The burgeoning discussions of spatial theory in humanities makes my study timely, and it also emphasizes the need to consider space in ancient texts.

Mapping Seneca’s language in the *NQ* allows us to see how he transforms space into place (place-making⁴²). The *NQ* is a journey in which Seneca creates a map for the reader to orient himself; but unlike physical maps, Seneca’s map is a cognitive map. His objective is not to create an accurate map of the world but to create a worldview composed according to the mental visualization of the world he assumes his reader understands (Salway 2012:196). Like a cartographer, he builds upon this assumed visualization, measuring and adapting it in order to fit his intended purpose. For example, at 3.28.5 Seneca surveys (*perlibret* “weighs” or “levels”) the highest points and remarks that the geography (*maria* “seas” and *tellus* “earth”) is “level” (*paria*); the imagery is reminiscent of a two-dimensional map which lays out the seas and land, which are not equal, onto a level plane.

⁴² Basso (1996:5): “. . . place-making involves multiple acts of remembering and imagining which inform each other in complex ways.”

By determining what elements he should include within the story—what is the purpose of this story? what do I want the reader to get from this story?—he endows the literary space with his own meaning, infusing narrative with place (place-making). Tuan (1977:161-67) notes that narrative and place are inextricably bound together: it is the story that gives meaning to space, thereby creating place.⁴³ Place-making is not about the representation but about the journey, the process of uncovering the secrets and the hidden elements lurking beneath the surface of those meaning-filled landscapes, and of reading those landscapes within the context of the narratives, uncovering the hidden messages, morals, and lessons.⁴⁴ After having surveyed the entire cosmos (with his mind), he is left with a greater understanding of self-knowledge and reminded of his human status and all that that entails.

V. Scope of Dissertation

This dissertation will be divided into three chapters. Chapter 1 (“Ex Humilitate”) examines Seneca’s geographic language, and how this language lends itself to two ways of thinking about and “mapping” the world—sense perception and cognition (that is, reason). He “maps” the world from these two perspectives in order to show the deceptiveness and faultiness of sense perception, which then affects our perspective of ourselves and our place within the cosmos. Chapter 2 (“O Quam Ridiculi Sunt Mortalium Termini”) builds on these two ways of thinking about the world, and I focus solely on Seneca’s boundary-language and how Nature destroys, violates, and defies man’s boundaries (expectations and perceptions); the purpose here is to demonstrate the smallness of mankind and the faultiness of his perception. The final chapter

⁴³ See also Tally (2009:51).

⁴⁴ Basso (1996:6) claims that place-making is the construction of place-worlds.

(“Modum Excedam”) considers how Seneca brings together narrative (historical and fictitious) and geography to create “place-worlds” and further his moral objective. We examine what happens to those who view the world from a narrow perspective (sense-perception), and how this faulty perspective leads to the transgression of boundaries and eventually their demise. Finally, I argue that the *NQ* is not really about mapping the world but about mapping man.

CHAPTER 1: *Ex Humilitate Nostra*

This chapter is about representation, and how perspective influences representation, particularly cartographic representation. Erik Gunderson (2015:68) devotes a chapter to analyzing the *NQ* from a narratological perspective in his work *The Sublime Seneca*, and states that “knowing nature consists of seeing nature, and, indeed, seeing it from a specific perspective.” While I take a different approach, I aim to determine in this chapter what that “specific perspective” is that Seneca creates. My approach is geocentric, and past approaches to the *NQ* have disregarded this approach,¹ neglecting language that is representative of cartography, and how that language contributes to the understanding of spatial relationships in the *NQ*. Gareth Williams’ *The Cosmic Viewpoint* (2012), for example, considers how the overall linear schema of Seneca’s *NQ* posits a “god-like” worldview that aligns itself with Stoic doctrine. As the reader progresses on a philosophical journey, Williams argues, he moves further away from a narrow, anthropocentric worldview to a wide, theocentric one that imparts self-knowledge. Though Williams’ work provides a thorough study, especially in his examination of the moral interludes, exploration of geographical terminology and representation, along with their ties to imperialist agendas, are overlooked in favor of the philosophical, and the same can

¹Eleni Manolaraki’s (2013:101) book on representation of Roman Egypt, especially her chapter on Seneca’s influence over Lucan’s Nile excursus, has proved useful in my analysis and in my understanding how Seneca uses geography (the Nile, for example) as “vehicle of moral reform.” Clarke (1999) and Nicolet (1991) are invaluable sources for grasping how Romans perceived space, and how they mapped it through other means besides actual maps. In her analysis of confined spaces, Victoria Rimell’s (2015) book considers writers’ exploration of space, particularly enclosed space, and how such narrow spaces influence identity. For analyses of Seneca’s use of geography in his tragedies, Mark Grant (2000:88) argues that his geographical rhetoric is more than “gratuitous writing” and exhibits a “definite pattern.” Though his study lacks depth, he provides a survey of modern studies on Seneca and geography. Also, J.D. Bishop (1985) claims that Seneca inserted “hidden political codes” within his works, and that proper names (including geographical names and places) had a hidden meaning that only Romans could understand. While an unorthodox approach that has *some* merit, I agree with the existing scholarship that states that the audience would be overwhelmed with decoding every proper name (Grant 2000).

be said for studies exploring the sociopolitical and geopolitical (Hine 2006; Grant 2000) and theological (Inwood 2002) contexts.

By taking a geocentric approach, I focus on space and how it is illustrated through Seneca's rhetoric. This study builds upon previous research, particularly those mentioned above, but with a greater emphasis on Seneca's mapping technique: geographical lists and passages laden with cartographic language (highs, lows, ups, downs, and boundaries) become my focus. I then consider how the cartographic translates to the ethical sphere: maps serve as a way of seeing the world, and they inform and influence what human-geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) terms as "sense of place."² In his collection of essays, J. B. Harley (1992) re-interprets maps as rhetorical devices that promote a hierarchy of power and knowledge. He claims (86) that maps are "socially constructed perspectives on the world rather than as the 'neutral' or 'value-free' representations," and that "the usual perception of maps as a mirror, a graphic representation of some aspect of the real world" is false (35). Though Harley is addressing actual visualizations, geographical writing can *and does* act in a similar manner in that it allows the reader to engage with his own experience through literary means (Tally 2013:3). It is through this geographical lens that I analyze the *NQ*.

Seneca tries to map the world and shows how that activity is an important way of thinking about the world. He posits two ways of mapping the world—sensory and cognitive. Sense perception, which is defined as the faculties of sound, taste, touch, smell, and sight, serves as one way of mapping, but is a less accurate and true representation of reality (just as Harley

²Tuan (1974) claims that "sense of place" refers to human reaction, positive or negative, to place. "Sense of place" is highly subjective and dependent upon an individual's personality, background, and previous experiences with places. It is an integral part of, and contributes to what it means to be human. Knowledge of place becomes closely linked to knowledge of the self. In mapping mankind in relation to his surroundings, Seneca is defining what it means to be human.

argues). The world is reduced to the boundaries of perception, and knowledge about the world is subjected to the perspective and authority of others whose perceptions are considered truth³; scientific knowledge, particularly geographic, and interest become a guise for those in power to assert control over geographic space (Poster 1982). This visual cartographic system then promotes world mastery, which culminates in the exploitation of Nature (cf. 5.17-18).⁴ Man sees the world not for what it really is, but rather for how he can control it to advance his power and position in the world. For example, Seneca launches into a tirade against those who exploit Nature's benefits (winds, in this example) for world mastery (cf. 5.18): He states that although Nature devised winds to help man, man nevertheless "perverted it [the gift of winds] to their own harm" (Hine 2014:83).⁵ The other way presented by Seneca is cognitive mapping, that is using reason to view the world. Cognitive mapping offers a way to poke holes in sense perception, and the cartographic system and the anthropocentricity it perpetuates. Cognitive mapping frees not only mankind from his physical and intellectual limitations⁶ but also Nature from the constraints of perspective and representation.

In this chapter I explore Seneca's approach to perspective and representation in the *NQ*. In the first section I demonstrate that Seneca sets up two ways of thinking about the world (sense

³Perspective is about control, and representation is about the manifestation of that control which is held by those in power (cf. Cosgrove 1998 [1984]; Giddens (1981); Harley (1992).

⁴In his discussion about the hidden agendas of maps, Harley (1992:46) argues that "representation is never neutral and science is still a humanly constructed reality."

⁵Vimell notes (2015:114) that in the *Epistles* Neronian lust for power and present stand as "the ever present antithesis" to Seneca's Stoic *sapientia* ("wisdom"). This tension between the conqueror and the Stoic *sapiens* carries throughout the *NQ*; it is difficult not to see the connection between "Neronian-imperial lust" and Seneca's disapproval of man's exploitation of Nature. Daniela Dueck (2012:18), in her survey of Classical geography, notes this connection between power and geographic knowledge, because knowledge about ancient geography comes from military conquests, which suggests that Roman geographic interests focused on mastery of the world.

⁶The Stoic *sapiens* will not be confined to corners or limitations; in fact, he despises them, and seeks to move freely throughout the cosmos (*Non sum uni angulo natus, patria mea totus hic mundus est! Ep. 28.4* "I was not born for one corner, this whole world is my homeland!").

perception and cognition), and then in the following section consider how these two epistemologies correspond to two ways of representing (that is, mapping) the world, (sensory mapping and cognitive mapping). In the third section I discuss how sensory mapping perpetuates imperialism, and how Seneca critiques this worldview by constructing a cognitive worldview. The final section is a case study to which I apply Seneca's mapping technique.

I. Epistemology: Sense Perception and Cognition

During the Roman Imperial Period the growing vitality of Stoic philosophy is evidenced by the continuation of Stoic treatises in all branches (ethics, physics, and logic) of the philosophy (Gill 2003:38). Physical works, such as Manilius' *Astronomica* and Coruntus' *Summary of the Traditions of Greek Theology*, uncovered the mysteries of the natural world that are ordered by divine reason (*ratio/logos*), thereby challenging one of the other existing schools of philosophy, Epicureanism, which demonstrated that the universe is devoid of divine influence (*ibid.*:40). Hence, Seneca sets out to demonstrate the divine rationale and cohesion of the universe (Stoic doctrines⁷), and to challenge Epicureanism. He makes use of Lucretius' own philosophical approach to natural phenomena not as a model but as a point of departure from which he launches his Stoic *De Rerum Natura*. Though Seneca does not explicitly quote Lucretius,⁸ he clearly had *De Rerum Natura* in mind when composing the *NQ*, scattering his investigation,

⁷Gill (2003:40); Inwood (2002); Hine (1996).

⁸At 4b.4.3-4, Seneca does quote Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* 1.313), but does not cite him: *aut, ut alius poeta ait: "Stillicidi casus lapidem cauat"* (Or, as another poet says, "The fall of a drop hollows out a stone," Hine 2014:65).

particularly in Books 7 and 1, with allusions to Epicurean sense perception.⁹ His critique of sense perception challenges knowledge gained through sense perception as set forth by Lucretius.¹⁰ In doing so, he sets up two ways of thinking about the world: 1) a world perceived by sense perception and ordered by chance (Epicurean); and 2) a world ordered by an unseen, divine being and perceptible through cognition (Stoic).

When discussing natural phenomena located within the *sublimia* and *caelestia*, Seneca foregrounds man's faculties of observation. Knowledge is acquired through sense perception, and it is limited by the senses. There are several ways in which Seneca talks about sense perception: restricting or channeling language, Epicurean language, and darkness and light. In doing so, he argues against sense perception and Epicureanism, the dominant philosophical school putting forth sense perception.

⁹For example, Seneca states that when he investigates Nature, he does so to determine whether or not god is involved with humans (1.praef.3). This is an implicit reference to Lucretius (and Epicureans) who divorces the gods from natural phenomena. Unlike Lucretius' atomistic view of nature, Seneca's investigation argues for the existence of a divine, unseen god creating, ordering, and permeating the cosmos. This divine force governs all things, both seen and unseen (1.praef.13.9-12; trans. Hine 2014:138-39):

Quid est deus? Mens uniuersi. Quid est deus? Quod uides totum et quod non uides totum. Sic demum magnitudo illi sua redditur, qua nihil maius cogitari potest, si solus est omnia, si opus suum et intra et extra tenet.

("What is god? The intelligence of the universe. What is god? All that you see and all that you do not see. Only then is his true greatness recognized—greatness than which nothing greater can be imagined—if he alone is everything, if he controls his creation both from within and from without.")

¹⁰ Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* 4.478-483; trans. Smith as cited in Lehoux et al. 2013:106):

*Inuenies primis ab sensibus esse creatam
notitiam veri neque sensus posse refelli.
nam maiore fide debet reperiri illud,
sponte sua veris quod possit vincere falsa.
quid maiore fide porro quam sensus haberi
debet?*

("You will find that our conception of truth is derived ultimately from the senses, and that their evidence is un-impugnable. You see, what we need is some specially reliable standard which by its own authority is able to ensure victory of truth over falsehood. Well now, what standard can be regarded as more reliable than sensation?")

I now consider how channeling language restricts knowledge, and how Seneca associates narrow space and geographic features with narrow thinking that is caused by the limitations of sense perception (cf. Williams 2012:292). By restrictive or channeling language, I refer to language that denotes narrowness or restrictiveness (for example, *angustias*, 1.praef.13.1, “limitations”). Seneca intentionally labels *sublimia* (comets, for example) and *caelestia* (rainbows, garlands, and rods, for example) as *mira*,¹¹ *miraculo*,¹² and *spectaculum/o*¹³—which are comprehensible by, and restricted to, perception. In doing so, he underscores the interplay between sense perception and knowledge. When Seneca is discussing things that are channeled or limited, what is known or observed about that thing is channeled or limited; by extension then the knowledge gleaned from observation is channeled or limited. In other words, there exists a metaphorical relationship between restricting knowledge and restricted sense perception: Knowledge gained from sense perception is limited because sense perception is limited.¹⁴ When discussing channeling things, Seneca distinguishes between things that can be channeled and things that cannot. If all instances of channeling language were examined, a connection would emerge: Those things that are channeled are related to mankind (time, human body, and

¹¹ Cf. *admiratione*, 7.1.1.6; *mirari* 7.1.4.5 and 7.1.5.4, 7.9.3.7; *mirabiles*, 7.14.4.13, 7.20.1.7; *miramur*, 7.30.4.9, *miraris*, 7.32.1.1; *mirari*, 1.1.2.7; *mirabilem*, 1.3.1.10, 1.3.4.11; *miraris*, 1.3.10.9; *miratur*, 1.3.11.6.

¹² Cf. 7.1.1.3, 7.16.1.6, 7.20.4, 10.

¹³ Cf. 7.1.1.8, 7.25.3.2; 1.1.6.2, 1.16.6.5.

¹⁴ Tuan (1974:6) in his discussion on visual traits in perception claims that human-vision is remarkable when it comes to chromatic accuracy; man’s visual field, however, is limited because his eyes’ position is located at the front. Man does not possess the ability to see behind himself as some animals do. Tuan continues, stating that “the objects we perceive are commensurate with the size of our body, the acuity and range of our perceptual apparatus, and purpose” (14).

perception¹⁵), but those things not channeled are associated with Nature¹⁶ and the divine¹⁷; and attempts to channel Nature or the divine are met with opposition by Seneca.¹⁸ For example when relating one of Epigenes' theories on the formation of comets, Seneca states that breath is forced "through confined spaces" (*per angusta*, 7.6.2), which then is ignited. Seneca, however, refutes this theory (*Aduersus haec multa dicuntur*, 7.7.1 "There are many objections to this view," trans. Hine 2014:119). Seneca's objection with Epigenes' view is that it is terrestrial, located closer to the earth, and Williams (2012:280-81) claims that by locating Epigenes' theory at this level of analysis, Seneca intentionally arranges the following theories (what he calls "optical illusion" and "planetary" theories) so that they move from a lower theoretical plane that is associated with the terrestrial to a "higher theoretical plane" associated with the sublime and celestial. What I want to note is that *angusta* ("confined things") appears alongside a perspective or theory that limits the sublimity of comets and cometary knowledge. Seneca's disagreement stems from the fact that Epigenes's theory pulls the sublime down to the terrestrial level and limits it (cf. 7.24.1).

Another example is when in Book 7 Seneca outlines other ancient cometary knowledge (cf. 7.3-30.2)—the various theories that attempt to *limit* what constitutes a comet. He says that

¹⁵ Note that those things channeled are associated with time (*tempus angustum*, 3.pr.3.9); birth "lineage" (*angustias*, 4a.pr.15), body (*angustiora*, 6.14), and sense perception (*angustias*, 4b.9.11; *in angusto*, 5.2.1; *in angustum*, 5.2.1; *in angustum*, 5.3.1; *in angusto*, 5.4.3; *angusta*, 5.12.1; *angustum*, 1.praef.8; *in angusto*, 1.praef.10; *angustias* [this could be tied to the body], 1.praef.13; *angusta*, 1.praef.17).

¹⁶ This is not an exhaustive list, but notice that things associated with Nature break out of channels (*angust-*): rivers (*angusta*, 3.16.1; *angustum*, 3.27.9; *angustum*, 3.27.10; *angusta*, 4a.2.5; *angusta*, 4a.2.6.) the sea (3.27.10.6), other forms of water (*angustissimum*, 1.2.2), fire (*per angustum*, 6.9.1; *angusta*, 6.11.1), breath (*angustias*, 6.12.2; *per angusta*, 6.13.1; *in angustum*, 6.13.4; *angusta*, 7.6.2; *per angusta*, 7.24.1; *angustiae*, 2.16.1), comets (*in angustum*, 7.27.6), and lightning (*angustiae*, 2.16.1; *angustissimum*, 2.40.1).

¹⁷ This list is similar to Note 17, but I want to draw a distinction between the two. There is a distinction between natural phenomena and the *animus*. The *animus* breaks out of channels, out of the limitations of body (1.praef.13) and birth (4a.praef.15), and it is allowed to enter into the divine's presence (1.praef.6; 1.praef.14), which also cannot be channeled (*in angustum*, 7.24.1) and return to its origins (*in originem*, 1.praef.12).

¹⁸ Stahl (1964:439) has made this observation, that the human realm is concerned with the imprisonment of the body and is limited. Cf. Rimell (2015:117-20).

some claim that comets are planets because of their distinguishing colors, shapes, and courses. Seneca is demonstrating that cometary knowledge is channeled into categories that are based upon observable features, and these features are restricted by sense perception. But Seneca critiques these views because comets appear outside the limitations of sense perception (*non in angustum coniecta et artata, sed dimissa liberius*, 7.27.6 “[their appearance] is not tightly constricted and contained, but freely spread out,” trans. Hine 2014:132; cf. 7.30.2-3), and outside the limits of man’s cometary theories (*in angustum* “within narrow limits,” *limitem* “limit,”¹⁹ 7.24.1.2), including his own philosophical school. Rather, they reside in those regions perceptible to the *animus* (cf. 1.praef.11), that is, the *caelestia* where the *animus* “engages with the universal immensity” (Williams 2012:290) and with the divine perspective (Gunderson 2015:69).

Another way in which he challenges the value of sense perception is by arguing against the dominant philosophy, Epicureanism, that puts this forth. Allusions and language attributed to Epicureanism appear, though cast within a Stoic light. For example, Seneca claims that certain phenomena, because they are reflections, like mirrors²⁰ which deform, are not true bodies,²¹ but are regarded as *imagines* (cf. 1.4-6). Celestial phenomena—rainbows, garlands, and so on—reside outside the gaze of mankind, which Seneca regards as deceptive (*nihil esse acie nostra fallacius*, 1.3.9 “nothing is more deceptive than our eyesight”). The eyes trick the mind into distorting images of true, natural phenomena. Man’s physical limitations—his weakened,

¹⁹ *Limis* appears only once in the *NQ*, and it is here.

²⁰ *De arcu dico et coronis . . . Non est enim in speculo quod ostenditur*, 1.15.6.3-7.5 (“I mean the rainbow and garlands . . . For what is shown in a mirror does not exist,” trans. Hine 2014:158).

²¹ *Simulacra ista sunt et ianis uerorum corporum quae ipsa a quibusdam ita compositis ut hoc possint detorquentur in prauum*, 1.15.8.2 (“They are semblances, an empty imitation of real bodies that themselves are corruptly distorted by things so constituted as to have that effect,” trans. Hine 2014:158-59).

distorted eyesight²²—inhibit his abilities to perceive truth. Knowledge acquired by sense perception distorts and transforms truth into *simulacra*.²³ Mankind becomes bound to his senses, never letting his mind, freed from the bonds of sense perception, wander in light, and so he becomes shrouded in darkness (cf. *caligo* “darkness,” 1.praef.2.6, 2.10.2.7, 3.praef.11.6, 3.27.4.4, 5.3.2.2, 6.27.3.4). Now what is interesting is that he draws on language from Lucretius Book 4.²⁴ For example, Lucretius defines *simulacra* as thin-filmed “images” that have a similar appearance and form to bodies (*rerum simulacra vocamus, quod speciem ac formam similem gerit eius imago*, Lucretius 4.30, 52 “we call them the images of things, because the image bears the appearance and shape of it”). He continues, stating that these “images” come “to our eyes” (*ad nostras acies*, 4.280, 357) and cause vision and visualization. He also claims that man’s perceptions are falsified by opinion (what the *animus* adds to it),²⁵ and, as is in accordance with Epicureanism, he holds that all sensations are true (4.499). As noted above, Seneca argues

²² *Acies nostra non potest per medium sidus exire*, 7.18.2.2-3 (“Our eyesight cannot pass through the middle of a planet”); *infirma uis oculorum*, 1.3.7 (“the weakness of our eyes”); *corpora retorta oculorum acie*, 1.5.1.5 (“the bodies are bent back by the eye-beam”).

²³ Cf. 1.5.1; 1.13.1; 1.13.2; 1.15.8; 1.17.1.

²⁴ Seneca also tackles some of the same natural phenomena as Lucretius *De Natura Rerum*, 6. For present purposes I focus on Book 4.

²⁵ Lucretius *De Natura Rerum*, 4.379-86:

*Nec tamen hic oculos falli concedimus hilum.
Nam quo cumque loco sit lux atque umbra tueri
illorum est; eadem vero sint lumina necne,
umbraque quae fuit hic eadem nunc transeat illuc,
an potius fiat paulo quod diximus ante,
hoc animi demum ratio discernere debet,
nec possunt oculi naturam noscere rerum.
proinde animi vitium hoc oculis adfingere noli.*

(“Nevertheless we do not concede that our eyes are deceived in the least. For wherever there is light and shadow it is theirs to see; but whether or not they are the same lights, or whether the shadow which was here is the same that passed through there, or whether it rather happens as we said a little before, the *ratio* of the *animus* must determine this, and the eyes are not able to know the nature of things. Hence do not place this fault of the *animus* upon the eyes”). See Tobias Reinhardt (2016) for a study on Lucretius and sensory language in *De Natura Rerum* 4.

against the idea that these “images” are true bodies because eyesight, not the mind, is deceptive. Eyesight is also weak and dim (*acies hebes et infirma*, 1.3.7 “dull and weak eyesight”; *imbecillam aciem*, 1.3.8 “feeble vision”), and reason (via the *animus*) shows the world as it really is (*quem [the sun] toto terrarum orbe maiorem probat ratio*, 1.3.10 “this object [the sun], which reasoning proves to be larger than the whole earth,” trans. Hine 2014). Seneca is implicitly criticizing Lucretius and Epicureanism. He even mentions how an oar²⁶ has the appearance of being broken when thrust into water, a famous analogy found in Lucretius (4.438).²⁷

Another way he criticizes sense perception is through the metaphor of darkness and light. Sense perception which narrows thinking and darkens intellectual growth parallels physical darkness.²⁸ In the following passage Seneca, in his refutation of Democritus’ theory of wind in Book 5, draws a connection between narrow space and darkness. Note the sensory language (underlined) and the spatial language (bolded) in the passage (5.3.1.3-2, trans. Hine 2014:74):

*atqui tunc plurima corpora se **in angustum** contulerunt et inde est spissarum nubium grauitas.*

*Adice nunc quod circa flumina et lacus frequens nebula est **artatis congestisque** corporibus, nec*

²⁶ Cf. 1.3.9: *Remus tenui aqua tegitur et fractit speciem reddit* (“an oar has a shallow covering of water, and it gives the appearance of being broken,” trans. Hine 2014:146).

²⁷ Lucretius *De Natura Rerum*, 4.438-42:

*Nam quae cumque supra rorem salis edita pars est
remorum, recta est, et recta superne gubernata;
quae demersa liquore obeunt, refracta videntur
omnia converti sursumque supina reverti
et reflexa prope in summo fluitare liquore.*

(“For whichever part of the oars is raised above the spray of the sea is straight, and the rudder is straight above; but everything which is submerged below, appears to be bent, turned back, and turned upwards and bent back so that it floats close to the surface”).

²⁸ Stahl (1964:439) and Gauly (2004:164-90, especially) note elements of Platonism (light as knowledge, darkness as ignorance, for example) in Senecan philosophy. See Note 56.

tamen uentus est. Interdum uero tanta caligo effunditur ut conspectum in uicino stantium eripiat, quod non eueniret, nisi in paruum locum corpora se multa compellerent.

Yet then many particles have converged in a confined space, and this produces the dense mass of thick clouds. Add that near rivers and lakes there is often a mist, as particles are packed and massed together, yet there is no wind. Sometimes such darkness envelops us that we lose sight of people standing close to us, which would not happen unless many particles forced their way into a small space.

Notice how physical darkness (*caligo* “darkness”) rises when particles have been collected into a confined space (*in angustum* “into a confined space”) and creates a mist (*nebula* “cloud”) which muddles perception (*conspectum* “sight”) and distorts reality. Just as sense perception narrows man’s focus to himself so that he cannot distinguish his surroundings, so too does physical darkness keep him from seeing those close (*in uicino* “nearby”) to him. The fault lies in the limitations of sense perception.²⁹ Not everything gets noticed,³⁰ nor is everything seen and able to be seen,³¹ but this does not preclude its existence (1.5.11): *nec ideo falsae sunt quia non uidentur* (“They are not unreal because they cannot be seen,” trans. Hine 2014:150). And so, because it cannot be grasped by perception, it does not mean that thing does not exist. Nature is hidden deep, escaping mortal eyes (*occulta naturae*, 2.59.2 “the hidden things of Nature”).

²⁹ The Stoic *sapiens* must accept his limitations (cf. *Ep.* 89.20). Rimell (2015:150) notes that man must “confront the claustrophobic reality of being confined to a narrow body.”

³⁰ *Non omnia scilicet, quaedam notantur*, 2.32.5 (“But to be sure, not everything gets noticed,” trans. Hine 2014:179)

³¹ *Quae aut sentiuntur aut sentiunt*, 2.1.3.3 (“[bodies] which are perceived or perceive”); 2.3.1, *Omnia quae in notitiam nostram cadunt aut cadere possunt mundus complectitur* (“All the things that are known to us or can become known are contained within the world,” trans. Hine 2014:164).

Seneca contrasts this way of thinking—sense perception—with cognition, that is, reason which liberates mankind from narrowed thinking: *Cum [animus] illa tetigit, alitur, crescit ac uelut uinculis liberatus in originem redit* (1.praef.12.1-2 “When it [the *animus*] has reached those regions, it finds nourishment, it grows, and, as though freed from its chains, it returns to its origin,” trans. Hine 2014:138); *Tunc contemnit domicilii prioris angustias* (1.praef.13.1 “It [the *animus*] then [upon reaching the celestial region] despises the limitations of its previous dwelling,” trans. Hine 2014:138). It requires one to leave behind one’s body (the seat of sense perception) and to rely upon one’s *animus* (the seat of reason) (*animum . . . seducemus a corpore*, 3.praef.2-4 “let us separate the *animus* from the body”). Unlike sense perception, which limits and distorts, cognition frees and reveals truth about Nature and the divine (cf. 7.29.3.8-12). It allows man to dig into the inner recesses of the universe (*secretaque eius eruere*, 3.praef.1.4, “to dig out its [the world] secrets”), and is his greatest, divine capacity which connects him with the divine (1.praef.14.1-3): *Quid ergo interest inter naturam dei et nostram? Nostri melior pars animus est; in illo nulla pars extra animum est* (“So what is the difference between god’s nature and our own? The mind is the superior part of us; in him there is nothing apart from mind,” trans. Hine 2014:137). By investigating Nature, he “sees” that everything foretells something, and points to a divine, subtle power ordering the cosmos (cf. 2.4.4-6, 2.5.7-8). Seneca elevates reason as it dictates that all things follow set patterns, and thus, man should use more than sense perception to see and understand the universe.

Because cognition “separates” man from his physical limitations, knowledge attained through cognition diminishes his anthropocentric perspective³² and power in the world.³³ And so, investigating Nature forces mankind to confront his limitations, shaking the very foundation of his *perceived* existence and power, and it liberates his mind so that he gains wisdom. This cognitive perspective shrinks mankind’s position and power within the cosmos, as he realizes that god is the ultimate power: he “manages” (*tractat*, 7.30.3.4), “creates” (*condidit*, 7.30.3.4), “finds” (*fundauit*, 7.30.3.5), and “encircles himself” with his creation (*deditque circa se*, 7.30.3.5)—all while eluding man’s eyesight (*effugit oculos*, 7.30.3.6 “he escapes our eyes”) but not his thought (*cogitatione uisendus est*, 7.30.3.6-7 “he must be perceived by thought”). As Manolaraki (2013:102) observes in her analysis of Seneca’s restrictive worldview, for Seneca “an ethically accurate view of the world” involves the rejection of anthropocentricity and the acceptance of Nature “serving itself, not humanity.” Therefore, man should not be surprised when he sees Nature’s forces acting without his knowledge, and it should not inspire fear or awe (*mirari*, 7.1.5 “to be amazed”) if he realizes that god acts of his own accord, without mankind’s direction.³⁴

³² *Quam multa praeter hos per secretum eunt numquam humanis oculis orientia! Neque enim omnia deus homini fecit*, 7.30.3.1-3 (“How many things besides comets follow remote paths, never appearing to human eyes! For god did not make everything for human beings,” trans. Hine 2014:133).

³³ *Fuerunt enim qui dicerent nos esse quos rerum natura nescientes ferat, nec caeli motu fieri ortus et occasus, nos ipsos oriri et occidere*, 7.2.3.4-6 (“There have been people who said that we are the ones whom nature keeps on the move, though we do not know it, and that risings and settings are not produced by the motions of the heavens, <but> we ourselves rise and set,” trans. Hine 2014:116).

³⁴ Empirical knowledge, though not completely rejected by Seneca, provides one way of thinking about the world; it does, however, affect perspective, being dependent upon the limitations of perception, which in turn influences representation. The world is reduced to the scope of man’s senses (*et Neque enim omnia deus homini fecit. Quota pars operis tanti nobis committitur!* 7.30.3.3-4 “For god did not make everything for human beings. How small a part of this vast creation is entrusted to us!” trans. Hine 2014:133). Seneca posits, however, another perspective, cognition. From this perspective, Seneca’s investigation is not about the end goal but the journey. The cognitive process moves man away from an anthropocentric worldview to one that re-situates him within a much larger, even theocentric worldview.

II. Sensory and Cognitive Mapping

After discussing how Seneca juxtaposes two ways of thinking about the world, I now consider how he creates two distinct world-projections—one built upon sense perception, the other on cognition. In this section, I examine several instances where Seneca distances himself and his reader from the topic at hand and moves from a microcosmic to a macrocosmic perspective,³⁵ and as seen in the next section, he does this in order to critique sense perception, and to remove the reader from the constraints and narrow thinking of sense perception. Like a cosmic traveller perusing a map³⁶ from above, he quickly passes over geographic features and landscapes, moving freely about the earth and the heavens. In his essay Gerard B. Lavery (1980) examines Seneca's use of metaphors, for example "life as a journey," and though Lavery forgoes an examination of the *NQ*, notice that the "*iter* metaphor" is prevalent in it.³⁷

During these "mapping moments,"³⁸ geographic space is organized in a multitude of ways (high/low, wide/narrow, visible/hidden, and large/small), and Seneca arranges space to fit his intended purpose, emphasizing the spatial relationship between sense perception and cognition which are embodied by these spatial dichotomies. By "mapping" the world, he

³⁵ Seneca takes Lucilius away (*te . . . abducam*, 4a.praef.21.1-2 "I shall remove you"; *te abducam*, 4a.1.1 "I shall take you away") from Sicily on a journey to the Nile, but this is not a typical journey because it is one that they meet in their minds (*Erimus una, qua parte* [the *animus*] *optimi sumus*, 4a.praef.20 "We shall be together in the best part of ourselves").

³⁶ Cf. *mundum circumire*, 3.praef.1.2 ("to traverse the world"); *circumit mundum*, 1.praef. 8.4 "it [the *animus*] traverses the world"). See Note 38 for further analysis of these phrases.

³⁷ For example, Seneca portrays himself as a world traveler, a guide who drives his reader on a journey (3.praef.4.1-2): *faciamus quod in itinere fieri solet* ("Let us do what is customary on a journey").

³⁸ Within the framework of a geocentric approach, texts can be analyzed in a manner similar to maps (literary cartography and literary geography): "All writing partakes in a form of cartography, since even the most realistic map does not truly depict the space, but, like literature, figures it forth in a complex skein of imaginary relations" (Tally 2013:134). Robert T. Tally Jr. argues that practices of literary cartography, how writers map their space, and literary geography, how readers read that work, enable ways to think about space, place, and mapping (2013:3). See Introduction in this dissertation for a more in-depth discussion.

demonstrates how perspective affects representation, both of the collective and the self,³⁹ even through geographical writing. While sense perception reduces the infinite world to the limited gaze of mankind, cognition liberates man from the restrictions of the senses and allows him to create a cognitive map of the world that draws on his imagination⁴⁰ and knowledge of the world.

I first examine Seneca's cartographic language. His language throughout the *NQ*, particularly 3.praef., 3.28.5, 4a.praef. 21-22, and 1.praef.,⁴¹ connotes map-making. He has decided to "traverse the world" (*mundum circumire*,⁴² 3.praef.1; cf. 1.praef.8, *totum circumit mundum* "it [the *animus*] traverses the entire world") and begins to lay the foundations of his work (*magnarum rerum fundamenta ponam*, 3.praef.1 "I shall lay out the foundations of a great undertaking"; *ponitis*, 1.praef.11.2 "you lay out"⁴³), that is, a map—gathering, collecting, and measuring the world.⁴⁴ The world is measured out⁴⁵: landscapes (cities, provinces, and

³⁹ In other words, collective representation can refer to identity as member of a society—Rome, for instance.

⁴⁰ Dueck (2012:68): "Our mental image of the world is always based on a combination of actual geographical knowledge and imagination, on a mix of directly experienced and abstractly conceived space."

⁴¹ The excerpt 4b.11 provides many examples of literary cartography; I have, however, chosen to focus on these passages in this section and return to a thorough examination of the text in my case study below.

⁴² Limburg (2007:115) notes that the verb *circumire* connotes surveying: "The verb *circumire* refers to a general survey (or tour) of the world." Seneca is surveying the world and providing a map of the world for his readers so that they might gain knowledge.

⁴³ Note the difference with the verb *ponere* ("to lay down") here at 3.praef.1 and at 1.praef.11. Seneca contrasts his undertaking, which is philosophical and described as *magnarum* ("great"), with that of the conqueror (at 1.praef.11) who lays out (*ponitis* "you lay out") his kingdom described here as *minima* ("very small"). This opposition demonstrates the contrast between the philosopher's or *sapiens'* journey and the conqueror's.

⁴⁴ *consequar*, 3.praef.1 ("I shall investigate"); *colligam*, 3.praef.1 ("I shall collect"); *metietur*, 3.praef. 3.2 ("it will measure").

⁴⁵ Note the surveying language: *metietur*, 3.praef.3.2 ("it will measure"); *perlibret*, 3.28.5 ("he surveys"); *mensura*, 1.praef.10.10 ("measurement"), *mensus*, 1.praef.17.5 ("measured").

geographic features) are measured according to size,⁴⁶ breadth,⁴⁷ and height.⁴⁸ In addition, Seneca describes the world as either divided into sectors or parts, or as *in toto*.⁴⁹ The contrasting representations correspond to the two ways of thinking about the world: 1) a divided world limited to and by the perspective of mankind, and 2) a world that is “vast” (*ingentia*, 1.praef. 11.4) and “perceptible” only to his mind.⁵⁰

Just as sense perception limits perspective, the corresponding map of the world is also limited. Geographic space understood in terms of sense perception is channeled (bounded or restricted), divided, and hidden or dark. Seneca creates this world from a narrowed perspective, and much like an actual map that illustrates and condenses the world to the boundaries of paper, this sensory map reduces the world to the rules of observation, that is, to the scope of man’s gaze. Because man perceives the world through this scope, with his “self” at the center of the world, the map is an anthropocentric map (Tuan 1974:30; Manolaraki 2013:101). In what follows, I consider a few examples that demonstrate how Seneca maps space from this perspective.

⁴⁶ For example, Seneca describes space in terms of its size as *ingentia* (“vast,” 1.praef.11) or a *punctum* (“pinprick,” 1.praef.11).

⁴⁷ For example, geographic space can be described in terms of breadth as narrow (*orbem . . . angustum*, 1.praef.8 “narrow globe”).

⁴⁸ Examples of geographic height include Seneca’s description of the *caelestia* realm at 1.praef.7, 8 as *altum* (“high”) or *superne* (“above”), or his mapping of the earth in relation to the height of the *caelestia* region (*orbem . . . despiciens*, 1.praef. “looking down at the earth”).

⁴⁹ In the passages that map out the world through sense perception, geographic space is described as divided or in parts: *in parte*, 3.28.5.5 (“in part”); *prouinciam*, 4a.21.4-5 (“province”); *pars/-te*, 1.praef.3.2, 3.6 (“part”); *diuiditur*, 1.praef.8.8 (“is divided”); *determinet*, 1.praef.9.5 (“demarcates”). But in the passages that map through cognition, geographic space is described as whole or all: *omne*, 3.praef.5.8, 10.7; *omnia*, 3.praef.12.4; *totam*, 1.praef.7.5, *totum*, 1.praef.8.3-4; *totus*, 1.praef.4.

⁵⁰ The *animus*, when it reaches the *caelestia* region, watches (*spectat*, *spectator*) and observes (*observat*) the ordered working of the universe (1.praef.11.4-12).

After laying the foundation of his work at 3.praef.1-4, Seneca pulls the reader back down to earth, to a level that concerns itself with mankind (3.praef.5-10). Though he appears merely to be ranting against historians who waste (*consumpsere* “they are consumed”) their lives relating the “deeds” (*acta*) and sufferings perpetrated by “foreign kings and nations” (*regum externorum*), he is in effect constructing a map as he, like a cartographer, surveys the known world—Spain, Italy, Carthage, and every kingdom and “every corner” (*omnibus angulis*⁵¹). Seneca takes what is considered an “immense task” (*immensam rem*, 3.praef.3.10), that is surveying the world, and reduces it, laying out territories in a quick geographical list.

In fact, Seneca’s geographical lists are highly suggestive of political maps which illustrate and aggrandize man’s *acta*.⁵² For example, at 1.praef.9, Seneca rattles off a list of geographical features and names, which follow his exclamation that mortal boundaries are ridiculous (1.praef.9, trans. Hine 2014:137-38):

*O quam ridiculi sunt mortalium termini! Vltra Istrum Dacos <nostrum> <arc>eat imperium,
Haemo Thraces includat; Parthis obstet Euphrates; Danuuius Sarmatica ac Romana disterminet;
Rhenus Germaniae modum faciat; Pyrenaeus medium inter Gallias et Hispanias iugum extollat;
inter Aegyptum et Aethiopas harenarum inculta uastitas iaceat.*

⁵¹ According to Varro (De Lingua Latina, 6.41), *angulus* (“angle” or “corner”) is related to the word *angustus* (“narrow”). *Angulus*, Rimell notes (2015:82ff), is a significant word that appears in Horatian lyric, though it has different connotations in Horatian satire. In *Satires* 2.6, *angulus* refers to the desire to possess more, and Seneca develops this Horatian *angulus* (116). Rimell argues (103) that in Seneca (and Persius) *angulus* “is the point that seems to represent the destination of unmoderated desire.” In *Ep.* 94:64-65, Seneca uses *angulus* (*angulos*, 94.65.1) to refer to those imperialists who, in their infinite desire, seek the furthest edges of the world. Rimell (2015:116) also notes that *angulus* can refer to “familiar nooks,” but here, within the geographical context, it is clear that Seneca refers to imperialism.

⁵² Dueck (2012:18) argues that because the surviving geographical writing is concerned with military conquests, it suggests that Romans were interested in conquest, and not the science.

How ridiculous are mortals' boundaries! The Dacians must not pass beyond the lower Danube; let the Thracians enclose their empire with the Haemus mountain, the Euphrates block the Parthians, the Danube form the boundary between Sarmatian and Roman territory, the Rhine set a limit on Germany, the Pyrenees raise their ridge between the Gallic and Spanish provinces, uncultivated desert sands lie between Egypt and the Ethiopians.

The imagery is evocative of a political map: boundaries are placed (*termini, modum*), territories designated and placed (*arceat, includat, disterninet, medium, inter, iaceat*), and names assigned. Consider the political connotations: *terminus*⁵³ (pl. *termini*), for example, symbolizes Rome's power to "reinforce order and limits" (Rimell 2015:30); even the use of jussive subjunctives (*arceat, includat, disterninet, iaceat*) are indicative of a worldview belonging to those "policymakers" who decide how to divide up the world (Hine 2006:45; Giddens 1981). In this sense, the geographical list demarcates and divides the world, and elevates man's power (*mortalium, imperium*) over Nature, in the form of his ability to carve up the world. Also notice the same technique at 4a.praef.21-4a.1.4 when Seneca warns Lucilius not to give into the delusion of "governing a *historically important* province [that is, Sicily]" (Manolaraki 2013:99, emphasis in original); this representation focuses on reducing the world and projecting it from an anthropocentric perspective. As a map gathers the world into one location, so too does Seneca in his description of Sicily's history (*contractas in unum locum* "brought together in one place"). He describes the province connecting it with man's accomplishments and power, "charging the natural environment with human events, memories, and emotion" (Manolaraki 2013:99). His

⁵³ The relationship between *terminus* and Roman *imperium* go back to Rome's foundation when Remus, after jumping over wall is killed by his brother Romulus; Vergil recasts this foundational myth through Aeneas' killing of Turnus who had repositioned a boundary stone (*Aen.* 12.896-98, 901). Remus and Turnus' violation of boundaries affirms Rome's concern with boundaries and spatial organization. Furthermore, Romans also connected *terminus* with *religio* ("religion") and worshipped the god *Terminus* whose sovereignty resided in his power to fix boundaries and organize space (Willis 2011:105). I discuss boundaries in the *NQ* in greater detail in the next chapter.

description yields to Lucilius' delusion and becomes a historical narrative, focusing not on philosophy but rather on historical events (*historia* "history," *maximarum urbium exercitus* "army of the greatest cities," *ingentis belli pretium* "a prize of a great battle," *totius imperii* "whole empire," *fortunam* "fortune," and *potentiam* "power").

This representation elevates anthropocentrism, and is tied to sense perception (*uidit* "sees," *spectaculo* "spectacle," *mirabilia* "marvelous things," 4a.21.9, 22.5, 22.1; 4a.1.1.2) and man's actions (Manolaraki 2013:101).⁵⁴ Seneca emphasizes that sense perception is concerned with *acta*, with conquest, and with the human level which "dims" mankind's sight. Man's sense perception keeps him at a disadvantage as he cannot fully grasp, in his human form, the vastness of the world, and remains in the darkness, with only artificial lights (*cum multo lumine*, 5.15.1.6 "with plenty of lights") to guide him⁵⁵ (3.praef.11.4-7): *qui a diuinorum conuersatione quotiens ad humana recideris*,⁵⁶ *non aliter caligabis quam quorum oculi in densam umbram ex claro sole redierunt* ("Whenever you sink back from engagement with the divine to the human level, your sight will go dim, just like the eyes of those who return from bright sunlight to dense shadow," trans. Hine 2014:27). He greatly misperceives and mistakes his significance, or rather, insignificance in the world because he can only "see" a glimpse of truth. Inwood (2005:174) notes that history, which focuses on man's *acta*, is in fact "limited, even blinded by its human

⁵⁴ Dueck (2012:51, 66) states that *mirabilia* ("wonder tales") were often used by the emperors to symbolize the conquest of distant regions with their "oddities."

⁵⁵ This metaphor is tied to the Platonic idea of light as knowledge and darkness as ignorance. It should also be noted that *lumen*, as opposed to *lux*, appears in connection with artificial lighting. For example, in Book 5 (5.15), Philip sends a mining expedition, with *cum multo lumine* (5.15.1.6, "with plenty of light"), down into the darkness of an old mine. The darkness into which they descend takes them away from the light of day (*lucem relinquere*, 5.15.3.5-6), which elsewhere in the *NQ* refers to true light (for example, cf. *lucem*, 1.12.1.11). This story, along with their descent into "darkness" will be discussed in a later chapter of this dissertation. Nevertheless, *lumen*, I argue, refers to distorted images of knowledge which comes from faulty thinking caused by sense perception.

⁵⁶ Note how the passage maps mankind, in his narrow, darkened perception moves him, in a low position (*recideris* "you will fall back").

perspective.” Even Cosgrove’s (1998 [1984]:21) statement on perspective and representation articulates those issues associated with perspective: perspective is regarded as “truth” rather than seen as a tool or technique with which to view the world, and knowledge gained by observation is subjected to the rules of perspective (237). And under the assumption that his perspective is scientific “truth,” man assumes a central position within the cosmos, which is demonstrated by his representation of himself in relation to his surroundings, that is, the cartography: what man thinks about himself is illustrated by his relationship with the world. And so, with these cartographic descriptions based upon sense perception, man views himself as superior, at the center of everything,⁵⁷ which in turn affects his behavior and leads to a transgression of one’s place as a human (see Chapter 3).⁵⁸

Sensory mapping provides one way of thinking about the world; yet, bound by physical limitations, man cannot rely on his senses alone to investigate Nature. And so, Seneca offers a solution—a cognitive map. Seneca’s objective is not to create an accurate map of the world but to create a worldview composed according to the mental visualization of the world he assumes his readers understand. Much like literary cartography, which Seneca is doing, cognitive cartography requires a fusion of both realism and imagination in order to represent real and imaginary places.⁵⁹ He builds upon this assumed visualization, adapting and manipulating it in order to fit his intended purpose, that is, to cause the reader to reflect inwardly upon his *actual* position in the cosmos, which in turn affects his behavior (cf. 3.praef.18). Seneca unfolds before his readers a mental image of the world that is unmarred by a static, standardized illustration and

⁵⁷ Cf. 7.30.3.

⁵⁸ Manolaraki (2013:101) remarks that such anthropocentric perceptions of space and time result in suffering.

⁵⁹ Cf. Tally (2013:69).

unrestricted by human limitations—in other words, a cognitive map built upon his reader’s understanding of the world. On his journey for knowledge, the cognitive map grounds the reader in his humanity, informing him of who he is in relation to god/Nature, which then shapes his ethics: *Quanti aestimas ista cognoscere et rebus terminos ponere, quantum deus possit; materiam ipse sibi formet an data utatur . . . sciam omnia angusta esse mensus deum* (1.praef.16-17, “What value do you place on learning about these topics and determining the limits of everything . . . I shall know that everything is puny when I have measured god,” trans. Hine 2014:139). Geography affects morality, and vice versa.⁶⁰

I now examine how the cartographic language in select passages calls attention to a cognitive way of thinking about the world. Because the world is vast and enormous, it must be comprehended in the same respect, that is, with something that can grasp the magnitude and enormity of the world and that can transcend the limitations of man’s narrowed perception. Because Nature (and her forces) cannot be measured according to human standards or channeled within limits, man must understand that the key for comprehending the world in this way is the *animus*, and Seneca’s argument on behalf of cognition involves the *animus*, which is the fundamental tool for “viewing” the world *in toto*. Viewing the totality of the cosmos with the *animus* (*animo omne uidisse*, 3.praef.11 “to see everything with one’s mind”) is what matters most to Seneca (*quid praecipuum est?* “what is important?”), and it allows man to see that “everything is a single, unitary thing, an *omne*” (Gunderson 2015:68). In fact, the “totalizing worldview” is Williams’ (2012:20) central focus in his examination of the *NQ*:

⁶⁰ Rimell (2015: Chapter 3, espec.), in her examination of Seneca’s *Epistles*, considers the relationship between space and identity.

. . . this vision of oneness provides the starting point for what we shall see to be Seneca's construction in the *Natural Questions* of a unifying mindset that redirects our focus away from the ordinary fragmentations and interferences of life at ground level, as it were, toward the alleviating, integrating perspective of cosmic consciousness: as we move from partial sight toward fuller insight, and from local participants to a more complete form of cosmic belonging, we begin to see the world for itself, not for ourselves.

Viewing the world in this totalizing, cognitive way alleviates the issues associated with sense perception because the world lies beyond sense perception but not the *animus*.

The cognition/sense perception dualism can also be articulated with mind (*animus*)/body. Seneca addresses this anthropological dualism (mind [or soul] versus body) implicitly in the *NQ* by contrasting the two ways of viewing the world. Senecan and Stoic dualism⁶¹ posits that the *animus* is the divine part of mankind, the part that connects with *ratio*,⁶² and it pulls mankind up to the level of the divine. When he contemplates Nature, he connects that divine part of himself with god (cf. 1.praef.1.13). The body, however, is mortal and limits mankind. Seneca likens the human body to a prison that imprisons the soul⁶³ and can dim the mind (cf. *Ep.* 15.2).⁶⁴ The

⁶¹ While early Stoics articulated the inferiority of the body to the *animus*, they did not do so to the extent that later Stoics did (Seneca, for example). Cf. Scott Smith (2013:354).

⁶² Cf. 1.praef.14: *Quid ergo interest inter naturam dei et nostram? Nostri melior pars animus est; in illo nulla pars extra animum est. Totus est ratio . . .* ("What is the difference between god's nature and ours? Our *animus* is the better part of us; in him there is nothing beyond *animus*. He is all *ratio* . . ."). Also see *Ep.* 41, particularly 41.8 for the divine living within us. Cf. *Ep.* 66.12: *Ratio autem nihil aliud est quam in corpus humanum pars divini spiritus mersa* ("*Ratio* is, however, nothing other than part of the divine spirit fixed within the human body").

⁶³ Seneca likens the body to a heavy load that weighs down and imprisons the *animus* (*Ep.* 65.16): *Nam corpus hoc animi pondus ac poena est; premente illo urgetur, in vinclis est . . .* ("For this body is a burden of the *animus* and its punishment; it is crushed by that [*corpus*] pressing down upon it, it is in chains . . .").

⁶⁴ For the body as a prison, Rimell (2015: Chapter 3) discusses narrowness and confinement in Seneca's *Epistles*, and reiterates Seneca's use of the Platonic vision of the body as a prison; see Plato's *Phaedo* 81e, 83a and *Phaedrus* 250c. Reydam-Schils (2010) also considers Seneca's adoption of Platonic opposition between body and soul. In Seneca's other works, see for example: *Ad Marciam* (*uincula animorum tenebraeque sunt*, 24.5 "[bodies with sinews and tendons] are the chains and darkness of souls"); *Epistles* (*hac custodia*, 79.12 "from this prison"; *ad hoc me natura grave corporis mei pondus adstrinxit*, 24.17 "to this heavy burden of a body has Nature bound me"; and *in vinclis est*, 65.16 "[the soul] is in chains").

gravity of his physical limitations (sense perception) pulls him back to earth (cf. 3.praef.11.4-8), and inhibit him from seeing reality, that is, the ordered cosmos. Returning to the three ways (limiting language, Epicurean language, and light and dark) Seneca challenges the value of sense perception, notice that the *animus* is the tool with which he challenges the other part of man's dualistic nature, the body, which is the seat of sense perception.⁶⁵ Notice how Seneca describes the *animus*: *eluctatus natalium angustias nec sorte me sed animo mensus* (4a.praef.15.2-3 "I struggled out of the confines of my birth and measured myself not on the basis of my lot but my *animus*"). The *animus* breaks through the limiting language, and it sheds light (knowledge) onto the darkness of man's ignorance (cf. 1.praef.1.). The *animus* allows man to "see" beyond limitations and cloudiness of sense perception. Attention must be given to how the *animus* challenges Epicurean notions of the *animus* which claims that the *animus* cannot exist beyond the body, and is mortal.⁶⁶ This contrasts with Stoicism that asserts the *animus*' divinity and also god's active participation in the cosmos.⁶⁷ Thus, the universe being both reason and rational, and ordered by the *Logos* (*Ratio*)⁶⁸ connects with man's own *logos* (*ratio*) (Gunderson 2015:58).

⁶⁵ In his consolation to Marcia (*Ad Marciam*) on the death of her son, Seneca describes the body as a "likeness" (*imago*, 24.5), a word tied to sense perception, and claims that the *animus* is the true person.

⁶⁶ Lucretius (*De Natura Rerum* III, particularly at lines 120ff) claims that the soul (*animus*) is comprised of atoms, and cannot be separated from the body; both *animus* and body must be destroyed together.

⁶⁷ This is a question that Seneca explores in the *NQ* (1.praef.3.): *Equidem tunc rerum naturae gratias ago cum illam non ab hac parte uideo qua publica est, sed cum secretiora eius intraui, cum disco quae uniuersi materia sit, quis auctor aut custos, quid sit deus, totus in se tendat an et ad nos aliquando respiciat, faciat cotidie aliquid an semel fecerit, pars mundi sit an mundus, liceat illi hodieque discernere et ex lege fatorum aliquid derogare an maiestatis deminutio sit et confessio erroris mutanda fecisse* ("I myself give thanks to nature whenever I see her not in her public aspect, but when I have entered her more remote regions, when I am learning what the material of the universe is, who is its creator or guardian, what god is, whether he is totally focused on himself or sometimes takes notice of us too, whether he creates something every day or has created once and for all, whether he is part of the world or the world itself, whether even today he may make decisions and amend part of the law of fate, or whether it would be an impairment of his greatness and admission of error to have made something that needed alteration," trans. Hine 2014:136). Cf. *Ep.* 65.24. Stoics believed that god (*logos/ratio*) was not only eternal but also penetrated all matter (Diogenes Laërtius 7.134); this stands in opposition to Epicureans who viewed the god(s) as having no part in the universe (Sharples 1996:13).

⁶⁸ That is, god.

Now that I have established cognitive thinking with the *animus*, and briefly looked at the nature of the *animus*, I examine how the philosophical nature of the *animus* can be transferred to my discussion on the physical world. Seneca describes the world as *totam . . . terram* (1.praef.7.5 “whole earth”), *totum . . . mundum* (1.praef.8.3-4 “entire world”), and *ingentia spatia* (1.praef.11.3 “vast spaces”). Its size is such that sense perception, with its limitations, cannot grasp the world’s enormity.⁶⁹ The *animus*, however, is a sufficient tool for viewing the world because their natures are the same (cf. 7.30.3-4; *Ep.* 102.21, 110.9; *Ad Helv.* 11.7;)⁷⁰ *totus animus* (3.praef.2.6 “whole *animus*”); *ingentes animos* 3.praef.3.6 “vast *animi*” [pl. of *animus*]). In order to comprehend the world as it really is, in its entirety, man must separate himself from the limitations of his senses and use reason (cognition) (cf. *animus . . . seducemus a corpore*, 3.praef.18 “let us separate our *animus* from our body”).⁷¹ Doing this (“viewing” the world) requires the use of the *animus* (cf. 3.praef.10), which is where reason resides. The vastness and divinity of the *animus* connects with that of the universe. From a Stoic point-of-view the *animus* is an effective tool also because it is connected with Nature (or god).⁷² Note how Seneca uses the same description for Nature as he does with the *animus*: Nature—*Nilus . . . per angusta luctatus* (4a.2.5.4-5 “The Nile struggled through straits”), *ingentia spatia* (1.praef.11), and *totam . . . terram* (1.praef.7.5). Both Nature (the Nile, here) and the *animus* break through (*eluctatus*,

⁶⁹ In *Epistle* 102.28, Seneca remarks that man is incapable of seeing the light of the “whole expanse of the sky” (*omne caeli latus*) because he, in his present, living state, is in darkness because of his very cramped eyesight (*per angustissimas oculorum vias*). The only way to fully break free from such narrowness is death (102.29-30).

⁷⁰ Cf. *Ep.* 65.24, Diogenes Laërtius relates Chrysippus’ teachings that state man’s natures are parts of the nature of the universe (*Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, 7.88).

⁷¹ Cf. *Ep.* 78.10.

⁷² Cf. *Ep.* 41.5; 65.12. Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* 2.153: *Quae contuens animus accedit ad cognitionem deorum . . .* (“By contemplating these things [the heavenly bodies], our mind attains to the knowledge of the gods . . .” (trans. Inwood and Gerson 2008:77).

4a.praef.15.2; *luctatus*, 4a.2.5) limitations (*angusta*, 4a.2.5; *angustias*, 4a.praef.15.2). Both are “vast” (*ingentes*, 3.praef.3.6; *ingentia*, 1.praef.11), “whole” (*totus*, 3.praef.2.6; *totam*, 1.praef.7.5) and, most importantly, both are connected with the divine.⁷³ The *animus* liberates mankind from sensory limitations, while Nature frees the world from physical ones.⁷⁴

I now turn my attention to cognitive mapping, that is, using the *animus* to view the world. Because the *animus* is connected with divine order, cognitive mapping allows man to see the world beyond the narrowed perspective that is effected by sense perception. When Seneca discusses cognitive mapping, he describes space as wide (unbounded or unrestricted), *in toto*, and seen (or connected with light, not hidden). At 3.praef.1-4, for example, Seneca describes his endeavor as *mundum circumire* (3.praef.1 “to traverse the world”) which is a great undertaking (*magnarum*, 3.praef.1), that is “a lot” (*multa*, 3.praef.1), “spread out,” (*sparsa*, 3.praef.1), “great” (*magnis*, 3.praef.3; *magnum*, 3.praef.4), and “immense” (*immensam*, 3.praef.3). Such a task, Seneca claims, requires the use of *totus animus* (3.praef.2 “whole *animus*”) and to “lift up the *animus*” (*tollimus . . . animos*, 3.praef.3; *crescit animus*, 3.praef.4). Note that this language is the language associated with cognition.⁷⁵

Another example of cognitive mapping is at 1.praef.11-13 when Seneca talks about the *caelestia* (“celestial region”). Note, in the following passage, language associated with cognition (underlined> and space (bolded), and how from this cognitive perspective space is described (1.praef.11-13 trans. Hine 2014:138-39):

⁷³ God’s magnitude is such that “nothing greater can be thought” (*qua nihil maius cogitari potest*, 1.praef.13).

⁷⁴ This is discussed in the next chapter.

⁷⁵ *Studia* “studies,” *animus/os/o*, *contemplationem* “contemplation,” *respiciat* “considers,” *cogitat* “he thinks,” *animo omne uidisse* “to see everything with the *animus*,” *mentem* “mind,” *subtilitas* “acuteness,” 3.praef.1-18.

[11] *Sursum ingentia spatia sunt, in quorum possessionem animus admittitur, et ita si secum minimum ex corpore tulit, si sordidum omne detergit et expeditus levisque ac contentus modico emicuit.* [12] *Cum illa tetigit, alitur, crescit ac uelut uinculis liberatus in originem redit et hoc habet argumentum diuinitatis suae quod illum diuina delectant, nec ut alienis, sed ut suis interest. Secure spectat occasus siderum atque ortus et tam diuersas concordantium uias; observat ubi quaeque stella primum terris lumen ostendat, ubi columen eius summumque cursus sit, quousque descendat; curiosus spectator excudit singula et quaerit. Quidni quaerat?* [13] *Scit illa ad se pertinere. Tunc contemnit domicilii prioris angustias. Quantum est enim quod ab ultimis litoribus Hispaniae usque ad Indos iacet? Paucissimorum dierum spatium, si nauem suus ferat uentus. At illa regio caelestis per triginta annos uelocissimo sideri uiam praestat nusquam resistenti sed aequaliter cito. Illic demum discit quod diu quaesiit; illic incipit deum nosse. Quid est deus? Mens uniuersi. Quid est deus? Quod uides totum et quod non uides totum. Sic demum magnitudo illi sua redditur, qua nihil maius potest, si solus est omnia, si opus suum et intra et extra tenet.*

[11] Up above there are vast spaces, which the mind is allowed to enter and occupy, provided that it takes scarcely anything of the body with it, that it wipes away any uncleanness, and that it soars upward unencumbered, nimble, and self-reliant. [2] When it has reached those regions, it finds nourishment, it grows, and, as though freed from its chains, it returns to its origins. It has this proof of its own divinity, that it takes delight in the divine and enjoys it not as someone else's possession but as its own. For confidently it watches the settings and risings of the stars, and their differing but harmonious paths; it observes where each star first reveals its light to earth, where its zenith [the highest part of its course] is, to what point it descends. As a fascinated spectator, it examines and inquires into each detail. [3] And why should it not inquire? It knows all relates to itself. It then despises the limitations of its previous dwelling. For what distance lies between the farthest coasts of Spain and the Indies? An interval of a very few days, if a ship is driven by a favorable wind. But that celestial region affords a journey lasting thirty years to a very swift star that never halts but is uniformly swift. There [*ingentia spatia*] the mind at last learns what it has long been inquiring into; there it begins to know god. What is god? The intelligence of the universe. What is god? All that you see and all that you do not see. Only then is his true greatness

recognized—greatness than which nothing greater can be imagined—if he alone is everything, if he controls his creation both from within and from without.

This passage is different from those connected with sensory mapping and sense perception: it is a critique. Seneca describes the cosmic traveller as a *spectator*, but the traveller is not “viewing” the world with limited sense perception, rather he “views” the world with his *animus*. Notice how space viewed from the *animus* is “vast” (*ingentia*),⁷⁶ not channeled, because the *animus* itself is not channeled, or bound to the limitations of sense perception (*minimum ex corpore, uinculis liberatus*). Cognitive mapping helps man to break out of the channeling language and he sees the world as it really is (“a space of a very few days,” *paucissimorum dierum spatium*⁷⁷), from this totalizing worldview (*uniuersi, totum, omnia*). This cognitive view lets man “see” what is not only seen but also what is unseen (*uides, non uides*),⁷⁸ and it sheds light (*primum lumen*⁷⁹) onto the ordered nature of the cosmos (*non fuit oculis contenta, extra conspectum, 1.praef.1; lumen, caliginem excedit, e tenebris . . . lucet, 1.praef.2*⁸⁰).

⁷⁶ Seneca employs several superlatives and extremes in this passage, which suggests that when it comes to the divine, there is nothing greater: *originem, occasus, ortus, primum, summum, paucissimorum, uelocissimo, intra et extra*.

⁷⁷ Seneca comments here on what man would perceive to be a long journey from Spain to the Indies, given the amount of space covered, is really very small when compared to the actual size of the cosmos. Man’s restrictive worldview limits his ability to see the vastness of the world; relying upon his perception, he sees the world from his point of view.

⁷⁸ Because god encompasses all that is seen and unseen, he must be grasped by thought (cf. Reydams-Schils 2010:208).

⁷⁹ Note how *lumen* (a less true form of “light” [knowledge]) is connected with the human level (ethics): *Altera errores nostros discutit et lumen admouet quo discernantur ambigua uitae*. And *lucet* (associated with true “light” [knowledge]) is connected with physics, the branch of philosophy concerning the gods.

⁸⁰ In the preface of Book 1 (1.praef.1-2) Seneca discusses the differences between ethics and physics. Consider how physics is connected with the gods (*ad deos, 1.praef.1*) and the *animus* (*animosior, 1.praef.1*); it is also more elevated (*altior, 1.praef.1*), literally and figuratively (because it is dealing with the *caelestia* region), and allows itself “immense scope” (*multum, 1.praef.1*) (Hine 2014:136).

Now that I have examined Seneca's cognitive mapping technique, I turn to how cognitive mapping grounds mankind and informs him of his place within the cosmos. Consider the spatial language (bolded) at 3.praef.8-10 (trans. Hine 2014:26):

[8] *Quid **exultas**? ista quibus **eueheris** **in summum** nescis ubi te relictura sint; habebunt suum, non tuum **finem**. Quid **iaces**? **Ad imum delatus** es, nunc **locus** est **resurgendi**.* [9] *In melius aduersa, in deterius optata flectuntur. Ita concipienda est animo uarietas non priuatarum tantum domuum, quas leuis casus impellit, sed publicarum: regna **ex infimo coorta supra** imperantes constiterunt, uetera imperia **in ipso flore** ceciderunt. Iniri non potest numerus quam multa ab aliis **fracta** sint. Nunc cum maxime deus **extruit** alia, alia **submittit**, nec molliter **ponit**, sed **ex fastigio suo** nullas habitura reliquias iactat.* [10] *Magna ista, quia parui sumus, credimus; multis rebus non ex natura sua sed ex **humilitate** nostra **magnitudo** est.*

[8] Why are you rejoicing? You do not know when the sources of your elation will desert you: they will end when it suits them, not you. Why are you downcast? You have hit the bottom, now there is the opportunity to rise up again. [9] Adverse circumstances change for the better, desirable ones for the worse. So one must grasp the vicissitudes not just of private households, which a slight misfortune can overthrow, but of ruling households too. Kingdoms have risen from the lowest levels and towered over their rulers, ancient empires have collapsed at the peak of their prosperity, and it is impossible to count how many empires have been destroyed by others. At this very moment god is building up some, overthrowing others, and not putting them down gently but hurling them from their pinnacle so that nothing will be left. [10] We believe such things are great because we are small: many things derive their greatness not from their intrinsic nature but from our lowly status.

Here Seneca cognitively (*concupienda est animo* “it should be comprehended by one’s *animus*”) maps the vertical strata of the world (*in summum* . . . *ad imum* “high. . . to low,” *delatus* . . .

resurgendi “brought down . . . to rise up,” *ex infimo* . . . *supra* “from the lowest . . . above,” *extruit* . . . *submittit* “he builds up . . . he throws down,” *ex fastigio* “from the pinnacle”), between the heights and the depths of the cosmos. But notice what he maps—political and social institutions (*domuum* “home,” *regna* “kingdoms,” *imperantes* “rulers,” *imperia* “empires”)—the deeds of mankind which are praised by historians but criticized by Seneca (3.praef.5). Seneca even introduces the passage by stating that it is much better to ask “what ought to be done” (*quid faciendum sit*, 3.praef.7.1 “ethics”) than “what has been done” (*quid factum*, 3.praef.7.2 “history”⁸¹). Yet, notice that Seneca is not praising mankind or his actions but rather he is emphasizing how powerless and small the world of man is. Man is helplessly (*suum, non tuum finem*) carried (*evehis* . . . *delatus*) by the ebb and flow of Fortune (*fortunae nihil stabile* . . . *mobilius* . . . *nescit enim quiescere*). He is brought high and low (*exultas* . . . *iacet*) just as his kingdoms rising (*coorta*) “from the lowest” levels (*ex infimo*) and towering “above” (*supra*) rulers, “fall” (*ceciderunt*) “at the height” (*in ipso flore*) of their existence, and are destroyed (*fracta* “broken”) by others. If the contrast between god’s power (*cum maxime, magna, magnitudo*) and man’s (*parui* “small,” *humilitate* “lowliness”) is considered, the passage places god’s supremacy above mankind—his abilities to “build up” (*extruit*), “lay low” (*submittit*), and violently “throw down” (*ponit*) mankind. At any moment god can build up and overthrow him, “hurling” (*iactat*) nations “from their pinnacle” (*ex fastigio suo*). Seneca’s purpose in cognitively mapping the world diminishes mankind’s perspective of himself, and firmly puts him in his place in the cosmos (*humilitate*).⁸²

⁸¹ Cf. 3.praef.7. Taken into context with Seneca’s previous rant against historians (*factum*) and also with what follows, the “what has been done,” refers to history, not physics (cf. 1.praef.1) (Williams 2012:110).

⁸² Grant (2000:95) notes that in the tragedies Seneca portrays the heroic figures as “small when shown up against the backdrop of their geography.”

Similar instances appear elsewhere in the *NQ*. The language in this passage anticipates the language and expressions (underlined) of the political map of Sicily (4a.praef.21-22, trans. Hine 2014:57):

Hanc ego habeo sub meo iure prouinciam quae maximarum urbium exercitus et sustinuit et fregit, cum inter Carthaginem et Romam ingentis belli pretium iacuit; <quae> quattuor Romanorum principum, id est totius imperii, uires contractas in unum locum uidit aluitque; <quae> Pompeii fortunam erexit, Caesaris fatigauit, Lepidi transtulit, omnium cepit; quae illi ingenti spectaculo interfuit ex quo liquere mortalibus posset quam uelox foret ad imum lapsus e summo quamque diuersa uia magnam potentiam fortuna destrueret; uno enim tempore uidit Pompeium Lepidumque ex maximo fastigio aliter ad extrema deiectos, cum Pompeius alienum exercitum fugeret, Lepidus suum.

I have under my jurisdiction this province, which has both supported and crushed the armies of the most powerful cities, when it lay between Carthage and Rome as the prize in a great war; the province saw the forces of four Roman leaders, that is of the whole empire, brought together in one spot, and it fed them; it raised up Pompey's fortunes, exhausted Caesar's, handed over Lepidus's, and found room for all their fortunes; it witnessed that great spectacle from which mortals could see clearly how swift is the fall from highest to lowest, and by what varied means fortune destroys great power. For at one and the same time it saw Pompey and Lepidus cast down in different ways from the topmost pinnacle to the depths, when Pompey fled from someone else's army, Lepidus from his own.

Here Seneca is discussing a land mass, Sicily, but he is not mapping the physical world; he is mapping the world through mankind's actions, namely those of Pompey, Lepidus, and Caesar. Seneca is thus blurring maps, blurring the physical with the anthropological, the political with

the ethical (Manolaraki 2013:99). For when he talks about geographic space, Seneca does not talk about geographic material *per se*, but rather he talks about geography in terms of historical events, in terms of mankind.⁸³ Also notice what happens to people during these “mapping moments.” They fall from “high to low” (cf. 3.praef.8 *in summum . . . ad imum*,). In the Sicilian passage, Fortune destroys Pompey and Lepidus who are carried from the highest to the lowest (*ad imum . . . e summo* “to the lowest . . . from the highest”). While Sicily nourished armies, and raised, exhausted, and took in “all” (*omnium*) of their fortunes, and while it stood as a “great prize” (*ingentium pretium*) between Carthage and Rome, in the end it watched the “great spectacle” (*ingenti spectaculo*) of Fortune, with her “diverse ways” (*diuersa uia*) throwing down men “from the highest pinnacle” (*ex maximo*). The map then becomes associated with man’s failings.

The spatial language contrasts man and cosmic forces. This juxtaposition places man alongside forces outside his control, comparing him to Nature. Yet, within the scope of cosmic forces that completely wipe out the human race, man is relegated to an inferior position in the cosmos. While he may destroy and conquer nations’ armies, in reality he is destroyed by forces on a far larger scale (*omnium* “all,” *maximo* “greatest,” *ingenti* “great,” 4a.praef.21-22), and as seen from these excerpts, mapping mankind forces him to confront the limitations of his humanity and his own power.

⁸³ Manolaraki (2013:100) argues that Seneca’s main objective with this passage is to prioritize philosophy over history by demonstrating that he must remove Lucilius from the Sicilian landscape which is “so thickly inhabited by Roman historical constructs that it is impossible for him to purge it and to show Lucilius the island on its own geophysical (salutary) terms.”

III. Sense Perception and Imperial Discourse

In this section, I examine how Seneca links sensory mapping with imperial power. As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, maps are never neutral; they tacitly carry messages of power, enforcing and re-enforcing institutional perspectives, while they describe the world, they do “in terms of relations of power and of cultural practices, preferences, and priorities (Harley 1992:35). Maps serve to “maintain the status quo and the power of the state” (84), and through persuasive discourse perpetuate this power.⁸⁴

Ancient geographical lists, whether imagined (mythological) or real, for instance, lay out space but do so in ways that point to the powers of the state—Rome. Dueck (2012:10) makes a correlation between knowledge and territorial expansion in the ancient world. Expansion of territories by both Greeks and Romans, particularly in the first century CE, influenced the expansion of knowledge of the world: Ancient affairs of state had a close relationship with geography (*ibid.*). If the two cartographic passages (3.praef.5-6, 10; 1.praef.8-11.3) are reconsidered, it can be seen that Seneca embeds imperialism within a sensory map, as he describes visible manifestations of imperialism, and after doing so, notice how he tears down these notions of imperial power by juxtaposing the smallness of man’s power against the magnitude of Nature and her forces.

In his denigration of history at 3.praef.5-6, Seneca maps the world—through the actions of mankind; that is, his description of the men’s careers in this section is suggestive of a political

⁸⁴ As discussed in the Introduction of this dissertation, there remains little evidence to claim Romans had illustrated maps that displayed the limits and power of the empire; there is, however, sufficient and bountiful material evidence that depicts, through iconographies, Roman power (cf. Zanker 1987). Such an archaeological approach is beyond the scope and approach of this dissertation, but literary evidence that demonstrates Rome’s imperial strength and power through imagery and language cannot be dismissed (De Blois and Hekster 2002:viii).

map.⁸⁵ The language (military and political) combined with the construction of a political map is evocative of imperialism:⁸⁶ destroyed lands, people, wars, and enemies. Seneca unfolds before his reader a political map that views the world from a narrowed, anthropocentric perspective which illustrates imperialism, and also perpetuates materialism.⁸⁷ History, Seneca argues, transmits the deeds of foreign kings (*acta regum externorum*) and others' evils (*mala . . . aliena posteris tradere*)—men, like Alexander, Philip, and Hannibal, were made famous (*clari*⁸⁸) by destroying “people” (*populi, gentium*) and were no less disasters to mortals than a flood sweeping over all the plains or conflagration (3.praef.5.6-9): *qui exitio gentium clari non minores fuere pestes mortalium quam inundatio qua planum omne perfusum est, quam conflagratio qua magna pars animantium exaruit* (“ . . . who became famous by destroying nations and were no lesser disasters to mortals than a flood that has swept over all the plains, or a conflagration in which a large proportion of living things has gone up in flames!” trans. Hine 2014:26). Historians write about Philip or Alexander’s robberies, and about how Hannibal, after he overcame the Alps and waged war in Italy, wandered from kingdom to kingdom, offering himself as a general against the Romans, seeking an army, and looking well into his old age for war in every nook. At first glance, Seneca’s description *seems* to praise these men who were responsible for extension of their empires, waging wars and conquering lands and people. For example, he

⁸⁵ In the ancient geographical texts and illustrations politics and geography cannot be divorced from one another (Dueck 2012:16). See *The Representation and Perception of Roman Imperial Power* (2002) for a thorough investigation of the interplay between representation and power as seen from the archaeological record.

⁸⁶ This section reads like a political map in the sense that it describes man’s military and political deeds (Dueck 2012:18).

⁸⁷ Military powers increased their geographical knowledge not for the purpose of moral edification but for material gain (Dueck 2012:11).

⁸⁸ Note that *clari* can also mean “bright” (*OLD*) and is also connected with sense perception (cf. 3.praef.11. *ex claro sole*).

writes about Hannibal who overcame the Alps, a mountain range known for its exceptional height (cf. 4b.11.1), and how, like a traveler circumambulating the world, Hannibal moves effortlessly around the known world—Spain, Italy, Carthage, and every kingdom and corner.

But he is not. Rather, he challenges this narrowed, anthropocentric perspective. Seneca's description of the vastness of Nature's forces overshadows and obliterates (cf. 3.praef.7-10.2) these visible manifestations of imperialism—conquered lands and peoples and treasures. Mapped within the scope of the deluge⁸⁹ “sweeping over all” the plains (*omne perfusum*, 3.praef. 5.8) and the conflagration that destroys a “great portion” (*magna pars*) of living creatures—cosmic forces that completely wipe out the human race—these men are described as *non minores* (“no lesser”). Williams (2012:34) argues that, on the one hand, by comparison with the flood and conflagration these men's *acta* are aggrandized; on the other hand, these cosmic forces overwhelm them, and “whatever the extent of their conquests and the number of their victims, their exploits are nothing in comparison with the destruction perpetrated by cataclysm or conflagration.” Consider that Seneca does not describe these men as *magni* “great” or *omnes* “all encompassing,” but reserves these words for Nature. And while they destroy “peoples and nations” (*populi . . . gentium*), Nature destroys on a far greater scale—all living things (*mortalium . . . animantium* “living mortals”). He demonstrates Nature's power, and in a certain way the supremacy of philosophy over history: the diminishing effect of the cataclysm and conflagration “[counter] the historians' emphasis on significant *acta* with the cosmic insignificance of any Philip or Alexander” (Williams 2012:34, emphasis in original). He uses

⁸⁹ The deluge destroys man's infrastructures and power. See the next chapter in this dissertation for more on Nature destruction of man's power.

geographical knowledge, which in antiquity is connected to historical conquest, to correct immorality stemming from materialism.⁹⁰

I consider another example that demonstrates how Seneca challenges the traditional imperialist approach to geography. At 1.praef.9, Seneca lays out the boundaries of territories and peoples that lie outside Roman rule. Seneca demonstrates that it is not the empire which determines the boundaries but Nature: rivers (*Istrum, Euphrates, Rhenus*) mountains (*Haemo, Pyrenaeus*), and deserts (*harenarum inculta uastitas* “vast deserts of sands”), and not fire and sword (*ferro et igne diuiditur*, 1.praef.8.8)—tools of imperialism.⁹¹ Seneca’s panegyric to Nature challenges imperial texts (Augustus’ *Res Gestae*, for example) that praise territorial expansion and conquests by the empire (Dueck 2012:3).⁹²

Seneca further undercuts the imperial discourse by drawing upon Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis*, particularly *De Republica* 6.16.15-17: *Iam ipsa terra ita mihi parva visa est, ut me imperii nostri, quo quasi punctum eius attingimus, paeniteret* (“Already the earth itself appeared so small to me that it pained me to reflect on our empire that we touch just a mere point of it”). Like Scipio Aemilianus, the reader is pulled up to the heavens to survey the extent of the world. Yet, upon reaching this realm, he realizes that the world praised by famous men, like Scipio

⁹⁰ V.S. Tietze argues, in the essay “Seneca’s Tragic Description: a ‘Point of View,’” that passages loaded with geographical and physical terminology paint Nature as *inconstantia* to reflect the *inconstantia* of the characters (1988:44): “The infringement of nature, constituted by the moral imperfection of the characters concerned, is reflected in nature itself.” Even though the characters serve as “*exempla* of the *constantia*” (*ibid.*:42), geography remains *constantia* “for description and invective” and therefore geography constitutes virtue (Grant 2000:95).

⁹¹ Nature’s creation of her own boundaries and the destruction of man’s will be discussed in the next chapter.

⁹² In his analysis of this passage, Hine (2012:208 n.6) states that Seneca “speaks ironically, as though he is dictating where the boundaries should lie both between the Roman empire and its neighbors, and between provinces within the empire.” In his essay on geography in Seneca’s tragedies, Grant (2000) argues against Boyle (1997:62) who suggests that Seneca’s geographical boundaries reflect those of the Roman empire, and claims that Seneca “does not limit himself to lands under imperial rule. In fact, he does the complete opposite” (Grant 2000:92). Grant makes a convincing argument because, he continues, “if anything the geographical bounds threaten a traditional imperialistic approach by the sheer impossibility of their conquest” (*ibid.*).

Africanus, or even like those at 3.praef.5-6, is in fact a mere *punctum* when mapped against the cosmos. Note the cartographic language which is bolded below (1.praef.8.8, 10-11.3, trans. Hine 2014:137, 138):

[8] *Non potest ante contemnere porticus et lacunaria ebore fulgentia et tonsiles siluas et deriuata in domos flumina quam **totum** circumit **mundum** et, **terrarum orbem** superne despiciens **angustum** et **magna ex parte** opertum **mari**, etiam ea qua extat **late** squalidum et aut ustum aut rigentem, sibi ipse dixit: “Hoc est illud **punctum** quod inter tot gentes ferro et igne **diuiditur**?”*

[10] *Si quis formicis det intellectum hominis, nonne et illae unam **aream** in multas **prouincias** **diuident**? Cum te in illa uere **magna** sustuleris, quotiens uidebis exercitus subrectis ire uexillis et, quasi **magnum** aliquid agatur, equitem modo ulteriora explorantem, modo a lateribus affusum, libebit dicere:*

“it nigrum campis agmen.”

*Formicarum iste discursus est in **angusto** laborantium. Quid illis et nobis interest nisi **exigui mensura** corpusculi?” [11] **Punctum** est istud in quo nauigatis, in quo bellatis, in quo regnatis. †Ponitis **minima**, etiam cum illis utrimque **oceanus** occurrit.*

[8] The mind cannot despise colonnades, and ceilings gleaming with ivory, and topiary forests and rivers channeled into houses until it has toured the entire world and until, looking down from on high at the earth—tiny, predominantly covered by sea, and, even when it rises above it, mainly uncultivated, and either burnt or frozen—it has said to itself, “This is that pinprick that is carved up among so many nations by sword and fire!”

[10] If someone gave human intelligence to ants, will they too not divide a single threshing-floor into many provinces? Once you have ascended to those truly great regions, whenever you see armies marching with standards raised, and, as though something great were happening, cavalry now protecting the rear, now exploring ahead, now spread out on the flanks, you will want to say,

“The black column marches across the plain.” It is a mere scurrying of ants toiling in narrow confines. What difference is there between them and you apart from size of your puny bodies?
 [11] It is a mere pinprick on which you sail, on which you wage war, on which you lay out your kingdoms, minute even when the ocean breaks on either side of them.

The perspective of the cognitive map, which is that of “looking down from above” (*superne despiciens*), shrinks man, or rather, Rome’s world: Nature is big and expansive, and makes man feel small. The cognitive map distances the reader, and from what Gunderson (2015:76) terms “the ethical perspective” he learns “to see the nullity of the material world from the sublime and eternal perspective” which “is the sure seat from which the ethical observer looks out upon all.” The passage elevates Nature (*totum mundum* “whole world,” *magna ex parte, late, magna*), while subordinating imperialism (*angustum/o* “narrowness,” *punctum* “pinprick,” *quasi magnum aliquid* “as though something great will happen,” *exigui* “puny,” *minima* “smallest”). Imperialism (*nauigatis . . . bellatis . . . regnatis* “you sail . . . you wage war . . . you rule”) described as *minima* is compared with the *magna* of Nature, and the world which man tries in vain to control is considered a *punctum*. If the reader were to take a cognitive, theocentric view of the world, he would realize that, like ants “dividing a threshing floor” (*unam aream in multas prouincias diuident*, 1.praef.10.2-3) and “struggling within narrow confines” (*in angusto laborantium*), he fights over a mere “pinprick” (*punctum*).⁹³ From this perspective, he cannot even distinguish the standards and army ranks; they appear nothing more than a “black band

⁹³ Cf. *Ep.* 53.11 (*At mehercules magni artificis est cluisse totum in exiguo* “By Hercules, it the sign of a great artist to have enclosed the fullness [of something] to a small space!”).

marching across a plain” (*it nigrum campis agmen*⁹⁴). By comparing mankind to ants fighting over territory, Seneca criticizes imperialism effected by anthropocentrism. Man, who is small, often compares himself to the infinite cosmos, and Seneca likens man to one of the smallest of creatures, ants (*interest nisi exigui mensura corpusculi* “the difference between us and them [ants] is that they have tiny bodies”). The comparison between man’s smallness and Nature’s infinitude negates man’s perception, and challenges imperial discourse.

Seneca sets up and contrasts two types of people in these passages, the cosmic traveler and the conqueror, and it becomes the reader’s task to actively judge them.⁹⁵ The cosmic traveler strives to “seek the heights” (*petit altum*, 1.praef.7.3) rather than the conqueror who “seeks an army” (*petens exercitum*, 3.praef.6.6). And instead of wasting his life “searching for a war in every nook and cranny” (*omnibus angulis bellum senex quaerere*, 3.praef.6.7-8), “wandering the ocean to seek the unknown” (*errasse . . . ignota quaerentem*, 3.praef.) or other imperial pursuits (cf. 3.praef.10-11), the cosmic traveler wanders, in his *animus* (1.praef.8), “amongst the stars” (*inter ipsa sidera uagantem*, 1.praef.7.4) so that he, as a “curious spectator” (*curiosus spectator*, 1.praef.9), might seek what he has long “searched for” (*quaerit, quaerat*, 1.praef.12.10; *quaesiiuit*, 1.praef.13.7)—“to know god” (*deum nosse*, 1.praef.13.8). Victory comes through internal pursuits, which refine us, such as by “conquering one’s vices” (*uitia domuisse*,

⁹⁴ Seneca quotes Vergil (*Aeneid* 4.404) when Dido watches as Aeneas’ men prepare for their departure from Carthage. Seneca recasts the Vergilian quote in a moral light in an effort to extract some moral component from the text (Mazzoli 1970:218; Limburg 2007:285). Here, by likening men fighting over land to ants fighting over dirt, Seneca foregrounds man’s ridiculous preoccupation with determining boundaries, and urges his reader to see this by adopting a wider world perspective.

⁹⁵ Williams (2012:36) differentiates between Hannibal (*senex*) and the Stoic *sapiens* who is characterized by Seneca, “the other *senex*.” He claims (35):

. . . despite [Hannibal’s] persistence (*pertinax*) amid his oscillating fortunes and prolonged wanderings, Hannibal hardly resembles the Stoic *sapiens*, for whom “every place is his homeland” (*Dial.* 12.9.7); by contrast, the Carthaginian tellingly “puts up with” (cf. *pati*) his own loss of *patria*. The *sapiens* roams free in his cosmic mind travels.

3.praef.11.10.8). These passages question man's perceived control within the cosmos. While man believes he occupies a significant position in the cosmos, reality dictates otherwise. The boundaries of perception, like the boundaries of a mirror (cf. 1.3.6.6), narrow man's perception and inhibit him from seeing the entirety of the world working *in toto*. In his limitations, he errs and mistakes reality, distorting the world, like mirrors distort reality (cf. 1.5.14.1-8; 1.15.8). And so, he traverses the earth (*circumit mundum*) with these distorted perceptions, and attempts to control and confine Nature within *his* boundaries and definitions.

Cartographic representations built solely upon sense perception serve as a means of control; the immeasurable cosmos is scaled down to a viewable image. With these controlled perspectives of the world, authorities can attempt to control and order not only physical space but also others' perspectives of it. In other words, cartographic representations impose an act of control over the representation of the world. By mapping Nature from his perspective, man puts it in boundaries—manipulating it, placing the world on a grid, and claiming territories—and he believes that he possesses mastery over it. And these images, such as maps with depictions of conquered, controlled lands, which are forms of knowledge, convey messages of power.⁹⁶ Yet, as will be apparent in the next chapter, the laws of Nature elude man (cf. *Ergo concedas oportet ex his quoque quae sensum quidem effugiunt, ceterum ratione prenduntur*, 2.2.3-7-8 “So you must agree that in the case of things that elude our senses but are grasped by reason . . .” trans. Hine 2014:164). To challenge the dangers of sense perception and its effects on man's perspective of

⁹⁶ Examples from the archaeological record that represent Rome's imperial project include Agrippa's map. Though no longer extant, the map, according to Pliny (*Natural Histories* 3.16-17), was an actual map (*spectandum* “for the purpose of looking at”) and must have included a list of land and sea measurements (Nicolet 1991:109-10, 171). Augustus' *Res Gestae* (§25-33, especially), which was displayed throughout the empire, enumerated the vast amounts of peoples and lands under his subjugation. See Dilke (1985) for a survey of Greek and Roman maps, itineraries, and land surveys. On the political implications of spatial representations during the early empire, see Nicolet (1991). In the *NQ* Seneca engages with this imperial mindset that seeks to conquer all with one's armies and victories (3.praef.10; cf. 5.18) instead “seeing all with one's mind” (3.praef.11).

himself and his power, every individual must observe and seek to understand the messages written by divinity into natural phenomena, and it becomes that individual's life and work to submit to, not control, them (Cosgrove 1998 [1984]:232). Upon gazing up at the sublime whose ordered nature speaks to the divine's power and influence in the world (*ibid.*), man learns how puny everything, including himself, is (1.praef.17.4-5): *Si nil aliud, hoc certe: sciam omnia angusta esse mensus deum* ("If nothing else, at least this: I shall know that everything is puny when I have measured god," trans. Hine 2014:139).

IV. Case Study

In the previous sections, I have laid out the foundations and techniques of Seneca's argument—how he posits two ways of viewing the world (sense perception and cognitive). Now, I examine an example in greater detail. This case study focuses on 4b.11, a passage that is dense with cartographic language and that exemplifies how Seneca uses cognitive mapping to challenge the imperial discourse embedded within a narrowed worldview (sense perception).

At 4b.11 Seneca departs from his discussion on celestial water to argue against those who claim that mountain tops should be warmer because they are closer to the sun. Seneca, like a cartographer, creates a map of the world, laying out the physical features—fields, valleys, mountains, and even the heavens. Note the spatial language in the text, bolded (4b.11, trans. Hine 2014:69):

[1] *Contra quidam aiunt **cacumina montium** hoc calidiora esse debere quo **propiora** soli sunt. Qui mihi uidentur errare quod Apenninum et Alpes et alios notos ob **eximiam altitudinem montes** in tantum putant **crescere** ut illorum **magnitudo** sentire solis **uiciniam** possit.* [2] *Excelsa sunt ista, quamdiu nobis comparantur; at uero, ubi **ad uniuersum** respexeris, manifesta est omnium*

*humilitas; inter se uincuntur et uincunt. Ceterum in tantum nihil attollitur ut in collatione totius ulla sit uel **maximis portio**. Quod nisi esset, non diceremus **totum orbem terrarum** pilam esse. [3] Pilae proprietas est cum **aequalitate** quadam **rotunditas**; **aequalitatem** autem hanc accipe quam uides in lusoria pila; **non multum** illi commissurae et **rimae** earum nocent quo **minus par** sibi ab **omni parte** dicatur. Quomodo in hac pila nihil illa **interualla** officiunt ad speciem rotundi, sic ne in **uniuerso** quidem **orbe terrarum** editi montes, quorum **altitudo totius mundi collatione** consumitur. [4] Qui dicit **altiozem** montem, quia solem **propius** excipiat, magis calere debere, idem dicere potest **longiorem** hominem citius quam **pusillum** debere calefieri et caput citius quam pedes. At quisquis mundum **mensura** sua **aestimauerit** et terram **cogitauerit** tenere **puncti locum**, intellet nihil in illa posse ita eminere ut caelestia magis sentiat, uelut in **propinquum** illis accesserit. [5] Montes isti quos suspicimus et **uertices** aeterna niue obsessi nihilominus **in imo** sunt; et **propius** quidem est a sole mons quam **campus** aut **uallis**, sed sic quomodo est pilus pilo crassior. Isto enim modo et arbor alia magis quam alia dicetur **uicina** caelo. Quod est falsum, quia inter **pusilla** non potest **magnum** esse **discrimen**, nisi dum inter se comparantur. Vbi ad **collationem immensi** corporis uentum est, nihil interest quanto sit alterum altero **maius**, quia, etiamsi **magno discrimine**, tamen **minima** uincuntur.*

[1] Against this, some people say that mountain tops ought to be warmer, the closer they are to the sun. They seem to me to be mistaken in [reckoning] that the Apennines and the Alps, and other mountains famous for their exceptional height, rise so high that their size can feel the closeness of the sun. [2] They are high so long as they are being compared with us; but when you look at the universe, the modest height of all of them is evident. They are outdone by, or outdo, each other, but none rises high enough for even the greatest of them to have any significance in comparison to the whole universe. If this were not so, we would not say that the whole earth is a ball. [3] The properties of a ball are roundness and a degree of evenness. You must realize that this is the evenness you see in balls used in games: the seams and the cracks do not really prevent them from being described as equal in every direction. Just as in this kind of ball those gaps are no obstacle to its appearing round, in the same way lofty mountains are no obstacle in the case of the whole earth either; their height is swallowed up in a comparison with the whole world. [4] Anyone who says

that a higher mountain, because it receives the sun's rays from a closer position, ought to be warmer, may as well say that a taller person ought to be warmed more quickly than a tiny person, and the head more quickly than the feet. But anyone who measures the world on its own scale, and considers that the earth occupies just a pinprick, will realize that nothing can project far enough from the earth to feel the influence of the heavens more strongly, as though it had got closer to them. [5] Those mountains that we look up at, and those peaks covered with perpetual snow are nevertheless at the bottom; a mountain is closer to the sun than a plain or valley, but in the same way as one hair is thicker than another. On that basis, one tree will also be said to be closer to the heavens than another; which is false, since there cannot be a big difference between tiny things, except in comparison with each other. When it comes to comparison with an enormous body, it makes no difference how much bigger one is than the other, because even if the difference is great, still minimal things are being outdone <by other minimal things>.

Its language is suggestive of a map (*in collatione* “in comparison” lit. “collection,” *aequilitate/em* “equal,” *mensura sua* “its own scale,” *aestimaverit* “he would estimate,” *ad collationem* “in comparison,” *discrimen/-imine* “boundary”), and posits two perspectives—one false (*errare* “to be wrong,” *falsum* “false”), the other true (*at uero*⁹⁷ “but in truth”). The first maps the world from an anthropocentric perspective, the other theocentric. The one concerns sense perception, the other cognition. By contrasting the two, Seneca subordinates the one, while elevating the other.

I first consider how he maps the world according to sense perception. Note the language tied to sense perception: *uidentur* (“seems”), *putant* (“reckons”⁹⁸), *sentire* (“to feel”), *calere* (“to be warm”), *calefieri* (“to become hot”), *sentiat* (“feels”), *suspiciamus* (“we look at”). These words

⁹⁷ Here, *at uero* marks the beginning of the truth, and denotes a change in the tone of the argument.

⁹⁸ While Hine (2014) translates *putant* as “thinking,” I have decided to deviate from his translation as “thinking” implies cognition. The sentence, however, is basing their theory upon sense perception. Therefore, I have translated *putant* as “reckoning” because they are evaluating or even esteeming the mountains to be a certain height.

express how “some people” (*quidam*) view the world from a purely empirical (sense perception) perspective, and in doing so, they map the world according to spatial relationships that are visual (*propiora* “nearer,” *uiciniam* “nearness,” *uicinam/a* “near,” *speciem* “appearance,” *altiolem* “higher,” *propius* “closer,” *longiorem* “longer,” *propinquum* “near,” *crassior* “denser”). Perception becomes the tool with which they map the world. For example, men “believe” (*putant*) that mountains can “feel” (*sentire*) the heat of the sun because of their “closeness” (*uiciniam*) to it. Their theory is derived from observation. From their perspective, these mountains appear closer to the sun and therefore must be warmer; the mountains derive their greatness and fame (*notos* “known,” *magnitudo* “magnitude,” *excelsa* “height”) from mankind’s lowliness (cf. *magnitudo* “magnitude,” *ex humilitate* “from our smallness,” 3.praef. 10), from his narrowed, anthropocentric perspective that maps the world according to man (*nobis comparantur* “when compared to us”).

Yet, Seneca criticizes this narrow worldview, and maps the world according to reason. The phrase *at uero* marks a change in the text, from sense perception to cognition. Note his use of cognitive language: *respexeris*⁹⁹ “considers” *intelleget* “understands,” *aestimauerit* “values,” *cogitauerit* “thinks.” Seneca emphasizes the cognitive in order to undercut the sense perception worldview by mapping it against Nature’s immensity and unboundedness (*ad uniuersum* “at the universe” or “whole,” *maximis* “greatest,” *totum* “whole,” *immensi* “immense,” *in uniuerso* “in the universe” or “whole,” *totius* “whole,” *aeterna* “eternal”). Nature is described as *totum* and

⁹⁹ Though *respexeris* suggests perception (looking), it also implies investigating, rethinking. While Seneca is a Stoic, he is not completely hostile to sense perception. Investigating requires both sense perception and reason, the problem lies, however, in the over-dependence of sense perception (Volk 2013:114): “Seeing the universe is not enough: in order to properly comprehend it, we must learn to use more than our eyes.”

uniuersum, while *humilitas* “smallness,” *puncti locum* “pinprick,” and *minima* “smallest” are reserved for man’s world.¹⁰⁰

Also observe the contrast between parts and wholes (*omnium humilitas* “modest [height] of all,” *maximis portio* “portion for the greatest,” *in collatione totius* “in comparison with the whole”).¹⁰¹ The parts of the world are consumed by the totality of the universe, and diminish man and his worldview: humans are considered parts, not the whole, of the cosmos (Vogt 2008). Nature’s magnitude, viewed *in toto*, completely “consumes” (*consumitur*) man’s perceived greatness. Furthermore, he analogizes a ball to the earth, claiming that mountains and valleys, when viewed from a theocentric view, are similar to a ball’s “creases and ridges” (*commissurae et rimae*). World domination is “trivial” (*pusillum*), like a child playing with a “ball” (*lusoria pila*). The world is man’s playground—a world that is *puncti locum*, a mere “pinprick,” when “compared to the entire universe” (*in collatione totius*). It is important to note here how Seneca uses the same words and expressions from other cartographic passages at 4b.11. For example, as previously discussed, the phrase *puncti locum* alludes to *De Republica* and points to a critique of imperialism (cf. *punctum*, *minima* 1.praef.11).

When the world is “measured on its own scale” (*mensura sua*¹⁰²), its vastness and man’s weakness are illuminated. His puny existence is completely swallowed up by the whole world. Cognitive cartography urges man to imagine the world from god’s perspective, a perspective

¹⁰⁰ In addition, it should be noted the ease with which these mountains *notos ob eximiam altitudinem* (“known for their exceptional altitude” are written off by Seneca; in one “breath,” he passes over them, while lingering upon the vastness of the cosmos. He gathers the mountains into a geographical list (*in collatione* “in comparison” lit. “taken together”)—*Apenninum et Alpes et alios notos* (“the Apennines and the Alps and the other famous [mountains]”—and they are consumed by the totality of the universe).

¹⁰¹ Also notice how the genitive does this too. It implies possession by the whole over the part.

¹⁰² The insertion of *sua* is significant because it emphasizes that it is Nature who determines the measurement of things.

unhindered by sense perception.¹⁰³ He marvels at the amazing heights of mountains, but when mapped in relation to and compared to the entire cosmos, the world is a pinprick. And so, he, because of his limitations, must use more than sense perception to see the *in toto* world. Seneca fosters his reader's experience¹⁰⁴ through everyday analogies¹⁰⁵ (tree or ball), since he is aware of the limitations that sense perception has on human experience. Because of this, Seneca elevates cognition over sense perception.

V. Conclusion

In the end, the construction of both sense perception and cognitive maps serves as a tool which the reader, on his philosophical journey,¹⁰⁶ can use to think about the world. The reader, along with his guide (Seneca), "travel" the world, using both sense perception and reason (cognition) to view the world, and at the end of the cosmic journey, the reader gains wisdom not only about the world but also about himself: Knowledge of self is closely linked to knowledge of place (*in quo rerum statu simus*, 7.2.3.7 "so that we know our own situation," trans. Hine 2014:116).

¹⁰³ The language and imagery described in 4b.11 echo those found at 3.28.5.1-12. Man's perspective (*videntur* "seems," *sentire* "to feel," *respexeris* "you look at," 4b.11.1-3; *intuentem* "looking," *videtur* "seems," *apparet* "appears," 3.28.5) is "flawed" (*falsum*, 4b.5.7; *fallunt*, 3.28.5.8). Man looks at a surge rising to "amazing heights" (*in miram altitudinem*, 3.28.5) or at the Alps or Apennine Mountains (*notos ob eximiam altitudinem* "known for their exceptional altitude," 4b.11.1), but when "measured" (*perlibret*) in comparison to the entire cosmos and god (*excelsa* "heights," 3.28.5; cf. 4b.11.1), the world is shrunk, and the "seas" (*maria*), "fissures" (*caua*), and "plains" (*plana*) are equal on all sides (*rotundum orbis aequatus* . . . *in unius aequalitatem pilae* "it becomes equal to the curved surface of a sphere . . . [they come together to create] a likeness of one globe [literally, ball]").

¹⁰⁴ Experience is directly linked to space, to sense perception and interaction with the world. Through experience man learns by stepping forth into the unfamiliar and transforming the unknown into the known (Tuan 1977:9). Yet, his human form limits him, and he must use more than sense perception as a way of thinking about the world.

¹⁰⁵ These analogies, Dueck argues (2012:83), are an important feature of ancient geography because it allowed the reader to comprehend and compare the spatial details with these shapes.

¹⁰⁶ Lavery (1980:154) terms this philosophical journeying "mental travel." The imagery of "mental travel," Lavery notes, is something about which Seneca speaks enthusiastically, particularly Cf. *Ep.* 65.16-17.

To contemplate both perceptible and imperceptible things is to contemplate the perceptibility of the body and the imperceptibility of the *animus*—the divinely inspired part of man that releases him from the constraints of a clouded, distorted perspective and the issues associated with it. Man aspires to such wisdom, to gain knowledge through the contemplation of Nature because the pursuit in itself refines him: “Natural questions are self-interested for the soul” Gunderson (2015:68). He “conquers his faults” (*uitia domuisse*, 3.praef.10.8), and rises above human affairs. The pursuit exercises the divine capacity—the *animus*—so that he might uncover the truth about the cosmos, and essentially his *true* place within it—*ex humilitate* (3.praef.10).

The cartographic techniques used by Seneca allows the reader to distance himself from a narrow, anthropocentric worldview. He learns how his human status limits and faults his perspective: perspective of both the world and self is conditioned by human limitations—sense perception. How man represents this perspective, whether through artistic or literary media, is greatly influenced by such thinking. For example, if he believes, through empirical observation, that mankind is the center of the cosmos, then he believes that he, as a human being, must occupy an important place within the cosmos. Perspective becomes about power and control, and knowledge becomes linked to faculties of sense perception which creates this worldview.

Through the implementation of cognitive cartography, the reader learns that knowledge is gained through individual observation into natural processes, as opposed to relying upon knowledge which is subjected to the perspective and authority of others. Seneca’s cartographic rhetoric forces the reader to reflect inwardly on his own misperception of himself and his place within the order of things, and, on a macrocosmic scale, it challenges imperial expansion and

colonization. When mapped against the vastness of the world, Rome and her imperial project shrink down to a pinprick, and all of man's achievements pale in comparison with achieving the highest virtue (*in consortium deo ueniat*, 1.praef.6.12-13 "to enter into partnership with god").

Chapter 2: *O Quam Ridiculi Sunt Mortalium Termini!*

Boundaries take many forms and serve as a way for mankind to make sense of the world and his surroundings; by placing things, peoples, and resources into categories, he creates the illusion of reality and control. Boundaries drawn on a political map, for example, are markers that divide territories and regions and mark off this from that. No boundaries were more important than those that marked territories and regions in the Roman empire (Campbell 2010:62). The *oikoumene*, as Strabo defined it, defined the limits of the “known world,” that is the world occupied by “civilized” peoples.¹ The demarcation and division of geographic space was an important part of ancient land management: laws, treatises, and offices developed to oversee the distribution and management of physical space.² For example, *ensores* (“measurers”) were responsible for the surveying and measuring of land, and certain *leges* (“laws”) were given to colonies or *municipia* (“towns”) for the distribution of land and for the demarcation of boundaries (Nicolet 1991:152ff). For the ancients, especially the Romans, the demarcation and representation of space (and natural resources) was essential in maintaining and asserting control by imposing boundaries.³

In the *NQ* Seneca is concerned with boundaries—with creating them and then destroying them. And he foregrounds the concept of doubling⁴ boundary-language in order to blur boundaries between the natural and human worlds. By blurring the two, he elevates Nature over

¹This word is not attributed to Strabo, but first appears in Herodotus (Romm 1992:37).

²Consider, for example, *centuriation*, a technique used by the Romans to measure and lay out land (Nicolet 1991:155ff).

³See also Piccaluga (1974) for a discussion on the Roman god Terminus. Nicolet (1991) and Campbell (2010).

⁴By “doubling,” I mean that a word has two different meanings. For example, Seneca uses the boundary-word *finis* (“boundary” or “end”) to refer to the physical world (cf. 3.27.10) and to mankind (cf. 6.32.8, here referring to death).

humans: Nature's imposition of boundaries over the world and man diminishes man's boundaries which, I argue, correspond to the boundaries of perception that limit man's abilities to see the entire universe. In other words, man puts Nature within boundaries, definitions, and classifications that are based on his perception, but because he is in fact limited by the narrowness of sense perception and views the world from a small place in the world (cf. 3.praef. 10 *ex humilitate nostra* "because of our smallness"), he misperceives and miscalculates Nature's magnitude and inability to be confined. The boundary-language limits the physical world, and also magnifies Nature's inability to be confined both by and impose *her own* boundaries on her forces and mankind.

In this chapter I examine a few of these instances of Nature allowing her forces to exceed their limits in order to put mankind in his place. I look at Nature in the form of water, earth, wind, and the Nile, and how they destroy, violate, and defy boundaries. These natural phenomena exhibit Nature's power over mankind and, as discussed in the final section, hereby destroy mankind and Rome's overinflated self-perspective. The title of this chapter, then, *O quam ridiculi sunt mortalium termini!*⁵ (1.praef.9.2. "How ridiculous are the boundaries of mortals!") highlights the ridiculousness of mankind's efforts to control Nature, and emphasizes his powerlessness over her, his inability to confine her into his physical, definitional, and temporal boundaries.

⁵At 1.praef.6-11, Seneca remarks on the ridiculousness of man to obsess over wealth and attempt to control Nature, and states that the *animus* seeks freedom and partnership with god in the "celestial region" (*caelestia*) where it can look down and despise wealth and laugh at man's efforts to carve up a mere pinprick (that is, the earth).

I. Destroying Boundaries

This section focuses on how Nature destroys boundaries through water, particularly in Book 3. Water, because of its mutability⁶—its ability to penetrate, cross, and exceed boundaries—becomes the means with which Seneca destroys boundaries after he has mapped them onto the world. The boundary-language connotes destruction, yet it is the destruction of mankind, his end, that is carried out by Nature (3.28.7.4; §29.5): *Vtrumque fit, cum deo uisum ordiri meliora, uetera finiri* (“Both events⁷ occur when god has decided to inaugurate a better world and to end the old, trans. Hine 2014:49); *terminus rebus humanis* (“the end of human affairs”). The determination of boundaries and limits translates to mankind’s termination—the termination of his perceived influence in and power over a worldview built upon perception. This leads to a consideration of Seneca’s philosophical objectives: how Nature’s destruction of boundaries affects mankind. Man, in his limitations, misperceives his power and existence which leads to immorality (*luxuria* “luxury,” particularly in Book 3), but Nature (in the form of the flood) destroys man’s self-important perspective and reminds him of his smallness (cf. 3.praef.10). In this section I first establish Seneca’s boundary-language in order to show how Nature destroys boundaries. Then I explore the philosophical implications of this destruction of boundaries and its effects on mankind.

Consider how Seneca maps physical boundaries and then destroys them. He deviates from his discussion on terrestrial waters to recount the world’s destruction and regeneration through a large flood (§27-30). He confines the physical world between depths and heights (*in*

⁶Seneca describes water as mutable; its character is such that it can change and conform to different states (cf. §10, §20). In fact, all the elements are mutable and can be replenished; water, however, is unique in that it, along with fire, is the starting-point of creation (§12, §22), and here, in Book 3, it is the end-point of world.

⁷The *utrumque* here refers to both the flood and conflagration.

profundo . . . *altitudo*, §27.11 “in the deep . . . the depth; *ex imo* . . . *supra*, §28.3, 6 “from the depths . . . above”), and then has water surmount these boundaries⁸ by exceeding its own physical limits: heights⁹ are overtaken, and depths¹⁰ penetrated by water. Rain, for example, falls without restraint (*non esse modum*, §28.2 “there is no limit”) and beyond its normal limits (*immodici*, §27.4 “limitless”), and it penetrates the depths (*radicibus*, §27.5 “ground”; *fundamenta*,¹¹ §27.6 “foundations”) and the heights (*altissimis*, §27.7 “highest”) of the world; and even the earth’s very foundation, a boundary, disintegrates (*desidunt*, §27.6 “they sink”). Rivers, too, burst their riverbanks (*alveos reliquerunt*, §27.8 “they leave their riverbanks”) and propel their “wide-spreading” waters (*latissimas*, §27.9) as if passing through a “narrow channel” (*angustum*, §27.9). And the sea rendered too “small” (*angustum*, §27.10) for itself is no longer confined within its boundaries (*nec continetur suis finibus*, §27.10 “they are not contained within their boundaries”). Waves rise “beyond their furthest point” (*ultra extremum*, §28.3) and tides, racing from the depths of the sea (*ex imo recessu maris*, §27.3 “from the deepest recesses of the sea”) to the summits of mountains (*supra cacumina*, §28.6 “above the summits”), advance

⁸Note how the boundary-language (bolded) is destroyed: *nec continetur suis **finibus***, §27.10 (“[The sea] is not contained within its boundaries”); ***finis** suos transeat*, §30.2 (“[how the tide] crosses its boundaries”); *eruendi **finis** aliquando est*, (§30.3) (“the digging is not halted”); *tam **incontinens**, tam contumax infestumque **retinentibus** quam magna uis undae*, §30.6 (“[nothing] is so lacking in self-control, so defiant and hostile to its constraints, as a great mass of water, trans. Hine 2014:52).

⁹*Altitudo* (“height”), *summis* (“summits”), *excelsissima* (“highest”), *editissimis*, §27.11 (“highest”); *editissimis*, §27.12 (“highest”).

¹⁰*In imum*, §27.6 (“to their [buildings’] base”); *profundo*, §27.11 (“in the deep”).

¹¹Note the root *fund-* refers to depth.

“without limit” (*sine modo*, §28.7). The world is completely swallowed up (*abscondi*, §28.3.1 “to be covered”), and Nature, in her unboundedness, obliterates limits and boundaries.¹²

Nature even dissolves the confines of the *NQ* itself as floodwaters spill over into 4a and a discussion of the Nile there. Seneca directs his reader’s attention from the *angustiae* of a self-important perspective, as exemplified by Lucilius’ preoccupation with his affairs in Sicily (4a.praef.), to the liberating, broader perspective of “seeing all” (cf. 3.praef.11) that is exemplified during both the cataclysm and Seneca’s “Nilescape.”¹³ Consider how the Nile’s behavior is such that it destroys boundaries: towards the beginning of its journey, the Nile’s nature is described as “wandering” (*peruagatus, vago, errante* 4a.2.3) and widespread (*diffusus* “spread out,” *sparsus* “dispersed,” *extenditur*, “it is spread out,” 4a.2.3), and it “breaks” (*frangitur*, 4a.2.5) through rocks after “having struggled through narrows” (*angusta luctatus*, 4a.2.5) encircles land (*cingitur* “it is surrounded,” *complectitur* “it is embraced,”

¹² Geographers and surveyors often used water sources (rivers, for example) as a means to define space and measure boundaries; also riverine descriptions illustrated the relationship between water and communities—Nature and mankind. Campbell (2012), in his study on rivers in the ancient world, discusses the importance of rivers not only for natural resources but also for political power. Rivers, he claims, were at the heart of community life, protecting and keeping communities apart and also connecting locations and regions. Hence, Roman interests in consciously seeking mastery and control of water in some way, for example, aqueducts (*ibid.*:30).

¹³ Williams (2012:116) notes that Seneca shifts the reader’s perspective by suddenly transporting the reader in the *NQ* from one place to another, from the local to the cosmic, from limiting to the liberating. He refers to the shift from the flood at the end of 3 and the moral preface of 4a as the “missing link,” and argues that Lucilius’ preoccupation with his business affairs in Sicily obscures the “primary cosmic vision” that is referenced at 3.praef. 11.

amplexus “encircled,” 4a.2.2-3) and breaks up.¹⁴ Thus, the “cosmic tour the Nile” and the cataclysm allow the reader to break free from a limited worldview and rise above the *angustiae* of sense perception (Williams 2012:116). By contemplating Nature’s marvels, the reader adopts a sense of self-perspective as opposed to self-importance (Scott 1999:63).

Returning to the deluge passage, I draw attention to Nature’s destruction of this self-important, anthropocentric perspective.¹⁵ Water’s dissolution of boundaries extends to man-made boundaries which are surmounted, completely rooted out from their bases, and toppled from their pinnacles: during the deluge buildings, from their “roofs” (*tecta*, §27.6) to their “foundations” (*inimum...fundamenta*, §27.6), are penetrated by floodwaters, and cities, with their people confined “within walls” (*moenibus*, §27.7), are swept away. The flood, as it “passes through” (*in transitu*, §27.7), even mixes masters with animals (*intermixtos*, §27.7 “intermingled”), thereby blurring distinctions between man and animal. The “safe refuges of mankind” (*illis tutis hominum receptaculis*, §28.4) are overcome by the sea rising above to an amazing height (*in miram altitudinem erigitur . . . superest*, §28.4 “it rises to an amazing height . . . it overcomes”). Nature even obliterates the myths associated with and names assigned

¹⁴ 4a.2.11, trans. Hine (2014:60): *Illa facies pulcherrima est cum iam se in agros Nilus ingessit: latent campi opertaeque sunt ualles, oppida insularum modo extant, nullum mediterraneis nisi per nauigia commercium est maiorque est laetitia gentibus quo minus terrarum suarum uident* “It is the most beautiful sight once the Nile has poured across the fields. The plains are hidden, the valleys are covered, and the towns stand out like islands. There are no communications between the people living inland except by boat, and the less people see of their land, the more delighted they are.” Though humanity may attempt to control Nature, she proves them wrong as supported by the similarities between this passage and the deluge episode at the end of Book 3 (§27.11, 13-14, *commercium* “communication,” *insularum* “islands,” *latet* “is hidden,” *campos* “fields”). Nature can dissolve the boundaries of man and the futility of man’s efforts to place Nature within his boundaries. The Nile provides life and delights people, while the other does not (cf. §27.11.5, 12.2 *miseros . . . adhaerebant reliquiae generis humani* “miserable [humans] . . . the rest of humanity was clinging”). For a more in-depth comparison, see Waiblinger (1977:55-58) and Schonbrger (1990:212).

¹⁵ Inwood (2002:170) notes the anthropocentric point of view of the flood, in that Nature assaults “us” (that, is mankind), but Williams (2012:113) presses the issue even more by stating that the passage reveals the opposite tendency, that the flood “sweeps away humankind and all the trappings of organized society with a simple, brief flexing of cosmic muscle.”

to geographic features,¹⁶ which man uses to demarcate, divide, and possess¹⁷ as exemplified in the following passage (§29.7-8, trans. Hine 2014:50-51):

Peribunt tot nomina, Caspium et Rubrum mare, Ambracii et Cretici sinus, Propontis et Pontus; peribit omne discrimen; confundetur quicquid in suas partes natura digessit. Non muri quemquam, non turres tuebuntur. Non proderunt templa supplicibus nec urbium summa, quippe fugientes unda praeueniet et ex ipsis arcibus deferet.

So many famous names disappear, the Caspian and Red seas, the Ambracian and Cretan gulfs, the Propontis and the Black Sea, when that deluge spreads a single sea over everything. All distinctions will disappear; everything that has its own place assigned by nature will be mixed together. No one will be protected by city walls or by towers. Temples will be no use to worshippers, nor the highest points of cities, for the wave will overtake them as they flee and pull them down even from the citadels.

Note how Seneca describes names and distinctions as “entire” or “all” (*tot, omne*). While these terms emphasize the totalizing nature of boundaries, they are dwarfed by Nature’s supremacy (*praeueniet* “it will overtake”¹⁸). The positioning of the geographical list between *peribunt* (“they will destroy”) and *peribit* (“it will destroy”), terms referring to the flood’s destructive power,¹⁹ is

¹⁶ §29.7: *Nihil erunt Adria, nihil Siculi aequoris fauces, nihil Charybdis, nihil Scylla; omnes nouum mare fabulas obruet et hic qui terras cingit oceanus extrema sortitus ueniet in medium* (“The Adriatic will be no more, nor the straits of the Sicilian sea, nor Charybdis, nor Scylla. The new sea will overwhelm all those myths, and the ocean that now encircles the land, assigned to its outer edges, will reach the center,” trans. Hine 2014:50).

¹⁷ Geographers used rivers as a way to measure distance and define space over a wide area that was often linked to regions within the empire; major rivers were useful in “demarcating the location of the huge territory now brought within the reach of the Mediterranean world” (Campbell 2012:55). According to Pliny, Rome sought to divide the empire into regions and sectors that suited its own interests (*Natural History*, 7.12); also see Murphy (2003:313ff) for a discussion about Pliny’s riverine descriptions and their relation to the Roman government.

¹⁸ Note that this term can mean to be elevated or superior; *OLD* s.v. “praeuenio.”

¹⁹ *Pereo* also means “to disappear.” *OLD* s.v. “pereo.”

suggestive of Nature's ability to bury mankind along with his various distinctions and boundaries (*summa* "summits;" *arcibus* "heights").²⁰ The passage points to Nature's authority: her destruction (*peribunt* "will destroy," *peribit* "will destroy," *confundetur* "will be confounded") and creation of boundaries (*in suas partes...digessit* "it has divided into parts").

Also consider what happens to law and land during the cataclysm. When discussing the flood, Seneca uses legalistic language to describe Nature, not mankind. Nature lords over the world and her own forces²¹: she commands²² her forces to exceed "normal limits" (*ad mensuram*, §28.6). And though Nature has imparted freedom to her forces to break boundaries, they do so within the constraints of her laws.²³ Nature's laws undercut man's laws, as man himself is held within Nature's laws, and the boundaries that separate and mark out man's boundaries are completely destroyed by the flood. Nature, not man, is the antagonizing force that repositions boundaries and enforces laws on mankind. While it is Nature that attacks the physical world,²⁴ in reality Nature is declaring war on mankind (*omnia uno agmine ad exitium humani generis incumbant*, §27.1 "does everything attack en masse to destroy the human race?" trans. Hine 2014:44).

²⁰ Hutchinson (1993:130) observes that Seneca reduces man to a "stupefied spectator." There is an element of control by the "scientific eye" as it imposes control over terrestrial waters (classification, definitions, taste, touch, and other sense-perception traits), but during the flood all of that—distinctions, tastes, and colors—is destroyed.

²¹ Note the language associated with Nature and her authority: *auctus*, *auctum*, §27.7, 10 ("authority"); *Aqua et ignis terrenis dominantur* "Water and fire lord it over terrestrial things" (§28.7, trans. Hine 2014:49).

²² *iura naturae*, §16 ("Nature's laws"); *iubente naturae*, §30.6 ("under Nature's command"); *solutus legibus*, §28.7.2 ("unbound by laws").

²³ §30.6, 7: Nature (*iubente natura* "under Nature's command") grants some freedom (*libertate permissa* "with freedom granted") to her forces to carry out the world's destruction. They will not enjoy this license (*licentia* "license") forever; once the human race has been destroyed (*peracto exitio generis humani* "when mankind has been destroyed"), the earth will reabsorb the waters and the sea will return to its boundaries (*intra terminos suos* "within its own boundaries").

²⁴ *obsidentur*, §27.11 ("will be besieged"); *pugna*, §30.2 ("fight"); *uincet*, §30.4 ("will conquer").

Now that I have established how Nature, through water, destroys boundaries, I turn to Seneca's philosophical objective, that is, how the destruction of boundaries affects mankind, in particular how it demonstrates the faultiness of sense perception and sensory thinking. In this section I argue that physical boundaries and limits correspond to the boundaries and limits of human perception. Like the world, mankind is subject to limitations.²⁵ And while it is possible to conclude that Nature's destruction of boundaries highlights her power over mankind, I would be remiss if I left it at that; and so when these passages (§27-30) are re-examined, the boundary-language appears connected with the language of viewership. Hence, during the flood man is bewildered because his perception of the world diminishes; the perceived "heights" (*summis, excelsissima, excelsa, editissimis*, §27.11), for example, which he "clings to" (*adhaerebant*, §27.12) for safety and solace are swept away. In other words, the world which man perceives as stable and incapable of destruction is in fact mortal (§29.2, 5), and easily overcome. Seneca challenges this sensory perspective at §28.4-5 when he surveys the sea and land levels²⁶ and notes that water can easily rise above these heights because "the seas are level with the land." It is the deceptiveness of eyesight that causes man to misperceive the world, and were he to adopt a cognitive perspective, he would realize this. Seneca critiques by putting forth his own cognitive worldview, and by using the flood as the means with which he critiques this narrow, confined worldview and destroys man's limited worldview.²⁷

²⁵ On several occasions Seneca compares the earth to the human body. For example, Seneca claims that the earth is modeled upon the human body (*quidem ad nostrorum corporum exemplar*, §15.1 "certainly [built upon] an example of our bodies") with its veins, arteries, and various other receptacles (cf. §15). He also states that "the earth is controlled by Nature" (§15.1). By analogizing, Seneca is tacitly claiming that Nature controls humanity too.

²⁶ See Chapter 1 §2 in this dissertation for an analysis on Seneca's cognitive mapping of this passage.

²⁷ At §28.5, I have discussed this passage in greater detail in the previous chapter, therefore will not recount it here.

By painting Nature's destruction of boundaries, Seneca discredits the anthropocentric worldview perpetrated by faulty perception. When man views the world from a limited perspective, his perspective of events, his surroundings, and himself are faulty and often anthropocentric; his perspective narrows the world and confines it to the boundaries of sense perception. To that end, Seneca criticizes Ovid's perception of the flood because it detracts from the seriousness of the flood (*sobria*, §27.13 "seriousness"). Ovid "condenses" (*reduxisset*, §27.13) Nature to fit his rendition of the flood, which hyper-focuses on the blurring of distinction between lambs and wolves instead of the grandeur of the subject (*magnitudinem rei*, §27.13 "the magnitude of the subject").²⁸ Seneca does, however, applaud Ovid's "bigger picture" of the deluge (§27.14-15, trans. Hine 2014:47):

Dixit ingentia et tantae confusionis imaginem cepit, cum dixit:

Expatata ruunt per apertos flumina campos,

*. pressaeque labant sub gurgite turres.*²⁹

magnifice haec, si non curauerit quid oues et lupi faciant. Natari autem in diluuio et in illa rapina potest? aut non eodem impetu pecus omne quo raptum erat mersum est? Concepisti imaginem quantam debebas, obrutis omnibus terris caelo ipso in terram ruente. Perfer. Scies quid deceat, si cogitaueris orbem terrarum natare.

His writing has shown greatness, and he has captured a vision of all the turmoil when he writes,

The rivers break out and race across the open plains...

and towers are about to collapse, overwhelmed, beneath the billows.

²⁸ Both Nicolet (1991) and Romm (1992) claim that all writing is open to geographic interpretation and Seneca, while demonstrating his erudition (Dueck 2012), is in effect interpreting Ovid (along with others elsewhere) as geographic writing.

²⁹ Hine (2014:197 n.57) emends the text to include two-and-half lines from Ovid *Meta*. I.285-88a, 289b-90; I, however, have followed the manuscript tradition and have omitted these lines.

This is splendid, if he were not concerned with what the sheep and wolves are doing. Is swimming possible in that deluge and that devastation? Has not every beast been drowned by the same force that has swept it away? You have imagined the scene on a scale you needed to when the whole earth was submerged, and the sky itself crashed down to earth. Keep it up: you will know what is appropriate if you reflect that the earth is swimming.

The flood destroys limits and boundaries: In Ovid's vision (*imaginem* "image") of the event, rivers "break out" (*expatiata*) and flow across open plains (*apertos* "open"), towers (*turres*) are toppled and buried "beneath the abyss" (*sub gurgite*), and the whole earth is "covered" (*obrutis*) by water. The Ovidian excerpt also illustrates the destruction of a narrow worldview by a larger one (*omnibus* "all"). Seneca plays upon the "greatness" (*magnifice*, note *magn-*) of Ovid's perspective and the totalizing destruction of the deluge. Note how *apertos* and *obrutis*, terms used to describe physical space, can also refer to vision: *apertos* ("visible") and *obrutis* ("hidden").³⁰ It is understandable why Seneca favors this representation, because it promotes a worldview that is open, unbounded, and elevated: *apertos*, *expatiata*, and *magnifice* (§27.14). The passage pulls the reader away from a reduced worldview to a larger perspective³¹ that destroys limited perspectives and allows him to openly "view" (*cogitaueris*,³² "you will know") the entirety of the cosmos.

Seneca uses Ovid here to support his argument about the flood destroying everything and wiping away man and his existence, but he also critiques it because Ovid lacks restraint³³ and

³⁰ Cf. 4b.5 Seneca uses *obruere* to describe arguments, not physical covering, but rather a covering or hiding of arguments. The term is multi-faceted. *OLD* s.v. "obruo."

³¹ §27.13: *Omnia pontus erat, deerant quoque litora ponto* ("Everything was sea, and the sea had no shore," trans. Hine 2014:47).

³² Note that this word is connected with cognition.

³³ Williams (2012:131-32) argues that there are parallels to Ovid's lack of restraint, which was well known in antiquity, and the moral corruption referenced at §30.8.

seriousness when writing epic, a serious genre (Pierini 1990:181). His criticism stems from Ovid's childishness and frivolity as Ovid transgresses the boundaries of what is fitting (*scies quid deceat* "you will know what is fitting"). But Seneca takes elements of Ovid's dramatization and adapts it to fit his philosophical-scientific rendition (Pierini 1990:193). There is a moral component to this Ovidian excerpt: the reason for the mythic flood is because Jupiter decides to punish mankind for his sinfulness (cf. *Met.* I. 240-415). Seneca uses the same reason in his flood story (cf. §29.5; cf. Gauly 2004:248-51), though he emphasizes the greatness of his own conception of it (Hutchinson 1993).

Consider another example in which Seneca criticizes sense perception by destroying boundaries and limits. In the following passage, Seneca poses several questions to his reader, asking if he can perceive Nature's forces exceeding limits and boundaries (§30.2-3, trans. Hine 2014:51):

*Non uides ut fluctus in litora tamquam **exiturus** incurrat? Non uides ut aestus **fines** suos **transeat** et in possessionem terrarum mare inducat? Non uides ut illi perpetua cum **claustris** suis pugna sit? Quid porro? Istinc unde tantum tumultum uides metus est, e mari et magno spiritu **erumpentibus** fluiuis? Vbi non umorem natura disposuit, ut undique nos, cum uoluisset, aggredi posset? Mentior, nisi **eruentibus** terram umor occurrit et, quotiens nos aut auaritia defodit aut aliqua causa **penetrare altius** cogit, **eruendi finis** aliquando est. Adice quod **immanes** sunt in **abdito** lacus et multum maris conditi, multum fluminum per operta labentium.*

Do you not see how the waves attack the shore as though they were going to break out? Do you not see how the tide crosses its boundaries and leads the sea forward to possess the land? Do you not see how it is perpetually battling against its confinement? And what is more, do you only need to be afraid where you can see turmoil—in the sea, and in rivers that burst out with a great

quantity of breath? Has nature not put water everywhere, so that she could attack us from all sides when she wanted? If people who dig up the ground do not encounter moisture, and if, whenever either greed sends us underground or some other motive compels us to penetrate deeper, the digging is not halted by water, then I am a liar. Add that there are enormous hidden lakes, a great expanse of buried sea, a great many rivers flowing unseen.

The passage questions the limitations of sense perception and sensory thinking. Seneca asks if the reader only fears when he *sees* (*uides* “you see”) Nature crossing and breaking out of physical boundaries. Sense perception only allows man to perceive what is before him; it severely limits his perspective of the world, confining him to perceptible parts. Therefore, limited by his own nature, mankind views the world from a narrow, anthropocentric perspective, and because of this, he is caught completely off guard when Nature’s unseen forces destroy the stability of his limited worldview.

A narrow, limited perspective also causes fear because the destruction of the boundaries of his worldview, like the foundations of houses penetrated by water, render mankind unstable.³⁴ Man’s lowly perspective of the events, combined with his fear, renders him a fool (cf. §27.13.6-15), and he then runs around trying to shore up these “foundations.” Human emotion (*ultra sensum mali*, §27.12 “beyond the sense of misfortune”³⁵) is exacerbated by man’s inability

³⁴ The imagery at 6.1.15.2-4 (*id ipsum supra quod stamus non stabile esse* “what we stand on is not stable”) recalls the imagery of the flood (*nihil stabile est*, §27.6 “nothing is stable”). As the rains fall “without limit” (*sine fine*), man attempts to shore up his “buildings” (*tecta*, 6.1.6; *tecta*, §.27.6) whose “foundations” (*fundamentum*, 6.1.5; *fundamentis*, 6.1.10; *fundamenta*, §27.6) have been penetrated (cf. *ab imo*, 6.1.4; *in imum*, §27.6.1-2). Nothing, including the man’s perception, is stable, and man, is “powerless” (*impotentes*, 6.1.3) against Nature’s destructive forces.

³⁵ Note the use of the word *sensum*, meaning “sense” OLD s.v. “sensus.”

to contemplate the reality of his small position in the cosmos (cf. §praef.10).³⁶ When floodwaters surmount those perceived heights which mankind clings to, he is “carried” (*perductis*, §27.12) to the “extremes” (*in extrema*, §27.12) as his “fear” (*metus*, §27.13) “crosses over” (*transierat*, §27.13) into “bewilderment” (*in stuporem*, §27.13). Nature sweeps away the limited worldview just as floodwaters sweep away the physical world.³⁷

Solace, however, comes from the realization that Nature is not bound to man’s limits or boundaries, particularly the limits of his perception. Thus, Seneca encourages the reader to look beyond what is seen to the unseen, an exercise in cognitive thinking.³⁸ In sum, Seneca’s destruction of the world is the destruction of a limited worldview that is built upon sense perception and cultivated by man’s limitations, his lack of visual acuity. Instead of reducing Nature to his perspective, mankind is reduced by Nature and is buried beneath floodwaters, just as Seneca literally buries him beneath the language of the flood.³⁹ Though mankind perceives that he possesses and limits Nature, in reality it is Nature that crosses and destroys boundaries, thereby putting man in his place.

³⁶ Winter (2016) argues that Seneca connects negative human emotions with landscape in his narratives, particularly his tragedies. His aim, she states (2016:144), is for the recipient to be “affected by the *Stimmung* that is told and created at the same time”; the descriptive elements in Seneca’s narratives draw in and attach to the recipient, engaging with his experience and his emotional state. This is in-line with Segal (1983:180): “With his feeling for the emotive quality of visual scenes, Seneca often creates an objective correlative for these psychological events through images of place or landscape.”

³⁷ Cf. §27.7: *deuolutus torrens altissimis montibus rapit silvas male haerentes* (“a torrent, tumbling down from the highest mountains, sweeps away unstable forests,” Hine 2014:45). Note the use of *haerentes* (“clinging”) with *adhaerebant* (§27.12 “they were clinging to”), and how Seneca blurs the worlds of nature and man. Both forests and mankind, clinging to heights (*altissimis*, §27.7 “highest”; *editissimis*, §27.12 “highest”), are swept away.

³⁸ For example, Seneca refutes sensory thinking, stating that there are vast amounts of water lurking beneath the earth’s surface.

³⁹ Nature’s destruction shrinks mankind down to size, and establishes to his place within the cosmos; he is buried within the flood (§29.9): *Vnus humanum genus condet dies* (“A single day will bury the human race,” trans. Hine 2014:51). Note how *genus humanum* (“mankind” is bound between *unus* (“one”) and *dies* (“day”); man is literally buried within the text.

II. Violating Boundaries

Seneca's pressing question within Book 5 is defining wind. Yet, as will be demonstrated, wind's nature is such that it violates boundaries (*Ventus est fluens aer*, 5.1.2 "Wind is flowing air").⁴⁰ The very definition of wind in itself implies its inability to be channeled or corralled. Yet, as explored within this section, mankind, in his efforts to maintain power and control, believes that by defining (§1-3) and naming winds (§16-17) he can harness its power (and loyalty) for his own means (§18). Thus, he seeks knowledge of wind to expand his empire, forgetful that wind cannot be channeled into his boundaries and limits. Nature cannot be confined—she is infinite—in fact, the *infinitum* (§17.5) of the subject matter (wind) contrasts with man's attempt to place boundaries around her, and she, in an instant, can destroy mankind. In this section I examine how Seneca uses wind's violation of both physical and definitional boundaries to demonstrate Nature's elusiveness. I divide the discussion into two parts. First, I examine instances where wind violates physical boundaries and how that corresponds to problems of defining wind. Second, I consider how Seneca's discussion and obsession with the definition and systemization of winds blurs into a discussion about man's urge and need to control. I argue that wind's violation of physical boundaries corresponds to its violation of definitional boundaries which then lends itself to a discussion on man's obsession with controlling and defining Nature.

When discussing wind in Book 5, Seneca starts off being very scrupulous with his methodology. He begins at the elementary level, emphasizing how wind, or, more specifically, air violates boundaries. For example, he claims that air can at one moment condense itself (*spissat*, §6), at another time it "expands" (*expandit*, §6) and "purges" itself (*purgat*, §6), and at

⁴⁰ *Fluens aer* ("flowing air") transports the reader back to 3.12.3: *si uentus est fluens aer, et flumen est fluens aqua* ("If wind is flowing air, a river is flowing water too," trans. Hine 2014:33).

other times it “contracts” (*contrahit*, §6), “spreads out” (*diducit*, §6), and “expands” (*differt*, §6).⁴¹ Air violates boundaries because it does not adhere to certain states, and wind, which is flowing air, is in a constant state of movement (*numquam . . . immobilis*, §1 “never immobile”; *non . . . umquam immobilis*, §2 “not ever immobile”). Air needs space to move, not confinement, and most importantly, as an active agent, it acts, and is not acted upon.⁴² Air is not a passive force forced to physical boundaries but is an active agent permeating the entire cosmos (cf. 2.9.4). Seneca’s advocacy for active agency highlights his Stoic proclivities, because air, according to Stoic doctrine,⁴³ possesses vital power to move itself and others.⁴⁴

His stance that wind arises not out of confinement but rather out of air’s natural propensity for movement is a challenge against Epicureanism, because Epicureanism held that the cosmos is comprised of atoms and void (atomism).⁴⁵ For example, he directs his attention to

⁴¹ These characteristics are not exclusive to air, but can be said about all elements (cf. 3.10). Stahl (1964:270ff) indicates that Seneca’s scientific discussion on air is linked to divine providence at 5.18, but her argument lacks evidence. Gross (1989:235ff) also disagrees with Stahl’s argument and claims that the notion of air following *lex naturae* (see discussion that follows in dissertation) is prevalent throughout Book 5. I find Gross’ argument more palpable because Seneca uses wind as a means to demonstrate Nature’s elusiveness and inability to be “grasped” even in its most violent states. Though wind may appear disorderly, in fact it follows *lex naturae*.

⁴² Stoic doctrine posits that air and fire are active, and earth and water are passive (cf. Galen, *De Nat. Facult.*, I.iii.8).

⁴³ Stoic doctrine held that there are two principles of things: active and passive. The active is the reason (that is, god) within it, and the passive is matter, without quality and inert (Diogenes Laertius 7.134ff). Each thing possesses the active principle which causes it to be what it is (Sharples 1996:43).

⁴⁴ The Stoic doctrine of vitalism, designed after some pre-Socratics and Plato regarded the whole cosmos a living being, with a soul and rational, and with a ruling principle (the *animus*) comprised of *pneuma* (a mixture of air and fire) (Diogenes Laertius 7.139). See White (2003:128ff) for further discussion of Stoic vitalism. Seneca returns to this notion of air possessing capabilities to move and benefit mankind (cf. §18).

⁴⁵ Atomism stems from the claim that nothing comes from nothing (Lucretius, *De Natura Rerum* 1.149ff, and Epicureans argued that the cosmos was made up of atoms and void (1.329ff), a claim which stands in opposition to Stoic vitalism (White 2003:128ff; Sharples 1996:34ff).

the pre-Socratic philosopher Democritus⁴⁶ who argues that wind arises out of particles (*atomos*, “atoms”; *corpuscula*, “little bodies,” §2) bumping into one another in a “confined space” (*in angusto*, *in angustum*, *exiguum locum*, §2). Seneca’s critique of Democritus⁴⁷ is an implicit attack on Epicureanism,⁴⁸ and Epicurean notions of sense perception which, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, perpetrate a narrow worldview. And so, Seneca posits two theories about wind: vitalism (Stoic) and atomism (Epicurean). Atomism violates the Stoic concept of cohesion and unity because individual particles (or atoms) are self-contained and separated by void from other atoms (White 2003:146). Seneca, however, pushes against this, arguing for unity and cohesion by emphasizing air’s violation of boundaries. Note how his theory on wind violates boundaries: wind arises from a desire for more space (*spatium maius desiderat*, §4.3 “desires more space”). The desire for more space does not refer to void but rather points to cohesion. The other, however, confines wind to boundaries: wind arises from atoms being forced into narrow confines which results in them being pushed forward and back, and being entwined and forced together. Notice how these theories correspond to the two ways of thinking about the world: cognition and sense perception. The one is open, devoid of limits, and uncontrollable. The other is narrow, limiting, and controllable. His purpose is to dismantle Epicureanism, both its

⁴⁶ Democritus is given credit for his approach to atomic theory, which is taken over by Epicurus, but despite this Democritus and Epicurus do differ in their treatment of sense perception (Furley 1993:72). Both philosophers do emphasize the mechanics of sense perception; Democritus, however, seems skeptical about sense perception revealing truth, while Epicurus claims that all perceptions are real (*Adv. Math* VII.203, VIII.63). Though differing theories, Democritus still provides the initial groundwork for Epicureanism.

⁴⁷ Note the juridical language (bolded) at §1.5: *Nunc ad ipsam rem accedamus, quoniam satis de formula disputatum est* “Now let us move on to the real business, since we have argued enough about the form of words,” (trans. Hine 2014:73). Seneca is setting up an argument against Democritus. It is a matter of semantics (*uerbo*, §1.5) and his argument about what defines wind blurs into an argument against Epicureanism.

⁴⁸ For example, words such as *corpuscula* (Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*) and *atomos* (Lucretius, *De Natura Rerum*) are related to Epicureanism. *Corpuscula* is derived from the Epicurean philosopher Amafinius (Cicero, *Academica*, I.6), and there is no corresponding word to it in Epicurus’ fragments. Cicero (*Fin.* I.17) coins the term *atomus* but has its roots in Greek (ἄτομος).

epistemology (sense perception) and its natural philosophy (atomism), and elevate his own school, Stoicism. Epicureanism builds boundaries and divisions; Stoicism, on other hand, blends and eliminates limits and boundaries.⁴⁹

Wind's inability to be confined physically blends into a discussion on defining wind; just as wind cannot be confined to physical boundaries, it cannot be confined to definitional boundaries.⁵⁰ When Seneca attempts to define wind (§1), he claims that some define wind⁵¹ as constantly moving (*numquam aer tam immobilis*, §1.1 “air is never so motionless,” trans. Hine 2014:73) and as flowing “in one direction” (*in unam partem*, §1.1), a detail which the interlocutor objects to (cf. *quid necessa est adicere te in unam partem?*, §1.4 “Why is it necessary to add in one direction?”). Gross (1989:203) notes that the phrase *in unam partem* distinguishes two definitions: “Die erste Definition ist uns für Theophrast bezeugt, die zweite können wir auf Poseidonios zurückführen, der den Wind von einer inneren Luftbewegung unterscheidet.” This distinction (*in unam partem*), though slight, demonstrates Seneca's pedantry, his preoccupation with semantics and with classifying wind and also emphasizes man's preoccupation with controlling the uncontrollable—here, wind.⁵²

And so, Seneca proceeds from the elementary level to a more difficult task of semantically corraling winds (§16-17), completely consumed with categorizing and defining

⁴⁹ “Total blending” (*krasis di' holon*) arose out Stoic response (known as anti-corpuscularianism) to Epicureanism (White 2003:146).

⁵⁰ Wind does not occur just for one reason, it's multiple: *non uno modo* (§4.1), *hanc solam...causam* (5.5.1), *ipse sol causa* (§6.1). This is the same thing that he posits at 3.29.2 when discussing the causes for the deluge: *Et istas ego receperim causas,—neque enim ex uno est tanta perniciēs,—et illam quae in conflagratione nostris placet hoc quoque transferendam puto* (“I would accept these causes too [for such a great catastrophe does not have a single origin], and the cause that our people assign to the conflagration should apply here too, I think,” trans. Hine 2014:49).

⁵¹ He extends this to air (*non esse umquam immobilem*, §1.2 “[air] is never immobile”).

⁵² Williams (2012:182) argues that Seneca's concern with making so much of a distinction prepares him for a discussion about intrinsic vitality of air.

wind until it becomes an issue of systemization and comes up with a way to systemize the wind, whereby he carves up and places winds into various definitional sectors. As he sets forth this system in the following passage, he foregrounds the complexity and problems of definition, thereby demonstrating Nature's elusiveness through winds' inability to be defined (§16.3-4.1, trans. Hine 2014:82):

Quidam illos duodecim faciunt. Quattuor enim caeli partes in ternas diuidunt et singulis uentis binos subpraefectos dant. Hac arte Varro, uir diligens, illos ordinat, nec sine causa. Non enim eodem semper loco sol oritur aut occidit, sed alius est ortus occasusque aequinoctialis,—bis autem aequinoctium est,—alius solstitialis, alius hibernus. Qui surgit ab oriente aequinoctiali, subsolanus apud nos dicitur; Graeci illum ἀφελιώτην uocant. Ab oriente hiberno eurus exit, quem nostri uocauere uolturnum . . .

Some people think there are twelve winds. They divide each of the four sections of the sky into three, and give each wind two subordinates. Varro, a careful scholar, arranges them in this fashion, and not without good reason. The sun does not always rise or set in the same place, but the rising and setting at the equinoxes (of which there are two), at the summer solstice, and at the winter solstice, are all different. The wind that blows from the equinoctial rising point is called *subsolanus* by us, and the Greek name for it is *apheliotes*. *Eurus* comes from the winter solstitial rising, and our fellow countrymen have named it *uolturnus* . . .

There is an emphasis here not only on physical boundaries but also on the boundaries of semantics and definition (§17.1 *casus* “cases”⁵³), and Seneca's concern is similar to the interlocutor's objection (cf. §1.4) which he had previously dismissed (cf. §1.5). Seneca emphasizes the difficulty of expressing definitions and categories for winds; the gamut of

⁵³ *OLD* s.v. “casus.”

definitions and theories for winds reflects the relatedness of two different tasks: physically corraling and semantically corraling winds. At times, he borrows Greek words (*apheliotes*; *ὀπίζοντα*, §17.3 “division” or “horizon”) because Latin does not have an equivalent, or because he prefers the Greek term to the Latin (cf. §16.4, 6 *apud nos sine nomine est* “for which we do not have a name,” trans. Hine 2014:82).⁵⁴ Then there are instances when he Latinizes the Greek words, for example, “giving Roman citizenship” to certain winds (*sed et eurus iam ciuitate donatus est*, §16.4 “but *Eurus* has also been granted citizenship”).

Seneca’s grappling with Greco-Roman terminology speaks to a larger issue about possession and control.⁵⁵ The twelve-point wind-rose presented is a Roman adaptation of the Greek system, as set forth by Varro (§16), and indicates a form of “intellectual imperialism,” whereby the idea of bestowing citizenship to a word implies “the superiority and mastery of the Latin language over the Greek” (Hine 2006:54). Seneca only furthers this “intellectual imperialism” with his linguistic analogy (§17.1): *Sic casus sex dicimus, non quia omne nomen sex recipit, sed quia nullum plures quam sex* (“Thus we talk of six cases not because every noun has six, but because none has more than six,” trans. Hine 2014:82). As Williams (2005:434) notes, Rome’s power and dominion are tied to the systemization: “But in Seneca’s Varronian

⁵⁴ Anemology, that is, the study of winds has long tradition in both Greek and Roman scientific writing. Though Aristotle clearly indicates that this is just an illustration to aid understanding, and he takes issue with his contemporaries’ cartographic illustrations of the earth (*Meteorologica* II, 362b), he is credited with the twelve-wind division theory (III, 363a-b). I should mention that this is not to discredit Aristotle, but to suggest that the Aristotelean “compass rose” meant to define the positions of the winds is emblematic of imperial conquest and colonization. In addition, frequent mentioning of Alexander should be noted, as Nero fashioned himself after Alexander (*imitatio Alexandri*, Suetonius 19.2); is it possible that Seneca questions the accepted standardization?

⁵⁵ Though only a few instances exist in Roman history, the Romans did implement their own nomenclature to assert control and demonstrate the defeat and humiliation of conquered peoples. For example, after the Bar Kokhba rebellion, the Romans renamed Judaea to Syria Palaestina. Rome latinized foreign toponyms for the ease of translation and pronunciation (for example, Latin *Rhenus* from Celtic *Renos* (Campbell 2012:69). Rivet and Smith (1979:22) argue that “the Roman invaders were not linguistic imperialists. When a place had a name, the Roman army, administration and settlers adopted it without question, merely Latinising its form and fitting it into a declension.” Yet, the incorporation and transformation of a non-Latin toponym into a Roman semantic system undermines their argument because the Latinization still implies Roman control.

wind compass the naming of the winds is a more charged affair, their Latin identity primary, with Rome, not Greece, the epicenter of their coverage culturally and linguistically.” By defining and dividing the winds into sectors and, of course, giving *Roman* names to them, Rome, or, mankind in general, is essentially staking claim on Nature: “To what extent is Roman ‘ownership’ of the winds symptomatic of a world outlook—a striving for conquest and control, whether intellectual, military, economic or sociopolitical . . .” (Williams 2012:199). But Seneca challenges this notion. Winds can work against the Romans. Hannibal, for example, received help from wind during the Battle of Cannae (cf. §16.4). He also challenges imperial claims to local winds that maintain both their physical position and foreign names. Note, for example, in the following passage the boundary-language (§17.5, trans. Hine 2014:82-83):

Quidam sunt quorundam locorum proprii, qui non transmittunt, sed in proximum ferunt; non est illis a latere uniuersi mundi impetus. Atabulus Apuliam infestat, Calabriam iapyx, Athenas sciron, Pamphyliam <cr>ageus, Galliam circius, cui aedificia quassanti tamen incolae gratias agunt, tamquam salubritatem caeli sui debeant ei,—diuus certe Augustus templum illi, cum in Gallia moraretur, et uouit et fecit.—Infinitum est, si singulos uelim persequi; nulla enim propemodum regio est quae non habeat aliquem flatum ex se nascentem et circa se cadentem.

Certain winds are unique to certain places and do not travel far but blow locally. They do not rush in from the edge of the whole world: *atabulus* plagues Apulia, *iapyx* Calabria, *sciron* Athens, *crageus* Pamphylia, and *circius* Gaul. When this last one destroys buildings, the local population nevertheless give thanks, on the grounds that they owe the healthiness of their climate to it. The deified Augustus certainly vowed and built a temple to it when he spent time in Gaul. It would be never-ending if I wanted to go through these winds individually: for there is virtually no region without some breeze that springs up in it and dies down close by.

While the passage seems to glorify imperial conquest,⁵⁶ Seneca undercuts the Roman systemization by claiming that naming every wind is an *infinitum* task, because the fluidity of wind defies classification.⁵⁷ Though propitiated by Augustus,⁵⁸ the winds remain (*non transmittunt* “they do not cross”; *in proximum* “in proximity”) nearby (*locorum proprii* “local places”), and are not incorporated into the Roman twelve-sector system. Williams (2012:201) argues that the aggression of these local winds:

. . . becomes symbolically suggestive if this picture of local *uenti* is centered on Rome and the superficially unifying imperial project is seen to be challenged by relentless regional difference and idiosyncrasy: local character is set powerfully against centralized standardization.

The fact that the local winds remain within their regions takes the focus away from Rome, and “vastly enlarges the story of regional difference and idiosyncrasy far from the imperial center” (*ibid.*:202).

Now that I have examined Seneca’s boundary-language and argued that wind violates both physical and definitional boundaries, I consider the effects on mankind. Though Seneca’s discussion is a seemingly monotonous discussion about systemization, he transforms it into an ethical discussion about man’s futile attempts to put wind, or Nature as a whole, into boundaries, and he demonstrates, with his own futile attempt with defining and systematizing wind, that

⁵⁶ Note how the regions and cities of Apulia, Calabria, Athens, Pamphylia, and Gaul fall under Roman administration and government.

⁵⁷ Rosenmeyer (1989:162) devotes a chapter to understanding the role of Nature in Seneca’s tragedies and claims: “In Seneca’s examination of the vastness of nature, the fluidity of nature chokes off the instinct for classification.” His interpretation suggests that Seneca illustrates Nature as being incapable of definition (or classification). This is in-line with what he is doing in the *NQ*; wind, a force of Nature, is fluid and violates classification, that is, the boundaries of definition.

⁵⁸ Williams notes (2012:201) that Augustus is only delayed in Gaul. Unlike *Circius*, Augustus is not a permanent fixture to the territory, suggesting that his influence and power are limited.

despite efforts to understand and comprehend Nature (via wind), she still eludes mankind, especially when she is in a chaotic, violent state.

Hence, his discussion foregrounds man's issues with wind, because wind lies outside human control⁵⁹—outside physical confinement, standardized systems and definitions, and even man's attempts to gain wind's loyalty. Accordingly, Seneca goes on to claim that wind, though helpful, possesses no loyalty: man has no control over whether an obscure lord (*in abdito dominus*, §18.12 “a lord in some distant land”), harnessing wind, keeps his nation “within its boundaries” (*intra terminos*, §18.12).

Even the mentioning of Xerxes, Crassus, and Alexander harnessing winds for their failed expeditions, and, of course, Hannibal's successful devastation of Italy, proves that wind, or Nature as a whole, bears no loyalty. In the following passage also consider how these men driven by their unharnessed desires (cf. §18.6) violate physical boundaries which leads to their own violation (§18.10, trans. Hine 2014:85):

Quousque nos mala nostra rapuerunt? Parum est intra orbem suum furere. Sic Persarum rex stolidissimus in Graeciam traiciet, quam exercitus non uincet, cum impleuerit. Sic Alexander ulterior Bactris et Indis uolet quaeretque quid sit ultra magnum mare et indignabitur esse aliquid ultimum sibi. Sic Crassum auaritia Parthis dabit; non horrebit reuocantis diras tribuni, non tempestates longissimi maris, non circa Euphratem praesaga fulmina et deos resistentes: per hominum et deorum iras ad aurum ibitur.

How far our wrongdoings have brought us! Madness within one's own part of the world is not enough. That is why the king of Persia, stupid man, will cross over to Greece; his army will not

⁵⁹ Note how the interactions with wind and the indigenous people, and also Augustus are harmonious. This sets up what follows in §18, on the benefits of wind.

defeat the country even though it has filled it. That is why Alexander will want the regions beyond the Bactrians and the Indians, and will try to find out what lies beyond the great sea, and will be aggrieved that he meets a dead end. That is why greed will deliver Crassus to the Parthians; he will not tremble at the curses of the tribune who calls him back, nor at the storms on the long sea voyage, nor at the prophetic lightning-bolts and hostile gods by the Euphrates; he will face the anger of men and gods to reach gold.

Note how each man crosses boundaries: Xerxes into Greece (*traiciet*), Alexander “beyond” (*ulterior*) the Bactrians and Indians and even “beyond the great sea” (*ultra magnum*), and Crassus across Parthia (*Parthis*⁶⁰). Also notice how each is propelled by some human desire or emotion (*stolidissimus*, *indignabitur*, *avaritia*) to go beyond their human limits, violating Nature’s laws in their “unnatural” destructiveness.” Alexander, desiring more land, for example, becomes angry when he cannot conquer lands that are “beyond himself” (*ultimum sibi*); his indignation derives from his confrontation with his limitations. Williams (2012:173) notes similarities between these men who “disregard all boundaries in their whirlwind progress toward limitless conquest” and the destructive and transgressive nature of violent winds (whirlwinds⁶¹): “[these men’s transgressiveness] exemplify a negative extreme, or perhaps rather an extreme perversion, of the *lex naturae* implicitly drawn in *NQ* 5.”⁶²

Wind, however, when violent, does not transgress Nature’s laws, and even though it may appear chaotic and disorderly, it in fact follows a law of Nature.⁶³ But, it does violate physical

⁶⁰ I take this with the understanding that Crassus had to cross into Parthia to get there.

⁶¹ And much like a whirlwind, their destructiveness is short-lived (cf. 7.9).

⁶² Williams argues that the defining and systemizing of wind is not so much Seneca’s aim but rather the correlation of human character and wind. For further discussion of this, see Williams (2005).

⁶³ Pliny (*Natural Histories*, 2.116) writes about all winds, stating “it is well-known that those [winds] also follow a law of Nature that is not unknown, even if it is not yet well-known” (*palam est illos quoque legem habere naturae non ignotam, etiamsi nondum percognitam*).

boundaries, and even its function, which is “diverse” (*per diversa*, §18.1), violates being characterized (definitional boundaries) as purely harmful. In fact, wind can harm as well as help,⁶⁴ and wind benefits not only the physical world but also mankind. For example, Providence, that is, god, allows wind to benefit mankind (crops and knowledge of the world) by violating boundaries.⁶⁵ Notice how god (Providence, here) gives the winds and mankind permission to cross boundaries (§18.13.3.-14.4, trans. Hine 2014:85-86):

Dedit ille uentos ad custodiendam caeli terrarumque temperiem, ad euocandas suppressendasque aquas, ad alendos satorum atque arborum fructus, quos ad maturitatem, cum aliis causis, adducit ipsa iactatio attrahens cibum in summa et ne torpeant permouens. Dedit uentos ad ulteriora noscenda. Fuisset enim imperitum animal et sine magna experientia rerum homo, si circumscriberetur natalis soli fine. Dedit uentos, ut commoda cuiusque regionis fierent communia . . .

He gave winds to control the temperature of the sky and the earth, to elicit and restrict the flow of water, to nurture the fruit of crops and trees. This is brought to ripeness, along with other causes, by shaking in the wind, which draws nourishment up to the top of the plants and keeps them moving to prevent wilting. He gave the winds to enable exploration of distant regions: for human beings would have been ignorant creatures, without much experience of the world, if they were confined by the boundaries of their native soil. He gave the winds so that the benefits of each region would be shared . . .

⁶⁴ For example, wind supplies land with rain and also prevents an excess of it. And, on the one hand, Providence has arranged it so that wind spreads throughout the entire world (*per totum orbem*, §18.1; *ex omni parte terrarum*, §4.1), but at the same time, on the other hand, it keeps certain winds in its place (*In Italiam auster impellit; aquilo in Africam reicit*, §18.2 “The south wind drives them [clouds] into Italy, the north wind forces them back to Africa,” trans. Hine 2014:83).

⁶⁵ Note the similarities in language between this passage, the flood (*commercium*, 3.27.11), and the Nile River (*commercium*, 4a.2.3.4; *commercium*, 4a.2.11.4).

Wind violates physical boundaries so that nations might be brought together for communication and knowledge (§18.14). Wind also fosters “growth” (*commoda*, *communia*, §18.14; *fructus*, §18.13) and “life” (*uitalemque*, §18.1), and is the driving impetus behind exploration (*noscenda*, §18.14 “for knowledge”). But vice creeps in and distorts these benefits, bringing “war” (*bellum*, §18.7; *fructus*, §18.8 “profit [of waging war]”) and “death” (*mortes*, *mortem* §18.8, 9; *ex commodo*, §18.8 “[“measure out our remaining years” in comfort]), and it drives man to various temptations (§18.5, §16.1-2 trans. Hine 2014:84, 86):

Sed non ideo non sunt ista natura bona, si uitio male utentium nocent. Non in hoc prouidentia ac dispositor ille mundi deus aera uentis exercendum dedit et illos ab omni parte ne quid esset situ squalidum effudit, ut nos classes partem freti occupaturas compleremus milite armato et hostem in mari aut post mare quaereremus . . . Diuersis enim irritamentis ad temptandum <ma>re impellimur; utique alicui uitio nauigatur.

But those benefits do not cease to be intrinsically good just because they cause harm through the fault of those who misuse them. It was not for this that providence and the god who manages the world gave the winds that task of keeping the air moving . . . We are driven by various temptations to brave the sea; the voyage inevitably serves some vice.

Note the similarities between wind and vice: *diuers-*, *impell-*, *gent-*, *commod-*, *fructus*. Notice, however, the subtle differences: growth versus destruction (war) and life versus death. Seneca intentionally pits the two against one another to highlight one thing—just as man cannot harness wind, he cannot harness his own madness.

Seneca’s discussion on wind violating boundaries is to correct misperception, to diminish man’s perspective of himself as the controller and master of the universe—a position held by

god/Nature.⁶⁶ Seneca devotes the first part of §18 to a larger perspective which focuses on the “macro movements” of Providence (*totum orbem* “whole world,” *totam*, “whole,” §18.2; *omnibus* “all,” §18.3; *omni parte* “every part,” §18.5) (Williams 2012:211). He moves, however, to a narrow, anthropocentric worldview (*partem* “part,” §18.5; *parte* “part,” §18.7) which hyper-focuses on man’s obsession with control. This worldview is also concerned with materialism (*aurum*, §18.10 “gold,” for example) and visible manifestations of power because it is tied to sense perception. But Seneca criticizes this worldview, stating that if man measures (*perpendimus* “we consider”) Nature’s benefits according to the “depravity” (*prauitate*⁶⁷) of those using them, he accepts them to his detriment (Hine 2014:86). Seneca criticizes this sensory worldview because sense perception (*uidere* “to see,” §18.15) distorts Nature (*manifestiae utilitatis*, §18.15 “manifest usefulness”) unlike cognition which views the world from a holistic viewpoint. Cognitive thinking does not try to confine or control Nature (wind) but “discovers” (*inuenies* “you will discover,” *inuenerat*, “they had discovered,” §18.15).

In sum, Nature’s violation of boundaries serves as a tool which Seneca uses to instruct mankind on his incessant need to control and thus misuse Nature, and to demonstrate that Nature still eludes man even when he attempts to “grasp” and understand her. No amount of definitional or semantic boundaries can harness Nature (wind), and stabilize uncertainty. Nature follows no laws, names, or loyalties set forth by man, and though Nature (wind) *appears* chaotic, it is a product of Providence, under Nature’s guidance and laws.

⁶⁶ *disposuit*, §18.1 (“he arranges”); *dispositor*, §18.5 (“arranger”).

⁶⁷ *Pravitate* is related to *prauus* meaning distortion, cf. 1.15.8.

III. Defying Time

Thus far, I have looked at how Nature destroys and violates boundaries, and in this final section I consider how time can be a boundary—how it is defined—and how Nature, via the Nile River, defies it.⁶⁸ I then conclude with the effects on mankind, and consider how Seneca’s discussion on time and Nature speaks to man’s preoccupation with death, particularly his lack of control over it.⁶⁹ Much as physical and sensory boundaries reduce the world, so too does time confine the world to seasons, months, and days. When discussing the timing of the Nile’s flood, Seneca is in fact talking about Nature defying not only the boundaries of time but also the boundaries of man’s control.⁷⁰ Nature’s defiance of boundaries and expectations creates fear; man’s preoccupation with death, I argue, stems from his fear of lack of control over Nature.

First consider how time is defined in the *NQ*. Time, according to Seneca, is a measurement, a boundary that is “measured out” (*metietur*, 3.praef.3; *emetiri*, 5.18.8): it can be “short” (*breuitatem*, 3.praef.3), “small” (*paruo*, 3.praef.3; *exiguo*, 6.17.3, 7.27.3; *exiguum*, 6.32.9, 7.12.4; *exigui*, 7.19.2), “narrow” (*angustum*, 3.praef.3), and “long” (*longo tempore*, 3.27.2). Time, therefore, is described and measured in the same way as physical space.⁷¹ There is

⁶⁸ If time is a construct used to measure spatial displacement, and also Plato’s understanding that time is an image (form) of eternity, then it can be concluded that god stands outside this. Stoics held that god (Nature) was the rational, active principle (*logos*, *ratio*) who is eternal (Diogenes Laertius, 7.134).

⁶⁹ Rivers are used as instructive analogies by Stoics for the transience of life (Manolaraki 2013:100; cf. *Ep.* 23.8).

⁷⁰ The source and the annual flooding of the Nile River were popular themes in the ancient world, and ancient literary material on the Nile was vast: Aëtius, Diodorus Siculus, Lucan, and Aelius Aristides, to name a few. The Nile excursus is interesting in that it really is a *periegesis* (“guided tour,” Romm 1992) that narrates the Nile’s course (see 4a.2-16). According to Francisco Barrenechea (2010:259), the search for the Nile’s source is a “well-known *topos* of human ambition, as an act of aggression, an imperialistic push to transgress natural boundaries.” Eleni Manolaraki’s book *Noscendi Nilum Cupido: Exploring Egypt from Lucan to Philostratus* (2013) explores Roman representation of Egypt, particularly the Nile River. This imperialistic ambition is a topic that I discuss in the next section, but here I focus on the Nile’s peculiar flooding as a metaphor for man’s lack of control over time and death.

⁷¹ For example, *exiguo spatio*, §2.7 (“small space”); *per angusta*, §2.5 (“narrow channels”); *angusta*, §2.6 (“narrows”).

a problem; if time is a measurement, then who sets down the boundaries of time—man or Nature? Seneca distinguishes two types of time:⁷² 1) *expected time*, time that is measured according to man, and 2) *fixed time*, time that is measured according to Nature's laws. In other words, Nature's forces defy the boundaries of *expected time* but reside within Nature's *fixed time*. In order to see how these distinctions work, I apply them to an example.

Time becomes a major, if not obsessive, point of investigation for Seneca when discussing the Nile River in Book 4a.⁷³ In the following passage, Seneca investigates the timing of the Nile's flood which, unlike other rivers,⁷⁴ floods at a different time than what is expected. Note how Seneca's boundary-language tries to confine the Nile into boundaries (§1.4-2.1, trans. Hine 2014:57-58):

[1.4] *Quaeram enim tecum, id quod libro superiore distuli, quid ita Nilus aestiuis mensibus abundet. Cui Danuuium similem habere naturam philosophi tradiderunt, quod et fontis ignoti et aestate quam hieme maior sit. [2] Vtrumque apparuit falsum. Nam et caput eius in Germania esse comperimus, et aestate quidem incipit crescere sed, adhuc manente intra mensuram suam Nilo, primis caloribus, cum sol uehementior intra extrema ueris niues mollit, quas ante consumit quam tumescere Nilus incipiat; reliquo uero aestatis et ad hibernam magnitudinem redit atque ex ea demittitur. At Nilus ante exortum Caniculae augetur mediis aestibus ultra aequinoctium.*

⁷² Other scholars have commented on the “cosmic regularity” of the Nile; they, however, have not noted the two distinctions between *expected* and *fixed time*, and these distinctions are attributed to my own research. Cf. Williams (2008 and 2012); Romm (1992); Campbell (2010).

⁷³ In *Ep.* 88, particularly at §33, Seneca briefly discusses time, its essence and nature.

⁷⁴ §2.19-20: *Atqui horum montium flumina uere et prima aestate intumescunt, deinde hibernis minora sunt. Quippe uernis temporibus imbres niuem diluunt; reliquias eius primus calor dissipat. Nec Rhenus, nec Rhodanus, nec Hister, nec <Hebrus> subiacen<s Haemo> aestate proueniunt; et illis altissimae, ut in septemtrionibus, iugiter sunt niues. Phasis quoque per idem tempus et Borysthenes crescerent, ut niues flumina possent contra aestatem magna producere* (“Yet the rivers from these mountains rise in spring and early summer, but they are lower in winter; for in the springtime the rains melt the snow, and the first warm weather disperses the rest of it. Neither the Rhine, nor the Rhone, nor the lower Danube, nor the Cayster at the foot of Mount Tmolus swell in summer; yet they too have very deep snows, as is natural in northerly mountains. The Phasis too would rise in the same period, and the Borysthenes, if snow could produce full rivers despite the summer,” trans. Hine 2014:61).

[2] *Hunc nobilissimum amnium natura extulit ante humani generis oculos et ita disposuit ut eo tempore inundaret Aegyptum quo maxime usta feruoribus terra undas altius traheret, tantum usura quantum siccitati annuae sufficere poss<e>t.*

[1.4] For I shall investigate with you the topic I postponed in the previous book, why the Nile floods as it does in the summer months. Philosophers have reported that the Danube has similar characteristics, since its source is unknown and it is fuller in summer than in winter. [2] Both claims have turned out to be false: for we have discovered that its source is in Germany, and that it does not start to rise in the summer, but at a time when the Nile still remains at its usual level, as the hot weather is first beginning, and the fiercer sunshine is melting the snows before the end of spring. But all the snow has disappeared before the Nile starts to rise. For the rest of summer, the level of the Danube falls; it returns to its winter level and drops below it. But the Nile rises in the middle of summer, <not> before the rising of the Dog Star; and it is still in flood after the equinox.

[2] This is the most famous of the rivers that nature has exhibited to human eyes. She has arranged for it to flood Egypt in the period when the earth is scorched most fiercely by the heat and soaks up the water more deeply, all set to drink enough to compensate for the annual drought.

First, note the blurring between physical and temporal language. Both *mensibus* (“months”) and *mensuram* (“measure”) imply measurement, here, an allotted amount of time (or space) confined by a beginning and an end—a boundary. The Nile *should* flood within the *temporal* confines of the summer months (*aestiuus mensibus* “during the summer months”), but it remains within its *physical* boundaries, at its usual level (*intra mensuram suam* “within its own measure”). By blurring the boundary terminology between space and *expected time*, Seneca further proves that the magnitude of Nature rises above and beyond boundaries.⁷⁵ The Nile is presented as a

⁷⁵ Note, from the above passage, the language that elevates Nature and the Nile: *crescere* (“to increase”), *extrema* (“extremes”), *tumescere* (“to swell”), *magnitudinem* (“magnitude”), *augetur* (“it increases”), and *ultra* (“beyond” or “after”).

microcosmic example of Nature and her regularity and cosmic cycle; and it is also presented in the same manner as the flood (cf. 3.27-30), but just on a smaller scale (Williams 2012:126). Both events speak to Nature's order and cosmic regularity,⁷⁶ and her imposition of boundaries on her own forces.⁷⁷

This leads me to my next discussion on cosmic regularity and the Nile. The Nile rises (*augetur* "it is increased") in the middle of summer (*mediis aestibus* "in the middle of summer"), during the equinox. It defies expectations and computations (*comperimus*, §1.2 "we ascertain"), but is bound to Nature's authority (*disposuit* "arranged"): Nature responds to its own measure, and it does so at just the right level (space) and moment (time). For example, though the Nile remains outside *expected* time, it is still confined within a celestial clock, the equinox (*ante . . . ultra* "before . . . after"), Nature's *fixed time*. This means that there is a general predictability imposed by Nature, which lies outside man's control. The Nile floods during a specific time that is arranged by Nature, that is, when Nature decrees it; the same can also be said for the deluge and the conflagration (cf. *illo tempore*, 3.28.7 "at that time"). Nature's defiance of temporal boundaries, as demonstrated by the Nile's flooding, attests to Nature's ability to impose her own boundaries (time, for example) upon her forces.

Everything has a fixed time that is arranged by Nature.⁷⁸ Man, however, cannot fully grasp the regularity of the Nile's flooding, even though Nature displays the Nile before his eyes

⁷⁶ For example, Seneca claims that when water has become putrified, it purges itself at regular intervals (*certis temporibus*, 3.26.7 "at certain times"). Though he is speaking about water in general, the topic is about Nature's timing.

⁷⁷ Francisco Barrenechea (2010:276), in his discussion on the Nile excursus in Lucan, claims that the Nile's flood is a "symbol of the cosmic working of divine providence."

⁷⁸ Seneca discusses the *fixed time* of Nature: how she regulates everything, including illness, menstruation, tides, and so on (cf. 3.16.2).

(*ante humani generis oculos*, §2.1 “before the eyes of mankind”). Note that Seneca’s insertion of *oculos* (“eyes”) brings the discussion back to man’s limited perspective, and the debate between sense perception and cognition. In the excerpt above there are two ways of thinking about time, just as there are two ways of thinking about the world. One view of time, *expected*, is concerned with putting the Nile within the same *expected* boundaries that are also placed on the Danube, because they apparently have a similar nature (*similem* “similar”). Also note the use of the word *apparuit* (“it appeared”); both of these terms appear in connection with vision, and also have Epicurean notions.⁷⁹ Seneca purposely makes this connection between *expected time* and sense perception, stating that the reason the Nile timing is ambiguous is because it lies outside man’s perception. Even though Nature puts the Nile before man’s eyes, he cannot *actually* see the cosmic regularity of Nature and her forces. The Nile’s flooding—causes⁸⁰ and source—evades man’s grasp, his definitions, and *expected time*. On the other hand, Seneca connects *fixed time* with cognition⁸¹; Nature, thus, allows her forces to destroy and violate boundaries at a exactly the right time (which is *fixed time*).⁸²

Nature’s evasion of man’s grasp is further supported at the end of Book 4a. Because Book 4a remains in fragmentary form, with John the Lydian’s paraphrase, I can only speculate about the significance and meaning behind his final few sentences, and its relation to the end of 4a

⁷⁹ For example, Lucretius, *De Natura Rerum* 4:29-30, 52-53.

⁸⁰ The debate about the Nile’s source comprises the latter half of Book 4a (§2.17-30), after the excursus on alligators and dolphin battle (4a.15-16). Seneca “maps” out the sources of other inquirers, before placing his own scientific opinion, which is somewhat elusive, within the framework of the investigation. His cast of philosophical investigators leaves him (and us) wanting, as no one theory clearly addresses the uniqueness of the flooding.

⁸¹ So, *disponere* means “to arrange,” and is connected with god/Nature/Providence being the arranger of the world. See Note 66 for additional information.

⁸² Romm notes (1992:154) that in Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* Book 10 the *topos* of Caesar’s quest for source of the Nile is transferred from the geographical to the cognitive: the Nile excursus serves to highlight the human urge to conquer and go beyond the limits of the world, but, as Francisco Barrenechea (2010:268) argues, it should be done it mentally, through this sense of *uirtus* as an intellectual and imperialistic push.”

which I would assume has some moral nugget for the reader.⁸³ What remains is a summary of various theories on the Nile. Nevertheless, he states that there are many opinions about the Nile, but the truth so far as human beings are concerned with is in the meantime nowhere (τέως οὐδαμοῦ “so far nowhere”), and he concludes with a pithy *sententia*: τὸ δ’ ἀτρεκὲς ἐν βαθεῖ ἐστι (“certain [truth] is in the depths”).⁸⁴ What I can hypothesize about this statement is that the Nile’s flooding is certain, as it happens every year, according to Nature’s orders, but the truth of this certainty, of the predictiveness of the Nile’s flooding—the reason and the exact time—lies hidden deep within Nature, and outside human perception.⁸⁵ His paraphrase speaks to man’s inability to perceive what lies beyond his limitations which do not stop him from attempting to impose limits on Nature. And though he thinks he puts Nature in limits, in reality it is Nature who imposes a limit on mankind.

Now that I have examined Nature’s defiance of expectations, I now consider how this translates to man and his preoccupation with death. Simply put, it is a matter of man’s lack of control over *fixed time*, and, hence, over the inevitability of his final end. Just as Nature imposes boundaries of *fixed time* upon her forces (the Nile, for example), she does the same to mankind through death.

Death is a central focus for Seneca in Book 6, *On Earthquakes*. The instability of the earth gives way to man’s fear of death as he realizes that what he once perceived as immovable

⁸³ This can be assumed because the other books have moralizing themes and digressions. It would be unusual for Seneca to dismiss any opportunity for moralizing.

⁸⁴ John the Lydian in *De Mensibus*: ποικίλαι μὲν οὖν αἱ περὶ αὐτοῦ δόξαι, τὸ δ’ ἀληθὲς κατὰ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τέως οὐδαμοῦ· κατὰ γὰρ τὸ λόγιον—τὸ δ’ ἀτρεκὲς ἐν βαθεῖ ἐστι (“Opinions about the Nile are varied, but so far the truth has eluded us humans. According to the proverb, ‘Certainty is hidden deep,’” trans. Hine 2014:64). Here, I have used Hine’s (2014) translation but, above, have translated the excerpts myself in order to render a closer translation of the text.

⁸⁵ Gross (1989) and Tracy (2014:166).

and unshakeable is in fact unstable. Seneca repeatedly analogizes that the earth is synonymous with mankind, and he fuses the two when discussing the end of the earth (*finibus sui*, §2.7) and the end of mankind, events which reside outside man's control (§32.8): *Ego recusem mei finem, cum sciam me sine fine non esse? Immo, cum sciam omnia esse finita, ego ultimum suspirium timeam?* (Should I protest at my own ending, when I know that my existence is not endless? Or indeed, when I know that everything has an end, should I be afraid of my final gasp?" trans. Hine 2014:113).⁸⁶ He offers solace to the reader through the contemplation of death's inevitability alongside his discussion of earthquakes, and his preoccupation with the source of earthquakes resembles man's own obsessive preoccupation with death.⁸⁷ Man attempts to control the timing of his own end (and that of others), though he cannot. Nevertheless, death, like the Nile's flooding, is certain and carried out according to Nature (*Omnes sub eadem iacent lege*, §1.12 "Everything lies under the same law").

As with the Nile, Seneca posits two views on the timing, *expected* and *fixed*, and death defies *expected time* but not *fixed*. Because of man's limited perspective, he perceives that everything will last forever (*Et perpetua sibi omnia promittentibus*, §1.15 "when people promise themselves that everything will last," trans. Hine 2014:89), and that he occupies such an important place that he is incapable of dying unless it is a great death (cf. §2.4; 2.59.9); yet Nature, via death, puts man on equal terms (*omnes in aequo sumus*, §1.8 "we are all on equal terms"), and he reaches "the same end" (*ad eundem terminum*, §1.8). Man is bound to the cosmic

⁸⁶ Seneca claims that death is inevitable; man cannot escape it (2.59.4): *Hoc nulla diligentia euitat, nulla felicitas donat, nulla potentia euincit* ("No carefulness can avoid this, no good fortune can exempt us from it, no power can overcome it," trans. Hine 2014:191).

⁸⁷ Anna Lydia Motto and John R. Clark (1988:130) consider Seneca's discussion on time in their article: "Seneca repeatedly reflected on the passing of time, the brevity of life, the harbor of death. In fact, he became more and more acutely sensitive to such themes in his last years, 60-65 AD."

regularity and cycle of Nature, that is, *fixed time*,⁸⁸ which is death. Like the Nile's flooding, death is inevitable. Note that Seneca describes time (and death) as a "boundary" (*finem, fine, finita*)⁸⁹ that he claims that the *expected time* of death is uncertain but that it is inevitable. Its *exact* timing, however, lies beyond man's grasp (*Hoc affigamus animo, hoc nobis subinde dicamus: moriendum est. Quando? quid tua?*, §32.12 "Let us imprint this on our minds, let us constantly say this to ourselves: 'We must die.' When? What does it matter to you?" trans. Hine 2014:114). Death diminishes mankind and his perceived status in the world. It destroys perception, the belief that man controls Nature and even his own death, but death is everywhere (*Omnes sub eadem iacent lege*, §1.12 "Everything lies under the same law"). And like the flood, wind, and the Nile, Nature destroys, violates, and defies his limits and expectations, and she shrinks him down to size.⁹⁰

Seneca's objective in foregrounding man's attempt to surmount and control the boundaries of time (here, death) highlights man's ridiculous attempts to control everything by putting it within boundaries (1.praef.9): *O quam ridiculi sunt mortalium termini* ("How ridiculous are the boundaries of mortals"). It also furthers his argument against Epicureanism,

⁸⁸ Seneca claims that Fate goes in circles, that in some ways there is an element of predictability to it (§1.13): *Circumit fatum et, si quid diu praeterit, repetit* ("Fate goes round in circles, and if it missed something out for a while, it goes back to it," trans. Hine 2014:89).

⁸⁹ In *Epistle* 49 Seneca remarks on the brevity of life and time puts him in boundaries (§4): *Non solebat mihi tam velox tempus videri: nunc incredibilis cursus apparet, sive quia admoveri lineas sentio, sive quia adtendere coepi et computare damnum meum* ("Time was not wont to seem so swift to me; now its pace appears incredible, whether because I feel that its boundary lines are closing in on me, or because I have begun to be attentive and to compute my loss," trans. Motto and Clark 1988:137).

⁹⁰ Seneca discusses how easily man can be killed by trivial things (*leuibus causis discutiamur*, §2.3 "we are destroyed by trivial things"). But in his misperception man believes that he is so great that he must have a grand death (§2.4): *Ita uidelicet nati sumus, tam felicia sortiti membra, in hanc magnitudinem creuimus! Et ob hoc, nisi mundi partibus motis, nisi caelum intonuerit, nisi terra subsederit, perire non possumus!* ("But of course we are born like this, assigned such successful bodies! We have grown to such a stature! So are we incapable of dying unless whole sections of the world are shaken, unless the heavens thunder, unless the earth collapses?" trans. Hine 2014:90).

because attempts to control Nature stem from man's dependence upon sense perception (*Quia naturam oculis, non ratione, comprehendimus*, §3.2 "Because we grasp Nature with our eyes, not our reason"; *Iam uero nimis oculis permittit nec ultra illos scit producere animum*, §7.5 "They are relying too much on their eyesight, and do not know how to let their minds advance beyond it," trans. Hine 2014:94). Mankind's temporal boundaries (*expected time*)—his concern for time that is created in an effort to control his surroundings—are superfluous, because, though he believes he has control over Nature, his perception is an illusion; he in fact is limited and not in control (§32.11): *Ne ex hoc quidem intellegimus incomprehensibilis uitae condicionem et sortem temporis semper alieni quod annos numeramus amissos?* ("Even when we see that we are counting the years we have lost, can we still not understand that our life is essentially something we cannot cling to, that the time allocated to us is never in our possession?" trans. Hine 2014:114). Note his use of terminology indicative of cognition (*intellegimus* "we understand"; *incomprehensibilis* "incomprehensible"), and contemplation (*meditare* "to consider," *cogitatione* "by thought," §32.12; *cogitemus*, 2.59.6 "we think").⁹¹ Instead of trying to shore up perceived notions of self, he should accept that his life is short, and his power is limited. When he reflects upon Nature's defiance of man's boundaries of time (*expected time*), he confronts his own limitations, the boundaries of time (*fixed time*) imposed upon him by Nature.

IV. *Imperium sine fine*

In Vergil's *Aeneid* Jupiter gifts Aeneas an empire that will know no end, both spatially and temporally (1.278-79): *his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono | imperium sine fine dedi*

⁹¹ Compare Seneca on the flooding of the Nile, when he emphasizes Stoic notions of reason (*cogitationes*, 4a.1.1 "thoughts"; *comprehendi*, 4a.2.3 "to be comprehended") which speaks to how man should view the world and live his life.

(“To these Romans I place no boundaries nor duration. I give them an empire without end”). The phrase *imperium sine fine* unobjectionably refers to Rome and her empire, and points to her “expansionist spirit”⁹² which continues long after Augustus.⁹³ Before concluding I want to consider how Seneca’s boundary-language challenges this “spirit,” and reflects his attitudes towards imperialism and the materialism it effects.

Geography and politics in the ancient world go hand-in-hand,⁹⁴ and are pertinent to the representation and the preservation of the Roman empire, particularly as the “ideal city.”⁹⁵ Seneca’s destruction of boundaries is not a destruction of reality but of perception, more specifically the perception of geography. These boundaries are in effect arbitrary; they are a representation of reality, not actual reality (Harley 1992), but man often mistakes representation for reality. The division and demarcation of nature, whether by natural boundaries or by artificial boundaries, were crucial to assert claim over regions and peoples incorporated into the empire. By destroying them, Seneca is in effect destroying man’s perception of geographic space which, for the expanding empire, was essential to maintain.⁹⁶ The destruction of this representation challenges Roman expansion which Seneca saw “as the final stage in a long slide toward

⁹² Notice the boundary-language in Vergil’s quote: There will be no “measurement” (*metas*, associated with space) and no end (*tempora* “time”); the the empire will be “without limit” (*sine fine*). Vergil’s *Aeneid* establishes and legitimizes the Augustan regime, but Seneca criticizes this “Romanization” or perhaps “globalization” of the *oikoumene*.

⁹³ Nicolet (1991) addresses the interplay between geography and politics (history) in the ancient literary record. Hine (2006) also considers Rome and her imperial project as it is discussed in the *NQ*. Campbell (2010) and Barton (1994) consider how the empire used “intellectual” exploration as a facade to assert power and claims over territories; both authors focus on two different natural phenomena, rivers and astronomy respectively. Romm (1992) also devotes a chapter to Roman expansion and exploration.

⁹⁴ The same applies to history, as Nicolet (1991:5) claims that the history of Rome is a history of geography, and is “fundamentally a political history.”

⁹⁵ Wallace-Hadrill (2003).

⁹⁶ Nicolet (1991:2), in his analysis of geographic space in the early Roman empire, argues that the imposition of boundaries was important for Rome to retain a “perception of geographic space, of its dimensions and of the area they occupied.”

reckless ambition, amorality, and self-annihilation” (Romm 1992:123). Though I have discussed it briefly in the sections above, I want to delve deeper into how Seneca uses natural phenomena to implicitly challenge imperial agendas in the first century CE.

I turn now to consider how this fits into my discussion about the flood passage. Gauly (2004) argues that Seneca hints at political connotations during the flood, claiming that the flood signals the end of Nero’s reign, but Limburg (2007:159) finds fault with this metaphorical relationship, arguing that it is purely hypothetical. Though I do not venture to the extreme conclusion of Gauly, I am not as dismissive as Limburg. There is merit in Gauly’s argument, that there exists some political, or, perchance, anti-imperialist undertones at 3.27-30. Seneca makes no explicit reference to Nero, but he does make several generalizations about empires and their rise and decline which could be applied to Rome (cf. Hine 2006; Murphy 2004). Consider the following excerpt from the deluge passage (3.29.9, trans. Hine 2014:51):

Vnus humanum genus condet dies; quicquid tam longa fortunae indulgentia excoluit, quicquid supra ceteros extulit, nobilia pariter atque adornata magnarumque gentium regna pessundabit.

A single day will bury the human race. All that fortune’s indulgence has fostered for so long, all it has elevated above the rest, the noble and the honored alike, and the kingdoms of great nations, all will be sent to the bottom.

Implicit references to Rome have been suggested here (Murphy 2004:187), and it is easy to make that connection. By generalizing that *all* kingdoms will be inundated, Seneca can skirt the issue of naming Rome outright: he can talk about the ephemerality of the Roman empire without mentioning it. His reference to the impermanence of empires touches on his philosophical

discussion about man's misperception of his power, and is suggestive that empires, including Rome, are not as permanent and powerful as they seem (cf. 3.praef.9-10; Hine 2006:44).

Seneca continues with this philosophical theme elsewhere in the *NQ*. Consider also how wind's violation of boundaries hints at Rome and her expansion project, particularly at 5.18. Following the precedent set by Horace, Seneca challenges transoceanic expeditions, the transgression of one's native soil (*natalis soli fine*, §18.14 "within the boundaries of their own native soil"), and Rome's "expansionist spirit." He questions overseas exploration, discussing its harmful, immoral consequences (§18.5) and warning that even Rome is subject to the same invasion as that which they inflict abroad. He speculates that in some remote land a lord, puffed up by fortune's indulgences, may decide to invade (§18.12). While such a possibility was unlikely during Seneca's time (Hine 2006:44), it serves as a reminder of the fragility of power, and Fortune's vicissitudes.⁹⁷

Now I want to consider how the Nile questions Rome's authority. Seneca's discussion about the Nile's failure to rise to appropriate levels (4a.2.2), for example, conjures up the vagaries of grain supply,⁹⁸ the famines that Rome suffered, and the social and political upheaval caused by the supply (Manolaraki 2013:100). Again, Seneca does not directly reference Rome, but rather he alludes to it by discussing a physical event (the Nile's flood) that is charged with political significance. The passage diminishes Rome's control because it implies that Rome is still dependent upon Nature's benefits.

⁹⁷ Romm (1992:167) notes that the use of *abditio* (§18.12, "hidden regions") in this passage is "seen by other authors as the locus of Rome's greatest promise, is here depicted in ominous tones as her gravest threat."

⁹⁸ From the time of Augustus onward Rome depended upon Nile's grain supply (Manolaraki 2013:100).

Even Seneca's discussion about the source of the Nile challenges Rome's authority. Despite attempts to uncover the mystery (6.8.3; Hine 2006:63-64), the Nile's source remains uncertain. Francisco Barrenechea (2010:267) notes that in Latin literature "to refer to the source of the Nile was to refer to the limits of the inhabitable world, and to seek it was understood as a geographical *topos* for imperialistic ambitions and even, at times, for the transgression of human boundaries." Is it possible that Seneca in his discussion about the Nile, along with mentioning Nero's expedition (6.8.3),⁹⁹ uses this *topos* to challenge imperialistic ambitions to expand her boundaries?¹⁰⁰

Elsewhere in Seneca's texts, *Medea*, for example, Seneca foregrounds issues with Rome's expansion project. Consider *Medea* 376-80 when the Corinthian chorus speaks:

⁹⁹ Seneca claims that Nero went to uncover the source of the Nile, an intellectual investigation, but Pliny claims that he had other aims (*Natural Histories*, 6.181): *inter reliqua bella et Aethiopicum cogitanti* ("he [Nero] was thinking about a war with Ethiopia").

¹⁰⁰ For Lucan's use of the Nile *topos*, see Barrenechea (2010) and Manolaraki (2013).

*uenient annis saecula seris,
 quibus Oceanus uincula rerum
 laxet et ingens pateat tellus
 Tethysque nouos detegat orbis
 nec sit terris ultima Thule.*

There will come a time when the Ocean will release the bounds of things and when the great earth
 will lie open and Tethys will lay bare new worlds and Thule will not be last among the lands.

Notice how the *Medea* passage blurs with flood narrative which occurs when man becomes too immoral (3.30), and the passage “depicts the crossing of Ocean as a final, cataclysmic step in human moral decline” (Romm 1992:170).¹⁰¹ The passage not only challenges imperial ambitions but also warns about the consequences of transgressing boundaries.¹⁰² Consider one final example of Seneca’s “anti-expansionist spirit” in the *Medea* and the *NQ*—*ultima Thule*. The creation of a land beyond (*ultima Thule*) comes from Vergil’s *Georgics* (1.30) which was “one of the most cherished ideals of the Augustan age,” the “manifest destiny” of the ancient world

¹⁰¹ What is interesting is that Christopher Columbus used this passage, and also 1.praef.10 to claim that Seneca was prophesying about his “founding” of America. The passage in no way advocates for imperialism but rather challenges, in my opinion, it. See Clay (1992) and Romm (1994) for more on this.

¹⁰² In the previous lines of the *Medea*, Romm (1992:170) notes: “the increase in travel and exploration under the Romans is described as a perversion of world geography, confusing the order of nature and interchanging peoples on opposite sides of the globe.” Note the boundary-language (bolded) (3.369-72, trans. Romm 1992:170):

***Terminus omnis** motus et urbes
 muros terra posuere noua,
 nil qua fuerat **sede** reliquit
 peruius orbis:
 Indus gelidum potat Araxen,
 Albin Persae Rhenumque bibunt—*

(“All boundaries have shifted, and cities have set their walls in a new land; the all-travelled world lets nothing remain in its previous station; the Indian drinks from Araxes’ cold waters, the Persians drink from the Elbe and Rhine.”)

What is interesting is that exploration brings about the repositioning of boundaries but in doing so, it turns the world on its head: people exceed their cultural boundaries, for example, the Indians are in the Middle East (Araxes River).

(Romm 1992:171). And like *imperium sine fine*, Seneca flips this “destiny” on its head, using it as a *topos* for the limitations of the Roman empire. By emphasizing Rome’s limitations and the fragility of her existence, Seneca in effect destroys Rome’s perception of itself, and demonstrates the ephemerality and instability of Rome’s power.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined boundaries, and discussed the various ways man attempts to exact control over Nature. His imposition of physical, definitional, and temporal boundaries prove obsolete and powerless against Nature’s forces. Nature’s destruction, violation, and defiance of boundaries magnifies her actual power, while diminishing mankind’s perceived power and control. Seneca emphasizes the faultiness of sense perception which breeds anthropocentricity and materialism. His critique pushes against Epicureanism which advocates for thinking about the world through perception. And so, Seneca critiques Epicureanism by highlighting how Nature easily overcomes those perceived worldviews which diminish the immensity of Nature to boundaries and categories. He then puts forth his own solution—cognition. If man contemplates Nature through cognition, he eliminates misperception because he “sees” the world as it really is—undefinable, unbounded, and uncontrollable.

As I proceed with my examination of the *NQ*, it will be clear that the same pattern and critique appear throughout Seneca’s investigation of Nature. Seneca’s *NQ* serves as a Stoic contra-argument to Epicureanism. As I hoped to have argued, the natural phenomena discussed in this chapter demonstrate how easily Nature destroys or eludes boundaries, and in doing so, man’s perception of himself is drastically diminished when faced with Nature’s forces. Returning

to Seneca's statement—*O quam ridiculi sunt mortalium termini!*—man realizes the ridiculousness and futility of his imposition of boundaries upon Nature. In the next chapter, I examine what happens to those who refuse to let their minds advance beyond their sight.

Chapter 3: *Modum Excedam*

The moral digressions throughout the *NQ* have warranted much attention from scholars as they veer off the path from the scientific nature of the work.¹ Though at first these stories bear little to no relation to the scientific topic under discussion in each book, they, in fact, do. It is their “digressiveness” that causes the reader to pause and to think about the story’s implications for his life.² Deviation from boundaries (physical, human, and sensory) is a central focus in the *NQ*, as well as this dissertation, and these narratives deviate from boundaries in multiple ways. In one way they transcend the boundaries of a scientific work; within each book, Seneca digresses from the “normal path” of his topic—science (cf. 3.18, 19 *quaestione seposita . . . ad propositum reuertar* “with my investigation put aside . . . I shall return to my subject”)—to relate narratives that draw upon fictitious or historical characters and their transgressive acts against Nature. Here, there is another form of deviation—transgression. In these narratives some characters transgress boundaries of Nature, some transgress social boundaries, and others physical ones; each transgresses in some way, but *all* transgress their human status by seeing and reducing Nature to their limited, anthropocentric perspective. Because of this, they are incapable of seeing the world as it really is, through a cognitive perspective. Bound by their human limitations, they see the world through sense perception, and they are narrow-minded. Their misperception (of the world and themselves) in turn affects their behavior: they kill, conquer, and destroy Nature’s benefits. The characters are anti-exempla which show the effects of misperception and how it leads to the

¹For a full treatment of most, if not all, of the moral digressions, see Williams (2012), Limburg (2007), Berno (2003), Merino Codoñer (1989), and Stahl (1964). For those individual moral discussions (in Books 3, 1, 5, and 6) that are discussed in this chapter, see their respective sections for sources.

²Digressing implies a separation or even a departure, and Seneca departs from the boundaries of scientific investigation.

transgression of human boundaries.³ The passages warn of the dangers for those who rely too heavily upon perception.

In a similar manner to the characters' transgressions, Seneca's own rhetoric transgresses rhetorical bounds as he makes full use of rhetorical devices in the narrative—irony and dark humor, for example—in an effort to detour the reader and impart some wisdom through these stories. The reader steps back and disengages from the text, viewing the characters as symbols of behavior or actions, not actual human beings, and seeks to understand the author's underlying moral within the story.⁴ Oftentimes these passages invite a response from the reader to reflect inwardly upon his own behavior.

The narratives are meant to pierce the reader's soul and elicit a response that if he were to act in a manner similar to those in the story, then he would experience some form of anguish, shame, or guilt; if he has acted in a manner opposite to them—in other words, in a way that is socially acceptable—then the narrative would reinforce his virtuous, ethical behavior. The disruptive social acts within the passages correct the reader's immoral behavior and remind the reader, “Hey you, don't make mistakes! Think sensibly. See what happens when you don't keep your world and yourself within limits?” Instead of outrightly condemning the reader's behavior, the passages create an astute reader who imagines the story unfolding before his very eyes and who also judges whether characters' behavior could reflect his own disruption of societal norms.

³Jenkyns (2013) notes that vision is important in the Roman world; processions, monuments, and so forth visually exhibit the power and glory of Rome and her people, and because of this, he argues that Roman society is a shame culture, “a culture of the eye, real and imagined.” This is played out in these narratives as the characters are shamed by the dispassionate third-person for their immorality.

⁴Seneca creates what Nussbaum (1993:138) terms a “critical spectator.” On the one hand, he relates with the characters' humanity, but on the other hand, the absurdity of the passages distances him from the characters. He sees how the characters' immorality causes them to transgress their place within the cosmos, usually by exploiting Nature, and he comes to a greater understanding of who he is.

Furthermore, to prove his point—that reason is better than sense perception—Seneca stresses in these digressions man’s limitations in perceiving Nature.

By combining narrative with geography, Seneca creates place-worlds that are embedded with stories that convey standards for socially acceptable behaviors and actions. As the reader progresses through his investigative “journey” of Nature, these stories serve as mnemonic pegs in which Seneca hangs his moral teaching. He communicates much by saying very little, thereby promoting the reader’s imaginative capabilities. The narratives thrust the reader into a period of intense critical self-examination, as he contemplates the consequences and misfortune of those tragic figures who transgressed human boundaries. Much as he transports Lucilius in Book 4a (*te abducam*, 4a.1.1 “I shall take you away”), Seneca transports the reader across time and space to a place-world where language and landscape emerge, where the reader can recall the stories and gain knowledge from them, allowing that knowledge to inform and direct his current situation. He is reminded of what he sometimes forgets—*hominis meminisse* (3.praef.15 “remember your humanity”) because he is bound by his human state, the limitations of his senses. This then leads to feelings of superiority and aggression and also the exploitation of Nature and her resources, as exemplified by the figures who, in their human limitations, perceive, or rather, misperceive the world and reducing it to fit into a limited worldview. In their misconstruction of the world, they misperceive their own place within the cosmic order, believing that they occupy a far more powerful position than they do. They forgo reality in favor of illusion which leads to the transgression of human boundaries, whereby they feign scientific knowledge for the purpose of satisfying their immorality. Nature and her benefits, then, are exploited. Yet, these transgressive acts are not without punishment, as the characters are met with some punitive response from

Nature (death, for example). The passages, then, warn that if he acts in a manner similar to those within the story, he, too, could face similar consequences.

The reader turns inward to reflect upon his position within the cosmos and to determine whether his behavior is in-line with Stoic ethical doctrine,⁵ or if he resembles those in the narratives who serve as a measure, rather, an *anti*-measure against which the reader measures his own behavior. In this chapter, I examine four moral “digressions”—two fictitious and two historical—analyzing how Seneca combines language and landscape to create place-worlds which reinforce socially acceptable behavior.⁶ He does not outright upbraid the reader for his behavior, but he allows the narrative, combined with the reader’s imaginative reproduction of place, to indict the reader’s immorality. The narratives draw upon the consequences of the fictional (“Mullet Man” and Hostius Quadra) and historical characters’ (Philip’s explorers and Alexander) misperceptions to inform the reader on “how to live in accordance with Nature.”

I. Fabulae

The creation of place-worlds is not contingent upon “true” historical accounts but rather draws upon the reader’s imagination and own interaction with and understanding of the world.⁷ In essence, the reader partakes in the construction of history,⁸ as he draws upon his own *past*

⁵Cf. *Ep.* 95 *sequere naturam* (“follow Nature”).

⁶Tuan (1977:34-45) argues that both language and the human body shape interaction with the natural landscape. This interaction or relationship is often rendered through human desire and urge to put “location into narrative, creating place, and, indeed, landscape” (McInerney and Sluiter 2016:15).

⁷Keith Basso (1996:154 n.3) states: “Place worlds, of course, are not restricted to constructions of the past; they may also be imagined as pertaining to the future (that is, “what will happen here?”), as writers of science fiction are well aware.”

⁸To remember is to draw upon history, but it is history that is without authority, that is very personal and very subjective.

experiences and memories to create fictional place-worlds.⁹ These fictional place-worlds, though not fully representative of actual historical events or places, are important for the individual who has personal ties to that imaginative representation of geographic space, which then informs his sense of place. The narratives, then, become highly subjective and personal because they draw upon the reader's imagination and memory.

To an extent, fictional narratives are an exercise in using imaginative capabilities: the reader imagines the narratives unfolding before his eyes (really within his *animus*), as he actively engages in recreating the scenes based upon Seneca's rhetoric and his own perspective of the world. In other words, this "thought exercise" allows the reader's own experience to inform his place, as opposed to relying upon another's experience or perspective,¹⁰ and in doing this experiment, the reader gains the strength to resist immorality (3.praef.18).¹¹

Within this section I analyze how Seneca creates place-worlds which inform the reader by combining the reader's past and/or present geographic knowledge with fictional narratives. In telling the tragic fates of two fictional figures ("Mullet Man" and Hostius Quadra), Seneca allows his reader freedom to exercise his imagination when re-creating the satirical vignettes. He

⁹When one remembers, he often remembers a place itself or a person or event in place (Casey 1987).

¹⁰ At 4b.6, Seneca launches into a short rant against the *chalazophulakes* ("hail-watchers") at Cleonae who watch (*speculatores* "spectators") the sky for signs of hail. Instead of relying upon their own experience of the world, people—his people (*omnes nostrorum*, that is, Stoics "our people")—put their faith in those claiming to be experts at observing (*peritos observandurm*) clouds and predicting incoming hail. He voices his disbelief (*incredibile* "incredible") that something which can be "learned by experience" (*intellegere usu ipso*) is left to "officials" (*publice praepositos*). Man should depend upon his own powers of reason and observation to inform his understanding of Nature's patterns so that he might not fall victim to those whose perspectives may influence his life negatively.

¹¹ Liberal studies—such as the exercise in using one's moral imagination—not only free man from the confines of his birth but also allows him to measure himself on the basis of his *animus* (4a.praef.15), not his fortune. The investigation itself frees him from fears and misperceptions that others' observations cannot do.

draws upon both the reader's imagination and memory.¹² These highly personal place-worlds are, then, transformed into vehicles that carry messages about correct moral behavior.

i. Mullet Man

Seneca remarks, in *De Vita Beata* (2.4), that what men watch in amazement and point at in awe, what shines and sparkles outwardly, is in fact inwardly miserable,¹³ and in the following narrative about the spectacle of watching a mullet die, this is played out. Seneca carves out a place in the literary landscape to insert a narrative (*hoc loco* "at this place", 3.17.1) that challenges sense perception by distorting reality. The characters, in their misperception, manipulate Nature for the sake of luxury, illustrated here by the expensive "taste" of their eyes (that is, perspective). The way the mullet is caught and treated, contrary to natural standards, reflects man's distorted perception of the world. Perspective is about control, and under this illusion of "controlling" Nature, he oversteps boundaries and violates human and natural boundaries. Littered with dark humor and satirical theatricality,¹⁴ the story of "Mullet Man" exemplifies mankind's praise of luxury's works over those of Nature, and warns of the dangers of allowing perception to detract from and blind man to reality (cf. 3.praef.5.4-9). In the passage "Mullet Man" becomes so engrossed in "seeing" the world through his senses—as he watches a mullet dying before being cooked—that he transgresses from reality to illusion, or rather delusion (3.17.1-2, trans. Hine 2014:36; boundary-language bolded):

¹² Casey (1976 and 1987).

¹³ *De Vita Beata* (2.4): *Ista quae spectantur, ad quae consistitur, quae alter alteri stupens monstrat, foris nitent, introrsus misera sunt* ("Those things which they watch, at which they stop and stare, which one in awe points out to another, they shine outwardly, but inwardly are miserable.").

¹⁴ Richardson-Hay (2009:86) and Barton (1994:60).

*Multa hoc loco tibi in mentem ueniunt quae urbane, ut in re incredibili fabulae, dicas: “Non cum retibus aliquem nec cum hamis, sed cum dolabra ire piscatum! Expecto ut aliquis in mari ue<n>etur.” Quid est autem quare non pisces **in terram transeant**, si nos maria **transimus**, permutabimus **sedes**?*

At this point you can think of many witty things to say, as some tall story: “To think of someone going fishing not with nets or hooks but with a pick-axe! I’m waiting for someone to go hunting in the sea!” But why should fish not cross over to the land, if we have crossed the seas and found new homes?

The perversion of fishing, “fishing with a *dolabra* (‘pick-axe’),” ridicules the extent to which mankind has been driven to transgress not only physical boundaries but also human boundaries, thus completely altering his place (*permutabimus sedes* “we shall change our homes” or “our places”) within the cosmos: he switches places with the fish, crossing the seas, while the fish “cross over onto the land” (*in terram transeant*).¹⁵ The passage criticizes nautical exploration (*maria transimus* “we cross the seas”) for the sake of luxury, suggesting that luxury distorts man’s intellectual quest for understanding of the world.¹⁶ The *fabula* also proves the existence of fish living underground (cf. 3.16.4-5). Seneca remarks that just because man cannot see something (in this case underground fish), it does not preclude its existence. This remark speaks to the broader issue at hand, which I discuss below: that sense perception is not always useful or truthful in the investigation of Nature.

¹⁵ Compare how mankind, led by *luxuria*, transgresses normal bounds, and how the sea during the flood transgresses normal bounds (3.29.4).

¹⁶ At 5.18, Seneca remarks that man distorts the benefits of Nature (wind, here) for greed. Wind, he argues, was given so that man might learn more about the world; see 5.18.4ff especially.

“Mullet Man” stands as an anti-exemplum: in his narrowed perception, he reduces Nature and her resources—here, a mullet—to his perspective. Consider, in the following excerpt, how sense perception (underlined) creates the illusion of beauty and lures “Mullet Man” to transgress boundaries (**bolded**) (3.17.2, trans. Hine 2014:36):

*Parum uidetur recens mullus, nisi qui in conuiuiae manu moritur. Vitreis **ollis inclusi** afferuntur et obseruatur morientium color; quem in multas mutationes mors luctante spiritu uertit. Alios **necant** in garo et **condiunt uiuos**.*

A mullet does not seem fresh enough unless it has died in the guest’s hand. They are put in glass bowls and brought in, and as they die people watch their color, death causes many alterations to it, as their breathing struggles. They kill other fish in fish sauce, and marinate them while still alive.

Consider how Seneca distorts reality and emphasizes the absurd: first, he distorts death; it becomes a spectacle. Seneca ends the final sentence, with living (*uiuos* “while alive”): the fish are killed and seasoned . . . alive. The passage is strangely evocative of funeral preparation, except reversed: the fish is displayed in an *olla*¹⁷ and “seasoned” (*condiunt*¹⁸) before death. This reversal of “norms” emphasizes the absurdity and grotesqueness of the scene, and also anticipates the funeral procession at 3.18.6-7. Second, the fish is literally poised between life and death (*conuiuiae* . . . *moritur* “[within the hand] of the diner it is killed”), held within man’s power (*manu*¹⁹ “hand”). Third, the fish is even enclosed within physical boundaries, a jar (*ollis*

¹⁷ An *olla* is a round vessel that was used for cooking, or could be used to contain ashes (Heller 1932:196).

¹⁸ *Condiunt* can be used to describe preparing a body (embalming) for burial, for example, Cicero’s *Tusculanae Disputationes* (*condiunt Aegyptii mortuos . . . Persae . . . condunt* 1.108 “the Egyptians bury the dead . . . the Persians . . . bury”).

¹⁹ *Manus* can mean power; see *OLD* s.v. “manus.”

inclusi “kept within jars”) made of glass. Glass, like mirrors, feigns reality—it magnifies and intensifies it.²⁰

This supposed control over Nature is based upon the illusion of power created by sense perception. The glass jar may intensify the beauty of the mullet, but it distorts the reality of death; what man perceives he holds (both in his “hand” and the boundaries of the glass jar) is in fact a trick of the eyes. “Mullet Man” revels in his senses, admiring the beauty of the dying mullet; this beauty, like that of other semblances,²¹ remains, however, temporary, and only feeds his insatiable desire for more. The grotesqueness of the scene pulls the reader further into narrative, eliciting both shock and awe.²² While such a scene should divert eyes from death, the beauty of the dying mullet, which feeds the eyes instead of the stomach,²³ only furthers “Mullet Man’s” immorality—here, in the form of luxury. Note the sensory-language (underlined) (3.18.4-5, trans. Hine 2014:37):

[4] *Illa audiebamur: “Nihil est melius saxatili mullo.” At nunc audimus: “Nihil est moriente formosius. Da mihi in manus uitreum, in quo exultet trepidet.” Vbi multum diuque laudatus est, ex illo perlucido uiuario extrahitur.* [5] *Tunc, ut quisque peritior est, monstrat: “Vide quomodo exarserit rubor omni acrior minio! Vide quas per latera uenas agat! Ecce sanguineum putes*

²⁰ Cf. *uitre-* 1.3; 1.6; 1.7. Note that in these passages Seneca use sensory-language similar to the mullet passage: for example, *poma formosiora quam uidentur; si innatant uitro* (1.6.5 “Fruit appears more beautiful if it is swimming in a glass vessel”).

²¹ Note *facies*; cf. 1.3.4; 2.40.6.

²² *miraris* (3.17.2 “you marvel”), *mirabamur* (3.18.2 “we marveled”), *incredibili* (3.17.1 “incredible”), *incredibilia* (3.17.2 “more incredible”), *incredibile* (3.17.3 “incredible”).

²³ The scene is a reversal of expectations and norms; consider how the diner feeds his eyes instead of his stomach (3.17.3, 3.18.7). Williams (2012:77) notes that “. . . the physical world of the *Natural Questions* supplies a vision of natural process and normative/rational behavior that is overturned in the moral excesses and irrationality that Seneca condemns at the human level.”

uentrem! Quam lucidum quiddam caeruleumque sub ipso tempore effulsit! Iam porrigitur et pallet et in unum colorem componitur.”

[4] We used to hear people say, “Nothing is better than a rock mullet,” but now we hear, “Nothing is more beautiful than a dying mullet. Let me hold the glass vessel for it to leap and quiver in.” After they have sung its praises for ages, it is removed from that transparent aquarium. [5] Then each person, according to his expertise, points and says, “See how that red color has flared up, more vivid than any red pigment! See those veins running along its sides! Look, you’d think its stomach was full of blood! Look, brilliant white coloring, and blue, has appeared below its forehead! Now it is stretching out and going pale and turning to a single color.”

“Mullet Man” grasps, controls, and contains Nature both “in his hand” (*in manus*) and within his gaze.²⁴ Because spectacle, in this instance, is an illusion, it does not fully satisfy, and exacerbates luxury (*Quo peruenere deliciae*, 3.18.3 “How their self-indulgence has progressed!” trans. Hine 2014:37). The diner is not satisfied unless the mullet dies in front of him, before his eyes (3.18.3): *Nescio de re magna tibi credere; ips<i> oportet me credere. Huc afferatur; coram me animam agat* (“I can’t trust you on this important matter. I’ve got to see it for myself. Bring it here, let it expire in front me.” trans. Hine 2014:37). Sense perception is the only way for the diner to know the truth, that the mullet is dead, or even fresh. The diner’s dependence upon observation for understanding can be explained in terms of the two ways of thinking about the world (sense perception and cognition). In this satirical vignette Seneca elevates sense perception

²⁴ Being held within someone’s gaze (perspective) holds the illusion of possession and power (Cosgrove 1998 [1984]).

above cognition to demonstrate the absurdity and dangers of thinking about the world in this way.²⁵

The satirical nature of the interlocutor's objections (*inquis*, 3.18.1 "you say"),²⁶ partnered with the absurdity of watching the death of a living creature, set up Seneca's castigation of luxury (*castigare luxuriam*, 3.18.1 "to castigate luxury"). The absurdity of the scene, like that at the beginning of the *fabula* (3.17.1-3), highlights the extent that mankind's perception leads to the manipulation and exploitation of Nature's benefits for the sake of luxury (3.18.1.6-10): *Longa somniculosae inertisque luxuriae neglegentia quam sero expre<s>s<a> sero circumscribi se et fraudari tanto bono sensit! Hoc adhuc tam pulchro spectaculo piscatores fruebantur* ("Luxury has long been lethargic, idle, and negligent, and has only just woken up, has only just realized that it was being cheated and defrauded of something so fine. Up till now only fishermen enjoyed such a beautiful sight," trans. Hine 2014:36-37). Luxury tries to contain²⁷ just as it is contained (*expressa* "forced out"; *circumscribi* "to be encircled") by perception.

Just as "Mullet Man" pushes the boundary between sense perception and reason, between absurdity and reality, Seneca's interjection also pushes the boundary of "normalcy" (3.18.6-7):

Ex his nemo morienti amico assidet; nemo uidere mortem patris sui sustinet, quam optauit.

Quotusquisque funus domesticum ad rogum prosequitur? Fratrum propinquorumque extrema

hora deseritur; ad mortem nulli concurritur. "Nihil est enim illa formosius." Non tempero mihi

²⁵ Diners, like "Mullet Man," are destroyed in the flood at the end of Book 3 (Williams 2012:77): ". . . symbolic punishment nevertheless awaits within the text: the degeneration they exemplify is implicated in the cleansing physics of the world . . ."

²⁶ Williams (2012:26 n.26) differentiates the various cases of *inquis* ("you say") of the interlocutor; some, he claims, refer to Lucilius, but others refer to a disembodied "third party who allows Seneca to indulge in sharper exchanges . . . than if his Lucilius . . ." Here, one assumes that Seneca engages with a counterargument with the third-party interlocutor.

²⁷ The fish is "contained" (*inclusi*, 3.17.2) in a glass jar which is representative of luxury.

*quin utar interdum temerarie uerbis et proprietatis **modum excedam**. Non sunt ad popinam dentibus et uentre et ore contenti; oculis quoque gulosi sunt.*

[6] None of these people sits by a dying friend, none can endure seeing the death of his own father, though he has prayed for it. Hardly any of them follows a family funeral procession to the pyre! The final hour of a brother or neighbor is deserted, but people race to the death of a mullet: “For nothing is more beautiful than that!” [7] I cannot stop myself from using words recklessly from time to time and crossing the boundary of propriety: in an eating-place they are not content with teeth, and stomach, and mouth; they are gluttons with their eyes as well.

The narrative is a strong indictment of sense perception as it is devoid of reasoning, and revels in the pleasures of life. Note how Seneca’s outrage lacks restraint just as the diners lack of restraint: he exceeds the measure (or boundary) of what is fitting or proper (*proprietatis modum excedam* “I shall exceed the boundary of propriety”).²⁸ Even the word *temerarie* (“without thought”), which also means “accidental,”²⁹ is used to critique sense perception because it has connotations to Epicureanism, and its definition elsewhere is also used to challenge those who think the world is created *temeritate* (1.praef.15)—Epicureans.³⁰

The passage is meant to disturb the reader who then must interpret the moral implications inherent in the *fabula*: he can either identify with “Mullet Man,” becoming completely awestruck and giving into the lust of his senses (*dentibus et uentre et ore . . . oculis*), or he can detach

²⁸ *Proprietatis*, elsewhere in the *NQ*, implies a characteristic or nature of something, for example, a ball has certain “properties” (*pilae proprietates*, 4b.11.3). To exceed a measure of something’s nature is to transgress a boundary given to something by Nature.

²⁹ See *OLD* s.v. “temerarius.”

³⁰ Hine (2014:209 n.14).

himself from *tam pulchro spectaculo*³¹ (“such a beautiful spectacle”), rising above the spectacle’s allure and using reason to extract something greater from the passage, a lesson.

“Mullet Man’s” narrowed perspective changes the mullet from a living creature into an object for consumption³²—visual and edible (*oculos ante quam gulam pauit*, 3.17.3 “it has fed the eyes before the stomach”). Positioned “between life and death” (*inter uitam ac mortem*, 3.17.3), the mullet’s fate remains within the perceived grasp of the diner who determines whether it lives or dies—such “power,” granted by luxury, is, however, considered incredible (3.17.2): *Hoc miraris accidere; quanto incredibilia sunt opera luxuriae, quotiens naturam aut mentitur aut uincit?* (“Are you surprised by this? How much more incredible are the achievements of luxury! How often it either fakes or surpasses nature!” trans. Hine 2014:36).³³

He is, however, blind to reality—that is, what is perceived (*mirabamur*, 3.18.2 “we marvel”) as true or real in the mullet passage is, in fact, just *mirum* (“marvel”). He forgoes reality

³¹ 3.18.1.10. In *Ep.* 7, Seneca confesses his weakness when going to the games: *Ego certe confitebor imbecillitatem meam: numquam mores quos extuli refero... nihil vero tam damnosum bonis moribus quam in aliquo spectaculo desiderare* (*Ep.* 7.1 “I certainly shall confess my weakness: never do I return the same as I left . . . but nothing is so harmful for good *mores* than to sit at some spectacle.”). It seems that although the reader, the critical spectator, has the power to control his reaction to these spectacles, the allure of spectacles is inevitably more powerful. He seems powerless when he is up against perceptions, not just his own but also other’s (poets’ and the crowd’s): *Etiam sine magistro uitia discuntur* (3.30.8 “Vices are learned even without a teacher”). Seneca implies that the limitations of humanity (limited senses) make man susceptible (weak) to wickedness. Seneca emphasizes that man is constantly to separate himself from this limited scope. *Sic ergo formare, ut scias non posse te consequi, ut sis impenetrabilis* (4a.praef.5 “And so prepare yourself in such a way, as you are impenetrable). See Gunderson (2015) for a more in-depth analysis of “ethical spectacle” in *Ep.* 7.

³² Fish is also likened to a pet (*delicia*) (3.17.3): *Hi sunt qui fabulas putant piscem uiuere posse sub terra, et effodi, non capi. Quam incredibile illis uideretur, si audirent natate in garo piscem nec cenae causa occidi <sed> super cenam, cum multum in deliciis fuit et oculos ante quam gulam pauit!* (“There are those who think that fish can live under the earth, and can be dug up, not caught. How incredible it would seem to those, if they heard of a fish swimming in sauce and being killed not for dinner but killed at dinner, even though it had been considered a pet for a long time and had fed the eyes before the gullet!”).

³³ Seneca is being facetious because Nature surpasses man and his vices. See Chapter 2 for discussion on Nature surpassing man; also see 3.27-30, when the flood destroys man because of his immorality, for an example.

—death—for the ephemeralness of a mullet’s death. Death becomes a spectacle³⁴ in the eyes of “Mullet Man,” provided that he is far enough detached from any hint of *his own* mortality (cf. 3.18.6). But consider how Seneca insinuates how close to death man is: the placement of *extrema* (“farthest”) close to *propinquorum* (“neighboring”); even though man may attempt to “sever” (*deseritur*) himself from death (*extrema*), it is close to him (*propinquorum*), and he is contained within the boundaries of death (*extrema hora . . . ad mortem* “final hour . . . at death”), unable to escape it.

The insertion of human limitations—here, in the form of death (*extrema hora*, 3.18.6)—into the story is, on the one hand, meant to hold up an exaggerated reflection of luxury, but, on the other hand, it reminds the reader of the lack of control he has. In reality, mankind holds no power over Nature, including death: his misperception spurred on by vice causes him to misconstrue his position within the cosmos. The passage serves to diminish mankind’s power by highlighting the absurdity of man’s illusion of power. Thus, man learns to live life knowing that he is not as invincible as he perceives (cf. 3.praef.9).

Furthermore, the transition from the mullet’s death to that of mankind highlights the extremes of man’s immorality, while also imposing animal characteristics onto humans, which allows the reader to identify with the creatures in the passages preceding and following the *fabula*. The story lies sandwiched between these two passages (3.16 and 3.19), which focus on

³⁴ This theatricality of death is not confined to the *NQ*; *Epistle 7* also addresses the issue of death as a spectacle: *Mane leonibus et ursis homines, meridie spectatoribus suis obiciuntur* (*Ep.* 7.4 “In the morning humans are thrown to the lions and bears, at mid-day they are thrown to their spectators.”). Seneca warns the reader of the dangers involved in attending the games where he, feeding the insatiable hunger of his eyes, is swept up in the obscenities of the death spectacles, forgetting his *mores*. The crowd, Seneca advises, should be avoided, as it can easily influence and negatively affect man. Death as spectacle in the ancient world is a widely discussed topic; Jenkyns (2013) discusses Roman obsession with public spectacles such as executions and gladiatorial shows. Williams (2012:77) also mentions that the diners’ interest in death is reminiscent of a play or theater. Gunderson (2015:76ff) also addresses Seneca’s “ethical spectacle,” stating that Seneca uses spectacle for ethical ends; the reader is molded and instructed by critically evaluating the scene.

the permeability of nature's laws: even though man's physical limitations prohibit him from seeing these laws at work, he can infer by reason that what occurs above also occurs below (3.16.4).³⁵ And, in waters hidden below the earth, there exist creatures that are noxious and bloated from long indolence in the darkness (3.19). 3.16 highlights the ordered nature of god (*logos, ratio*), his divine pervasive nature, and also the physical limitations of mankind who, if he were to use reason, would see this ordered nature. Yet, like those living creatures produced in darkness (moles, for example), he lives in intellectual darkness. His limitedness hinders his abilities to perceive the laws of nature working in tandem and pervasively throughout the cosmos, and he, like "Mullet Man," overindulges in his senses, and this skewed perception sets the reader up for Seneca's indictment of sense perception at 3.18.

On the other side of the fable, 3.19³⁶ follows up Seneca's castigation of luxury (3.18): those who live like a mass (*turba*) of subterranean creatures—blind and in darkness—become "horrid" (*horrida*), "disgusting" (*turpis*), and "harmful" (*noxia*) because of the deprivation of daylight (*diem* "day"). Seneca's physical language, here, doubles as ethical: his description of the subterranean earth, in particular the fish, presented at 3.19 highlights the consequences of neglected morality. "Mullet Man" forgoes knowledge, and viewing the world from this blind, limited viewpoint, he becomes wrapped up in his senses and eventually harms others—in this case, a mullet.

³⁵ Seneca asks the reader if it is "surprising" (*mirum*) that he sees (*uideas* "you would see") that everything has an ordered nature to it. He talks about a subterranean earth, stating that because everything is ordered, then what happens above must happen below the earth too. In this subterranean world, he continues, there is "darkness" (*tenebris*), and living creatures that are "sluggish" (*tarda*), "ill-formed" (*informia*), and "blind" (*caeco, caeca*) because they were created in darkness (*deest lumen* "there is no light") and "in stagnant water" (*aquis torpentibus*).

³⁶ Seneca continues his subject on subterranean creatures, stating that there are "hidden" (*occuli*) waters which produce fish which are poisonous and ugly (*turbam* "crowd," *horridam aspici et turpem ac noxiam gustu* "horrible and ugly to look at and poisonous") because of their inactivity. It is not "surprising" (*mirum*) that the "darkness" (*diem caelo, tenebris, lucis expertia, latebrosis*) makes them fat and they are indigestible because of their idleness (*longo otio* "long leisure").

ii. *Hostius Quadra*

As the reader progresses on his journey through the cosmos, he moves from the realm of seen to unseen which requires him to further shed the limitations of his senses and rely more upon reason. In an effort to do so, he must be wary so as not to fall victim to the beauty and allure of sensation as exemplified by the tragic figure Hostius Quadra. Seneca uses Hostius Quadra as an anti-exemplum; he is as a representation of those who view the world from a sensory perspective, and stands in opposition to the cognitive worldview. In this section Seneca creates two worldviews: one seen through the eyes of Hostius Quadra (sensory) and another created through Seneca's criticism of Hostius (cognitive).³⁷ I first consider how Seneca introduces the tale with a discussion on the illusion of sense perception.

At 1.15 Seneca deviates from a scientific discussion about rainbows and garlands to the *fabella*³⁸ about Hostius Quadra. Though the narrative seems out-of-place within the physical context of the whole work, previous scholars have taken different approaches to fuse the scientific (physical) with the ethical.³⁹ His scientific discussion primes the reader for Hostius Quadra, forcing him to think about the deceptiveness of sense perception in the physical world,

³⁷ Williams (2016:178) claims that Hostius Quadra is a reflected distortion of the Stoic *sapiens* who engages in a journey of the sublime and "seeing it all."

³⁸ The use of the word "*fabella*" has warranted much attention recently. Gauly (2004:121) claims that the *fabella* indicates to the reader that there is a lesson to be learned. Berno (2002:241) claims that the term takes on different meanings—to indicate an aesopic fable and the suicide of Marcellinus—but in the *NQ* it takes on a didactic meaning, an *exemplum*. Berno (2003:36-41) reconsiders the term, and argues that the *fabella* develops through three narrated descriptions.

³⁹ This tale has been the subject of many articles and books; though most scholars treat the passage as a separate entity, Williams and Volk (2016, especially pp. 177-79), Williams (2012 and 2005), Limburg (2007), Gauly (2004), and Berno (2003) attempt to integrate the physical and the ethical in their analyses. Leitão (1998) and Bartsch (2000) discuss passion, self-knowledge, and mirrors, and how Seneca's discussion on rainbows and garlands as distorted, mirrored reflections is linked to Hostius' distorted mirrors. Bartsch also links Platonic and later philosophical thought to the story, and notes the similarities between Hostius and Narcissus. Berno (2002) argues that Seneca creates Hostius as a Stoic anti-*sapiens* (presented in the preface of Book 1); this study heavily influences Williams (2012) who builds upon the "Hostius versus the Stoic *sapiens*" argument.

before moving to the ethical. The narrative pushes the boundaries of reality in order to show the absurdity of sensory thinking (much like “Mullet Man”). Seneca posits cognition as the favorable of the two; he identifies sensation with deception,⁴⁰ and reason with “truth” (*uerum*, §15.6). His argument implies that one must be vigilant in his investigation of Nature, particularly here in reference to the unseen, and advocates the use of reason to “judge” (*iudicamus*, §15.7) accurately what is truth and what is not. Rainbows and garlands, for example, mimic the deceptiveness of mirrors (*facies*, §15.3 “appearance”; *detorquentur* “distort,” *augeant* “increase,” §15.8)⁴¹; though beautiful, “they are semblances”—*simulacra ista sunt* (§15.7). Thus, the reader must depart from relying solely upon sense perception lest he become vulnerable to and deceived by his senses, and assume a rational approach (cognitive).⁴²

This rational approach combats the deceptiveness of illusions which feign power and control because cognition is not confined to human limitations. Seneca’s final remark in this passage (note the boundary-language bolded)—*sunt quae in **infinitum** augeant, ita ut humanum habitum **modumque** excedant nostrorum corporum* (“For, as I have said, there are mirrors that deform the appearance of those who look at them, and there are some that enlarge them immeasurably, so that they exceed human stature and the scale of our bodies,” trans. Hine 2014:159)—underlines this illusion, because mirrors turn truth into deceit, and it serves as a launchpad from which Seneca can introduce Hostius Quadra whose pursuit of knowledge is spurred on by his lust for the attainment of these *simulacra* (§16.1-2, trans. Hine 2014:159):

⁴⁰ *Decipiant aciem et mendacio constant* (§15.6 “they deceive our eyes and consist of an illusion,” trans. Hine 2014:158); *fallaciam* (§15.7 “deceit”); *mentientis* (§15.7 “illusion”).

⁴¹ See 1.5.14 especially for Seneca’s discussion on the deceptiveness of mirrors.

⁴² Though I have discussed this passage in Chapter 1, it is important to reiterate here the anti-Epicurean sentiment in this section; Seneca is in effect challenging sensory thinking, and does so implicitly in the Hostius Quadra passage (1.17).

[1] *Hoc loco uolo tibi narrare fabellam, ut intellegas quam nullum instrumentum irritandae uoluptatis libido contemnat et ingeniosa sit ad incitandum furorem suum. Hostius fuit Quadra, obscenitatis in scaenam usque p<ro>ductae. Hunc diuitem auarum, sestertii milies seruum, diuus Augustus indignum uindicta iudicauit, cum a seruis occisus esset, et tantum non pronuntiauit iure caesum uideri.* [2] *Non erat ille ab uno tantummodo sexu impurus, sed tam uirorum quam feminarum audus fuit fecitque specula huius notae cuius modo rettuli imagines longe maiores reddentia, in quibus digitus brachii mensuram et crassitudinem excederet. Haec autem ita disponebat ut, cum uirum ipse pateretur, auersus omnes admissarii sui motus in speculo uideret ac deinde falsa magnitudine ipsius membri tamquam uera gaudebat.*

[1] At this point I want to tell you a story, so that you may learn how lust does not disdain any means of stimulating pleasure and applies its ingenuity to encouraging its own madness. There was a certain Hostius Quadra who turned his obscenity into a dramatic spectacle. The deified Augustus judged that this rich, miserly man, a slave to his own hundred millions, did not deserve to be avenged after he had been killed by his slaves; he virtually declared that he had been lawfully executed. [2] His impurity was not confined to one sex, but he lusted after men as well as women. He made mirrors of the type I have just described, giving off greatly magnified images, in which a finger appeared longer and thicker than an arm. He arranged them so that when he was submitting to a man with his back to him, he could see his partner's every movement in a mirror; and then he delighted in the illusionary size of his member as though it were real.

The narrative itself is a scene (*in scaenam* “into a scene”), a space where the reader can watch the spectacle that is Hostius Quadra (*spectaculum*, §16.6 “spectacle”). As if watching a theatrical presentation, he imagines the world through Hostius’ eyes, a world built upon sense perception (*uideri* “seem,” *imagines* “images,” *specula* “mirrors,” *speculo* “mirror,” *uideret*, “he sees,” *falso magnitudine* “false enormity,” *tamquam uera* “as if real”). Deceived by his senses, Hostius, in his misperception of the world, becomes completely consumed by the power of

illusion, and he, just as a mirror distorts true bodies (*falsa . . . uera* “false . . . true”), distorts Nature’s benefits—mirrors⁴³—for the sake of lust (*insatiabile malum*, §16.3 “insatiable evil”). He creates this world by arranging (*disponebat*, §16.1 “he arranged”; *diuideret disponeretque circumdedit*, §16.4 “he divided and arranged and put around himself [mirrors]”; *circumponam*, §16.8 “I shall place around myself”) mirrors in a way that feed his illusion. He creates a world that is confined to the body, to sense perception, a worldview that is a distorted image of reality (*mensuram et crassitudinem excederet*, §16.2 “it might exceed the measure and the thickness”). He gawks at the enormity of his partner’s distorted members (*incredibilem magnitudinem imaginum*, §16.8 “incredibly large image”).⁴⁴ Knowledge only becomes the means with which he can further satisfy sensation, and he becomes an eyewitness to his own world (*spectator*, §16.3 “spectator”; *spectabat*, §16.5 “he watched”). His knowledge and worldview is based upon sense perception. Instead of seeking out Nature’s “secrets” (*secreta*, cf. 3.praef.) and “measuring god” (that is, Nature) (1.praef.16 *mensum deum*) for the sake of virtue, he “openly measures” men (*aperta mensura*, §16.3) for the sake of vice.

Nature becomes an object of possession (*capit*, §16.9 “he seizes”), to control, manipulate, and contort to his perspective, and it is from this viewpoint that Hostius fabricates his own skewed worldview and transforms Nature’s benefits into a “spectacle” (*spectaculum*, §16.6). Note the totalizing language in the narrative (*omnes*, §16.2; *omnibus*, *omni*, §16.3; *omne*, §16.4; *toto*, *omnia*, §16.5). What is interesting is that in Hostius’ world what he considers to be great or

⁴³ Seneca remarks that mirrors were invented so that “man might know himself” (*se nosset*, 1.17.4), yet, like Hostius Quadra, he often “distorts” (*detorquebat*, 1.17.5) these benefits for the sake of vice (*libidinem luxumque*, 1.17.5 “lust and luxury”).

⁴⁴ Williams (2016:178) notes that Seneca’s use of *magnitudinem* “is itself philosophically distorting here, to the effect that Hostius delights in the false sublimity implied by *magnitudine*.” *Magnitudino animi* (“greatness of animus”) in Senecan thought is a virtue and indicates self-completeness (*ibid.*:179). See also *Epistle* 92.3 for Seneca’s take on what constitutes a happy life (*animi magnitudo*).

all-encompassing is related to the human realm, particularly the body; he reduces the totality of the cosmos to that of the human body.⁴⁵ His exploitation of Nature's benefits hinges on a perspective that views the world through a narrow lens. Man attempts to reduce Nature to a set of definitions, boundaries, or limits (here a mirror, cf. 1.3.6)—an attempt that lies outside the laws of Nature (*naturae modum*, §16.8 “the boundary of Nature”)

But Seneca challenges this perspective, and makes a new space (*hoc loco*, §16.1) for himself to criticize Hostius Quadra (§16.1): *ut intellegas quam nullum instrumentum irritandae uoluptatis libido contemnat et ingeniosa sit ad incitandum furorem suum* (“... so that you may learn how lust does not disdain any means of stimulating pleasure and applies its ingenuity to encouraging its own madness,” trans. Hine 2014:159). He makes a space, combining narrative (*narrare fabellam*, §16.1 “to tell a story”) with spatial terminology (for example, *in balneis* “in bathhouses,” *disponeretque circumdedit* “he arranged and placed around himself [mirrors]”) to create an imaginative scene⁴⁶: Just as Hostius is a spectator to his own immorality, so is the reader watching the scene unfold before him. This imaginative scene conveys morality through the immorality of Hostius whose “pursuit” of carnal knowledge feeds his lust and eventually results in his death. The dispassionate third-person becomes involved at 1.16 and reaches his “limit” (*modum*, §16.9) much in the way that Hostius does and delivers his verdict of Hostius (§16.9): *Facinus indignum! Hic fortasse cito et antequam uideret occisus est; ad speculum suum*

⁴⁵ For example, he seeks in “every” bath-house (*omnibus*, 1.16.3) men that he can submit his “entire body” to (*in omnia, toto corpore*, 1.16.5).

⁴⁶ Tally (2013:50) argues that “the very act of storytelling is also a process of producing a map.” Whether real or imaginative, stories generate new places and narratives, and the author, consciously or unconsciously, participates in this process. For example, “selection and omission” demonstrate the similarities between author and mapmaker (Turchi 2004:25): decisions to include or exclude events, people, places. An author must select what he wants his readers to gain from his narrative. In his description of the Hostius *fabella*, Seneca takes the reader from bathhouses and “brothels” (*lupanar*, §16.6) to Hostius’ bedroom and where he describes the placement of mirrors, and even Hostius’ sexual positions (*auersus* §16.2 “with his back to him [his sexual partner]”; *in omnia* §16.5 “he admitted them at all points”).

immolandus fuit (“What an outrage! He was perhaps killed too quickly, before he could see it: he ought to have been sacrificed in front of his own mirror!” trans. Hine 2014:160). The humor presented here highlights the absurdity of Hostius’ immorality and “intellectual pursuit.” Hostius’ interjection at §16.7-8 exemplifies the mindset attributed to those who seek knowledge of the world for immoral purposes, which contrasts with the reader’s (and Seneca’s) journey through the cosmos.⁴⁷ His immorality transgresses the limit of propriety, and he is worthy of a death fitting of his crime. Ironically, he suffers such a fate: he, a slave to his own vices, is killed by his own slaves (*sestertii milies seruum...a seruis occisus esset*, §16.1 “ . . . this rich, miserly man, a slave to his own hundred millions . . . had been killed by his slaves . . .” trans. Hine 2014:159). The irony is that he was a slave to his own senses, which echoes Seneca’s warning that enslavement to oneself is the severest punishment (3.praef.16). Hostius’ servitude to immorality interestingly contradicts the purpose of scientific investigation, which is for self-reflection and amoral edification. Nature becomes the means with which mankind might know himself (1.17.1) and free his mind from limitations and immorality (cf. 1.praef.13; 3.praef.18).

It is here at this satirical *fabella* that the reader reflects (*intellegas*, §16.1 “you might learn”) and compares his virtuous pursuit of knowledge with Hostius who sees the world with his senses.⁴⁸ Judging from what happened in the narrative, the Stoic reader, on the other hand, imagines the world cognitively for the sake of virtue (cf. 1.praef.6). He “surveys the world” (*circumit mundum*, 1.praef.8.4) and not only gains but also shares “knowledge” (*noscenda*, 3.praef.1). Because he is not tied to visual representations or images, he is freed to imagine the world on a much grander scale, which allows him to resist any moral

⁴⁷ Cf. 3.praef.1.1-6; 3.praef.4.5-7; 3.praef.18.4-8.

⁴⁸ *Ocul-* (§16.3, 4, 7 “eyes”); *os/or-* (§16.3, 5 “mouth”).

issues tied to his misperception. Unlike Hostius, the reader avoids the allure and illusion of empty images that give off distorted images of true objects. His cognitive worldview allows him to measure the cosmos beyond limits or measurements, and from this he learns his smallness in comparison with the vastness of the cosmos (*omnia angusta esse mensus deum*, 1.praef.17.4-5 “everything is puny after measuring god”).

II. Historici

Though Seneca has explicitly stated that he will not discuss history, he allots several digressions (cf. 3.praef.5, 7) to such a subject—the purpose being to instruct the reader by bringing to the present the mistakes of the past. As William Chapman (1979:47, italics in the original) has written, “the past is at its best when it takes us to places that counsel and instruct, that show us who we are by showing us where we have been, that remind us of our connections to *what happened here*.” By inserting parts of the past into the narrative, Seneca fills the literary landscape with both past and present significances, and allows the past to inform the reader’s understanding of socially acceptable standards. Because the reader *should* already be familiar with the outcome of these figures, Seneca can communicate much by saying little, thereby promoting the reader’s imaginative capabilities. So, for example, the mere mentioning of Xerxes, Alexander, or even Crassus (5.18.10) (without a full-on explanation) serves as a mnemonic peg on which Seneca hangs his moral teaching. The reader, already familiar with the outcome of these characters, pauses, asking, “What’s going on here? Seneca clearly argued at the beginning that historians have spent their lives writing about the instability of fortune in the lives of famous men, and that he would focus on philosophy. So why does it matter?”

The passages invite the reader to partake in the process of engaging with and disengaging from the text. In other words, he becomes a critical spectator, merging together acts of remembering and imagining to create a place-world which instructs the reader, and brings to life portions of the past (Basso 1996:6). The historical tales, like the fictitious passages, elicit a response from the reader who is warned that if he acts in a such a way, something similar or analogous to the characters in the stories might happen to him.

For the purpose of this section, I examine two instances where Seneca uses historical figures (Philip and Alexander) to construct place-worlds where the mistakes of the past inform the reader's present circumstances. Misperceived nature affects the treatment of and interaction with the surrounding environment. Both Philip and Alexander's skewed perception, for example, leads to the transgression of human boundaries. The passages highlight their misunderstanding and misuse of Nature for reasons beyond self-knowledge and intellectual growth.⁴⁹ Their perspectives feign the illusion of reality, causing them to mistake their places within the cosmos, and the world and her resources then become an object to possess and control. Their behavior is anthropocentric and tied to their perception: they exemplify those who depend upon sense perception to see the world, and, as previously discussed, this worldview is narrow.

⁴⁹ Scientific knowledge dispels fears and old religious ideas, such as stated about the uneducated people who believe rain can be attracted and repelled by incantations.

i. Philip's Mining Expedition

In Book 5 Seneca tells a “story” (*fabula*, §15.1) about men who were sent down by Philip II of Macedon to look for deposits of precious metals.⁵⁰ If the details are stripped away, Seneca’s employment of moral imagination, combining historical narrative with geography (place-world), is apparent: the reader is left to judge for himself what he should make of this *fabula*. The faults of his ancestors are held up to him like a mirror which teaches him what not to do. The story draws upon the mistakes of historical figures (Philip, in this case) and ancestors whose greed (*auartia*, §15.1), as the story relates, has a strong (and longstanding, *uetus, olim*, §15.1) grasp on humanity (cf. §15.2). It also indicts those whose greed forces them to forsake their human status and plunge into the darkness of the earth. Man, who was created to stand upright and contemplate nature (*hominem ad sidera erectum*, §15.3 “man stands up [looking up] at the stars”), descends into the depths of the earth to plunder and satisfy his greedy, lustful eyes. He becomes so captivated by this pursuit that he loses sight of his true nature,⁵¹ transgressing to a realm where the “boundary between night and day” (*noctium dierumque discrimen*, §15.3) becomes muddled, and he enters a world contrary to Nature.

In the following excerpt, I highlight spatial and sensory terminology and consider how Seneca creates this world, a representation that is built upon sense perception (spatial-language

⁵⁰ The story is not without historical credibility. Diodorus Siculus (16.8) mentions that Philip opened several mines and increased the Macedonian kingdom’s wealth. Elsewhere Seneca mentions Philip and Alexander (cf. 3.praef.5-6).

Seneca’s juxtaposition of the conquests and treasures of Philip and Alexander alongside the forces of Nature drastically diminishes their power and exploits as they are easily overtaken by the magnitude of Nature (Williams 2012:34). See Roller (2001:102) for his interpretation that questions Seneca’s attribution of *uirtus* for military achievements.

⁵¹ Nature gave man these things so that he might know himself better, but vice creeps into his life and causes him to go “overboard” with his investigation of natural phenomena. Oftentimes, as exemplified by the characters in the story, they misuse and misunderstand the reason Nature gave man certain benefits.

bolded, sensory underlined) in order to demonstrate how Seneca maps mankind against the vastness of the subterranean world. In analyzing Seneca's tragedies, Winter (2016:124) remarks on how Seneca's vivid description of places allows the reader to witness the event as if he were there; it creates "an impression of corporality in the recipient, i.e., the feeling of having a body and being placed within the environment" (§15.1, trans. Hine 2014:80):

*Nunc mihi permittite narrare fabulam. Asclepiodotus auctor est **demissos** quam **plurimos** a Philippo in metallum antiquum olim **destitutum**, ut explorarent quae ubertas eius esset, quis **status**, an aliquid futuris reliquisset uetus auaritia; **descendisse** illos cum multo lumine et multos duraturo dies, deinde **longa** uia fatigatos uidisse flumina **ingentia** et conceptus aquarum inertium **uastos**, pares nostris nec **compressos** quidem **terra supereminente** sed **liberae laxitatis**, non sine horrore uisos.*

Now let me tell a story. Asclepiodotus writes that a number of men were sent by Philip down an old mine that had long since been abandoned; they were to explore how rich its deposits were, what state it was in, whether past greed had left anything for future generations. They descended with plenty of lights, enough to last many days; then, when exhausted by the long journey, they saw enormous rivers and huge lakes of stagnant water, like our own, not cramped by the earth weighing down upon them, but with plenty of open space—and they could not help shuddering at the sight.

The vividness of Seneca's description engages with his reader's experience (sensory perceptions), creating what Winter (2012:124) considers a "gaze tour," a method of describing space, which involves a stationary observer's perspective within an environment.⁵² The reader "sees" the story unfold before his eyes, which, as Winter argues, purposefully elicits an

⁵² Cf. Taylor and Tversky (1992 and 1996).

emotional response (*ibid.*). Consider, for example, how the passage shocks the reader, just as the explorers are not without fear, as he imagines a world that dwarfs mankind: though “several” men (*plurimos*) descend with “a lot” (*multo*) of light, they are still overwhelmed by the immensity of this subterranean world: *longa* (“long”), *ingentia* (“vast”), *uastos* (“vast”), *supereminente* (“weighing down”), *laxitatis* (“spaciousness”). The passage is meant to diminish mankind’s perception of himself to such an extent that he becomes horrified.⁵³

As he continues his story, he creates a place where the natural order of things is reversed (*ubi nouam rerum positionem* “where there is a new order”) and men leave behind the “daylight” (*lucem*) and descend into “darkness” (*latebris*) to deepest regions (*altissimis* “deepest,” *fundum* “depths,” §15.3; *in imo*, §15.4 “in the deep”) where the boundary of night and day is transgressed (*discrimen*, §3)—all for the sake of greed (*ut erueret aurum non minore periculo quaerendum quam possidendum*, §15.3 “to dig out gold that is no less dangerous to search for than to possess . . .” trans. Hine 2014:81). The tale itself digresses, veering off from the scientific discussion,⁵⁴ as the miners transgress space (cf. *demissios* “sent down,” *descendisse* “descend,” §15.1) , and regress into “an animal-like state in which they crawl [(cf. *reptauit*,

⁵³ What is most interesting about this narrative is that Seneca’s description of the *katabasis* (“downward journey”) is reminiscent of the underworld. Baleriaux (2012:109-10) argues that descriptions of the underworld are often described as dark and damp, because ancient authors observed that subterranean waters must go somewhere that is wet. Consider, for example, Seneca’s description of the narrative; he reiterates the darkness and the dampness of the mine. Furthermore, according to Winter, there are three characteristics of Senecan-underworld description: barrenness, lack of motion, and suspension of time. In the narrative, for example, the mine has long been “abandoned” (*destitutum*), there are “stagnant” pools (*inertium*), and there is no indication of time in the darkness (*noctium dierumque discrimen*, 5.15.3). Seneca even likens the subterranean earth to burial (*mortuo*, 5.15.4) which recalls man’s ultimate limit (death): *Vlli ergo mortuo terra tam grauis est quam istis supra quos auaritia ingens terrarum pondus iniecit, quibus abstulit caelum, quos in imo, ubi illud malum uirus latitat, infodit?* (“Does the earth lie as heavy on any corpse as it did on those people, over whom great greed threw the weight of the earth, whom it robbed of the sky, whom it buried in the depths where that foul poison lurks?” trans. Hine 2014:81). Seneca’s description clearly foregrounds the smallness and limitations of mankind, but it also emphasizes the characters’ violation of human and natural boundaries. For the sake of vice, men turn the pursuit of scientific knowledge into a pursuit for gain and wealth; what they do (descending to the underworld) is contrary to human nature, and this is reflected in the world they enter, which is contrary to nature (earth hanging above).

⁵⁴ This absurdity is reminiscent of Seneca’s transgression of rhetorical bounds (*temerarie uerbis et proprietatis modum excedam*, 3.18.7).

§15.4 “crawl”)]” (Williams 2012:84). They enter a world which not only functions without order or agency, and in a “strange” (*nouam*) fashion, but is also likened to “death” (*mortuo, inferos*) and “perpetual night” (*alteram perpetuamque noctem*).

While the men do physically descend into the confined darkness of the earth, the passage, with its emphasis on light, darkness, and perception, elicits a more in-depth response, thereby suggesting that their descent is metaphorical in nature: that the descent is into intellectual darkness spurred on by limited perception; a descent propelled by vice (*propter hoc*, §15.4 “because of this [that is, greed]”). Stifled and blinded, their limited perspective transforms the world from a fixed, divinely-ordered cosmos to a godless one where sense perception trumps reason and virtue surrenders to vice. Morality goes out the window as they, in “darkness,” see the world not as a living entity (cf. 3.29.2) but as a commodity. Led on by their “greed” (*auartia/am*, §15.1, 2, 4), the men leave behind the “light of the day” (*dies*, §15.1; *dierum, lucem*, §15.3), accompanied with artificial lights (*multo lumine et multos duraturo dies*, §15.1 “with a lot of light that would last several days”), and return to “darkness” (*noctium, -em*, §15.3, 4; *tenebris*, §15.2; *caecum*, §15.4). Stagnated by vice, they enter a quasi-Platonic darkness (ignorance) where they falter in their morality as they see the world from a limited worldview. In this stagnated state, they then become harmful not only to themselves but also others (and Nature), just as the air becomes stagnant and poisonous in the darkness (cf. §15.4-7).

The passage exploits the *topos* of light and darkness as correlatives of knowledge and ignorance as recalled in Plato, and it also reverses the progression of mankind:⁵⁵ man, endowed with an upright, free spirit, acquires knowledge which *should* bring him closer to light and free

⁵⁵ Vice acts contrary to knowledge in that it causes mankind to return to the darkness of ignorance.

his mind, but instead returns him to darkness which chokes out this free spirit (cf. 3.praef.11). In essence, mankind “un-evolves,” returning to his primitive origins,⁵⁶ that is, to ignorance; he acts contrary to his created nature, stooping to enter darkened, confined spaces (*recto spiritu liberoque in illos se demitterent specus* “although endowed with upright and free spirits, they descend into those caves”). Essentially, in acting contrary to his nature, mankind forgets his place within the cosmos (*hominem ad sidera erectum*, §15.3 “humans stand erect [looking at] the stars”) and thereby exposes himself to the dangers and darkness of lurking vices, which, in turn, affects his mental dispositions: he begins to manipulate and exploit Nature’s benefits for the sake of vice.

Under the guise of scientific inquiry, knowledge is acquired for the sake of vice, as it is used to advance man’s positions in and power over the cosmos. In other words, mankind feigns scientific interest, and in his pursuit of material wealth and power he forgoes his fears not for the sake of virtue but for the sake of vice, which casts a veil over his eyes and leads him away from the light of knowledge and into a new world order, as exemplified in the tale.

Here, in perpetual darkness, the earth’s *habitus* (§15.4) is “suspended above” (*pendentium*, §15.3)—reversed—while winds blow aimlessly, without direction, and “through the darkness” (*per caecum*, §15.4). The characters enter a world that inverts the natural order—man below and earth above. Seneca intentionally paints this inverted world within the tale in order to facilitate his moral stance on mining, an unnatural act that promotes *auartia* (“greed,” §15.1, 2) (Williams 2012:81-84). Not only does mining damage the earth but it also

⁵⁶ In *Ep.* 90, Seneca discusses the progression of man, and how vice snuck into man’s pursuit and attainment of knowledge.

destroys mankind (cf. §15.3) because the mining of materials leads to the production of weapons, and then warfare (cf. 5.18, especially §6ff.).⁵⁷

Seneca combines narrative with geography to create a place-world: the folly of the characters' physical transgression (narrative) and the horridness of the new world order (geography) encountered by these actions thrust the reader—especially a socially delinquent reader—into a period of self-examination and critical thinking—*what happened here?* (moral imagination). The narrative warns of the dangers associated with sense perception and the consequences associated with such thinking. The characters' transgressive and ruinous acts are not without punishment: they enter a “new world” (*nouam rerum positionem*, 5.15.4) which brings “death” (*mortuo*, §15.4) and destruction (*malum uirus*, §15.4 “foul poison”) instead of “profit” (*pecuniam*, §15.3) and “gain” (*praedam*, §15.4). It elicits a response of fear, while also placing the reader firmly within his human boundaries by drawing upon the “magnitude” (*ingentia*, §15.1) and “vastness” (*uastos*, §15.1) of the subterranean earth. The narrative forces the reader, just like the explorers, to encounter the limitations of humanity.

Instead of misperceiving the world as an empty mass of atoms channeled into profitable resources, like the figures in the narrative, the reader “views” (via *ratio* “reason”) the world as a living entity ordered by a divine agent; doing so, however, requires shrugging off this narrowed perspective,⁵⁸ and aligning himself with the divine. By observing Nature in this way, mankind knows his place in relation to the divine, which then shapes his character: Nature communicates how to live rightly, offering remedies and protection. By actively seeking knowledge of Nature,

⁵⁷ The idea that mining leads to the production of weapons and warfare also recalls the progression of mankind, cf. *Ep.* 90.

⁵⁸ In a similar vein, that is what 5.3 does. Democritus claims that atoms bumping into one another somehow in their chaotic state create wind. Erratic behavior cannot create. Furthermore, mankind turns good benefits into bad ones with his misperception.

mankind learns to follow Nature's example and thereby shores up his mind against the threats of vice, and the darkness that it perpetrates.

ii. Alexander's Worldview

At 6.23, Seneca digresses from his scientific discussion on earthquakes to present a short commentary on Alexander's *aeternum crimen* ("eternal crime," §23.2)—the murder of Callisthenes. In the discussed passage, Seneca purposefully reduces the memorability of Alexander's achievements—his perceived greatness—to a single act of immorality (§23.2-3, trans. Hine 2014:105):

[2] *Haec placet et aliis, ut paulo ante rettuli, causa, si quid apud te profectione testium turba est. Hanc etiam Callisthenes probat, non contemptus uir; fuit enim illi nobile ingenium et furibundi regis impatiens. Hic est Alexandri crimen aeternum, quod nulla uirtus, nulla bellorum felicitas redimet.* [3] *Nam quotiens quis dixerit: "Occidit Persarum multa milia," opponetur ei "et Callisthenen"; quotiens dictum erit: "Occidit Darium, penes quem tum **maximum** regnum erat," opponetur ei "et Callisthenen"; quotiens dictum erit: "**Omnia Oceano** tenuis uicit, ipsum quoque temptauit nouis classibus et imperium **ex angulo Thraciae usque ad Orientis terminos** protulit," dicetur: "Sed Callisthenen occidit." **Omnia** licet antiqua ducum regumque exempla transierit, ex his quae fecit nihil tam **magnum** erit quam scelus.*

[2] Other people too agree with this explanation, as I said a short while ago. If a mass of witnesses is going to make any impression on you, this view is also accepted by Callisthenes, a far from insignificant man; for he had a noble intellect, one that would not tolerate an insane king. This is an undying accusation against Alexander, for which no courage, no success in war will atone: [3] whenever someone says, "He killed many thousands of Persians," there will be a protest about Callisthenes; whenever it is said, "He conquered everything as far as the ocean, and made an

attempt on that too with fleets not seen before, and extended his empire from a corner of Thrace to the boundaries of the east,” someone will say, “But he killed Callisthenes.” He may have surpassed every precedent set by generals and kings, but of his achievements, none will be as great a crime.

The passage pits ethics and virtue against history and immorality just as it pits the character of Callisthenes, whom Seneca eulogizes (*non contemptus uir* “not an insignificant man,” *nobile ingenium* “noble intellect”), against that of Alexander (*furibundi regis* “insane king”). Callisthenes’ description as *non contemptus uir* echoes Seneca’s consolation to the reader at 6.32 (6.32.4, trans. Hine 2014:112, spatial-language bolded):

Pusilla res est hominis anima, sed **ingens** res contemptus animae. Hanc qui contempsit securus uidebit maria turbari, etiamsi illa **omnes** excitauerunt uenti, etiamsi aestus aliqua perturbatione mundi **totum in** terras uertet oceanum; securus aspiciet fulminantis caeli truce[m] atque horridam faciem, frangatur licet caelum et ignes suos in exitium **omnium**, in primis suum misceat; securus aspiciet ruptis **compagibus dehiscens** solum, illa licet **inferorum** regna **retegantur**. Stabit **super** illam **uoraginem** intrepidus et fortasse quo debet cadere desiliet.

A person’s soul is a trivial thing, but contempt for one’s soul is a tremendous thing. Anyone who treats it with contempt will watch the seas in turmoil without anxiety, even if all the winds have whipped them up, even if through some disturbance to the world the tide is diverting the entire ocean onto the land. He will look without anxiety at the cruel, dreadful sight of the sky flashing with lightning, even if the sky is fractured and is concocting fires that will destroy everything, starting with itself. He will look without anxiety at the ground gaping open as its structure shatters, even if the kingdoms of the underworld were to be revealed. He will stand above that abyss unflinching and perhaps will leap in where he will have to fall.

I want to draw attention to two things about this passage. First, it trivializes humanity's existence (*pusilla . . . hominis anima*); the world and mankind are diminished against the magnitude of Nature (*omnes, totum, omnium*). The word *pusilla* and its use recall 4b.11, when Seneca "maps" man and his *perceived* existence and power against the totality of the universe, and even the imagery of the entire ocean crossing onto land (*in terras uertet oceanum*) recalls the flood passage (cf. 3.27-30); both passages (6.23 and 4b.11) foreground Nature's supremacy over man, which Seneca reiterates here. But, the indefinite *securus* ("secure man") sees beyond these "appearances" (*faciem*), because he knows his place within the cosmos, knows his limitedness and that of the world, and thus can watch the destruction of the world, securely.

Second, though not explicitly stated, the phrasing draws similarities between Callisthenes and the indefinite *qui* (*ingens res contemptus animae* "someone who considers contempt for one's existence a great thing"), and it can be concluded that Callisthenes exemplifies a man whose security stems from his "passive resignation" toward life (Williams 2012:255). By contemplating Nature (*Hic Callisthenes in libris quibus describit quemadmodum Helice Burisque mersae sint—quis illas casus in mare uel in illas mare immiserit*, 6.23.4-6 "This Callisthenes, in the books where he describes the inundation of Helice and Buris, and the event that drove them into the sea, or the sea onto them . . ." trans. Hine 2014:105-04), he finds "security" (*securus*) in the midst of life's uncertainties. Seneca's praise of Callisthenes, a historian writing about the causes of the inundation of Helice and Buris, seems contradictory to Seneca's opinion about history (cf. 3.praef.5-6), but his praise stems from Callisthenes' achievements—his probing into Nature's secrets—which stand in contrast with the destructive world exploration and probing of the man responsible for his death, a man whose pursuits stem

from his desire for power (*nulla virtus . . . nulla bellorum felicitas*, §23.2 “no victory . . . no success in war”).

In contrast to Callisthenes is that Alexander who perceives the world not for the sake of moral edification but for his own personal glory as detailed in *Epistle* 113 (§29.1-8):

Alexander Persas quidem et Hyrcanos et Indos et quidquid gentium usque in oceanum extendit oriens vastabat fugabatque, sed ipse modo occiso amico, modo amisso, iacebat in tenebris, alias scelus, alias desiderium suum maerens, victor tot regum atque populorum irae tristitiaequae succumbens; id enim egerat ut omnia potius haberet in potestate quam adfectus.

Alexander indeed laid to waste and put to flight the Persians, the Hyrcanians, the Indians, and whatever people extend their land eastwardly all the way to the oceans, but he himself lay in darkness, some times because a friend was killed, other times because one was lost; at times lamenting his crime, other times his desire, the conqueror over many kings and peoples succumbing to anger and sadness; in fact he carried that out in such a way that he would have preferred to have everything in his power than his passions.

Both passages (*Ep.*113 and 6.23) paint a pitiable figure: a man who extended his empire as far as the Ocean and conquered many nations but could not conquer his own emotions, and now lies not only in physical but also metaphorical “darkness” (*tenebris*), blind to his passions. Alexander had command over lands but not over himself: those who have control over others lack control over themselves (cf. 3.praef.10). Despite his great achievements, what remains is the crime (“*Sed Callisthenen occidit*”. . . *nihil tam magnum erit quam scelus* “‘But he killed Callisthenes’ . . . nothing will be as great as the crime”); it overshadows his conquests. He “conquers” (*uicit*) and “assaults” (*temptauit*) Nature, manipulating and distorting the world to fit into the

“boundaries” (*terminos*) of his empire; the passage invites the reader to imagine the extent of Alexander’s kingdom from his perspective, that is, as a political map: *omnia Oceano tenus . . . ex angulo Thraciae usque ad Orientis terminos protulit* (§23.2-3 “everything as far as the Ocean, extended his empire from the corner of Thrace to the boundaries of the east,” trans. Hine 2014:105).

The world (Nature) is reduced to the perspective of one man; he holds it within the grasp of his gaze, attempting to exact his rule over it. This cartographic projection, which is distorted and “controlled” by a man’s perspective, contrasts with the grander, cognitive map which Seneca maps out for his reader at 6.2.3. The Stoic reader gazes (*circumspicite* “look around”) cognitively (*intellegetis* “you will realize”) upon the world like a map (*mensura* “measure”), moving freely through the various trivialities that could kill him. Yet, unlike Alexander’s map which diminishes the power of Nature (*uicit*, 6.23 “he conquered”), this cognitive one diminishes that of mankind (*nugatoria* “trifle,” *imbecilla corpuscula* “weak, little bodies,” *fluida* “fleeting,” *non magna molitione perdenda* “destined to be destroyed with no great exertion,” trans. Hine 2014:90). Seneca even mentions in *Epistle* 91 that had Alexander continued with his studies of geometry (surveying), he would have realized how limited his control over the world was (*Ep.* 91.17):

Alexander Macedonum rex discere geometriam coeperat, infelix, sciturus quam pusilla terra esset, ex qua minimum occupaverat. Ita dico: “infelix” ob hoc quod intellegere debebat falsum se gerere cognomen: quis enim esse magnus in pusillo potest? Erant illa quae tradebantur subtilia et diligenti intentione discenda, non quae perciperet vesanus homo et trans oceanum cogitationes suas mittens.

Alexander, king of the Macedonians, began learning about geometry, unhappy man because he would learn that the earth was a pinprick of which he had occupied a very little. And so I call him: “Unhappy,” because he should know that he had a false name: for who is able to be “great” on a pinprick? The basic things which were taught to him should have been learned with diligent attention, and not for an insane man to imagine sending his thoughts across the ocean.

In his perceived (*uidelicet*, 6.2.3 “it is perceived”) *magnitudo* (6.2.3 “magnitude”), he believes himself so self-important (*falsum cognomen . . . magnus*, *Ep.*91.17 “false name . . . great”; *magni se aestimat*, 6.2.3 “he estimates that he is self-important”) that he “occupies” (*occupaverat*) a much larger, much more powerful position within the cosmos than he, in fact, does (*pusilla* “pin-prick”). Yet, Seneca describes Alexander as *infelix* (“unhappy”) (*Ep.* 91): he cannot find happiness by setting his sights on Fortune’s promises, glory, for example, but on virtue (*Ep.* 113.30.1-4, 32.1-2):

O quam magnis homines tenentur erroribus qui ius dominandi trans maria cupiunt permittere felicissimosque se iudicant si multas [pro] milite provincias obtinent et novas veteribus adiungunt . . .

Qui virtutem suam publicari vult, non virtuti laborat, sed gloria.

O how great error grips mankind who desires to extend the law of domination across the oceans and who consider themselves very blessed if they obtain many provinces with their army and who unite new provinces with old . . .

He who wants his virtue to be made public, he does not labor for virtue, but glory.

Thus, the reader learns to set his sights on something more enduring and long-lasting—virtue—as opposed to temporary matters such as military conquests or glory.⁵⁹

The brief discursus (6.23) places ethics above *acta*, suggesting that it is not what one does but *who* one is (character) that matters, and by extension it places philosophy above history. The passage pits the *sapiens* (here identified as the *securus* and Callisthenes), whom the reader strives to emulate, against the conqueror (Alexander). The *sapiens* digs into the inner recesses of Nature's secrets, but the conqueror rummages around for the sake of greed (cf. 5.15) and has a “destructive grip on the world that (so briefly) submits to him” (Williams 2012:254). For the *sapiens*, Security comes from uncovering who one is in relation to the cosmos, which he derives from the contemplation of Nature (cf. 6.32). At this place, one must come to terms with his identity, that is, his humanity and all that that entails. When confronted with the fact that man's boundaries of existence and power are trivial, the reader realizes that his fear stems from his *perceived* immortality (*gloria* “fame”) which, like a shoddy building, collapses when the earth's foundations are shaken. Thus, he follows Callisthenes' example (contemplating Nature) and shies away from that of Alexander.

In the end, the reader takes from the story the importance of investigating Nature. Knowledge gained through contemplation of Nature allows him to free himself from these chains of fear and to find solace in the instability of life (*stabile nihil*, 3.praef.7, 3.27.6 “nothing is

⁵⁹ Scholars (Lana 1955:15; Hine 2006:64). have considered the similarities between Callisthenes and Seneca, and Alexander and Nero who fashioned himself after the conqueror; this comparison suggests that Seneca may be implicitly attacking Nero's own imperial pursuits (for example, his Nile expedition). Romm (1993:123, 151) claims that the Hellenistic lore surrounding Alexander's conquests contributed to Roman interest in finding lands *plus ultra* (“far beyond”); but, it also had a “darker side” because some “saw Alexander's exploits as reckless greed.”

stable”; cf. 6.1.15). He looks to Nature, shoring up his identity and providing a foundation⁶⁰ upon which he builds his place within the cosmos (6.1.3.4-6): *Quorum ut causas excutiamus, et propositi operis contextus exigit et ipse in hoc tempus congruens casus* (“Both the plan of the work I have embarked upon and the coincidence of this recent disaster call for a discussion of the causes of earthquakes,” trans. Hine 2014:87). To combat the fear instigated by the earth’s movements, he must “shake out” (*excutiamus*) the causes of this fear—earthquakes—and when he has thoroughly investigated this natural phenomenon, only then does he begin to eradicate fear (6.1.4): *Quaerenda sunt trepidis solacia et demendus ingens timor* (“Comfort needs to be found for the fearful, and their great terror needs to be eradicated,” trans. Hine 2014:87). The task requires him to forgo his narrow-mindedness, to rise above his humanity, and strive to the level of the gods⁶¹ where he might survey the inner and outer workings of Nature. Here, Seneca combines narrative with geography, creating a place-world from which the reader “gazes” upon the world. Seneca uses the mistakes of Alexander to remind the reader to remember his humanity lest he suffer a similar fate and to remind him of the boundaries of humanity.

III. Conclusion

The digressive passages within the *NQ* serve as landmarks for the reader to pause and give thought to the passages’ hidden meanings within the framework of each individual book chapter. The satirical vignettes dispersed throughout the *NQ* stand as anti-exempla, and with the guidance

⁶⁰ *Fundamenta* (3.praef.1.2): *magnarum rerum fundamenta ponam* . . . (“I shall put down the foundations of this great undertaking . . .”). The instability of life, and Fortune’s promises, parallel that of Book 3. Flood comes and wipes everything away in an instant, just as earthquakes do.

⁶¹ As implied by Vagellius’ quote about Phaethon falling from the sky (*Si cadendum est, inquit, e caelo cecidisse uelim*, 6.2.9 “If I should fall, he says, then I would like to fall from heaven”), Seneca’s investigative journey through the cosmos is not about the end goal but the process.

of Seneca's rhetoric, the reader develops a critical "eye," "seeing" the ramifications of misperception. He "sees" men, real and imagined, who in their narrowed perspectives, forsake knowledge of Nature (and self) and exploit Nature's benefits for the sake of vice.

The reader reflects upon his internal behavior, his individual battle against misperception: whether or not he, too, suffers from the same affliction—misperception. And so, he learns to view Nature with his *animus*, to realize that she occurs *ex decreto dei* (3.praef.12) and that it is god who controls creation, not man (cf. 1.praef.13).

The narratives establish bonds between the reader and features of the natural landscape: "as a direct consequence of such bonds, persons who have acted improperly will be moved to reflect critically on their misconduct and resolve to improve it" (Basso 1996:40). Seneca manipulates language and landscape to create a place-world which imparts wisdom and self-knowledge to the reader. To investigate Nature is to investigate oneself—the limitations of human power and existence, which the characters grossly fail to do. Through their misperceptions and misfortunes, the characters redefine what it means to be human by establishing what happens to those who transgress their human status (*humilitas nostra*).

Conclusion: *Hominis Meminisse*

From meticulous descriptions of known locations and areas to imaginative spaces of narratives the *NQ* is a work that provides the reader with a map of the spaces presented within it, but even more so, it is a work that provides its reader with a map that reminds him of his humanity (*hominis meminisse*, 3.praef.15 “remember that you are human”). By reading the *NQ* geocritically, one can analyze how Seneca engages with his reader’s imagination and also sense of space and place in order to elucidate for his reader his place within the cosmos. In other words, the *NQ* is about mapping mankind under the pretense of mapping the physical world.¹

In this dissertation I have argued that Seneca partakes in what Tally defines as literary cartography, that is, mapping in narrative form.² Tally argues that “all writing partakes in a form of cartography, since even the most realistic map does not truly depict the space, but, like literature, figures it forth in a complex skein of imaginary relations” (Tally 2009:134). Seneca, with his use of cartographic language and imagery, acts like a map-maker who determines the boundaries of space represented, selects what should be included and excluded, and establishes the scope and scale of his work. His purpose, however, extends beyond creating a space for his narrative; instead, his aim is to demonstrate to his reader how to think about and approach Nature (Tally 2011), and just as map-makers provide tools to help their viewers navigate the world, so too does Seneca provide the tools necessary for the reader to navigate his journey through life (Lavery 1980:151ff).

¹Maps serve as a powerful and effective means with which readers can orient themselves in the world and make sense of their surroundings (Tally 2009:2).

²Tally (2011) claims that “narrative itself is a form of mapping, organizing the data of life into recognizable patterns with it understood that the result is a fiction, a mere representation of space and place, whose function is to help the viewer or mapmaker, like the reader or writer, make sense of the world.”

In analyzing the *NQ* geocritically one can see that it functions as a map that orients the reader in the world and imparts meaning to his surroundings. Combining narrative and space,³ Seneca endows the literary space with meaning (Tally 2011; Basso 1996; Tuan 1977), which is what Tuan defines as “place”; instead of an “undifferentiated sweep of scenery,” Seneca’s geographic descriptions cause the reader to pause, a “resting of the eyes,” which “transforms it into a subject of storytelling” and this “space-turned-place” takes on meanings (Tuan 1977:151-62).

Literary cartography provides “figurative or allegorical images of the world and one’s place in it,” (Tally 2011: par. 4) which is what Seneca is doing. These descriptions remind the reader of what it means to be human: to be human is to be limited. For example, his emphasis on the vastness of the cosmos is in fact an emphasis on man’s limitations. When mankind is mapped within the whole world, his power and existence are diminished. The *NQ* forces the reader to come to grips with the fact that his perception of himself and the world is flawed, that he has limited power, and that even he himself is limited in his existence. Seneca demonstrates this by mapping the world from two perspectives (cognition and sense perception), and he uses one worldview (cognition) to demonstrate the flaws of the other (sense perception). Because man is bound by limitations, he cannot perceive the entirety of the world nor his place within it, which leads him to mistake his place in the world; this is exemplified by the characters in the fables.

In his limitedness, mankind can only look to what excites the senses and not beyond to a rational ordering of the cosmos. Though created to stand erect, gazing up at the stars (cf. 5.15), the gravity of his human limitations pulls him back to the earth (cf. 3.praef.11.4-8). Instead of

³“Mapping establishes a meaningful framework for the subject, with points of reference for thinking about oneself and one’s place in the broader social space. Likewise, narratives are frequently used to make sense of, or give form to, this world in significant ways” (Tally 2011: par. 4).

gazing up at the sublime whose ordered nature speaks to the divine's power and influence in the world, man gazes at himself (Hostius Quadra, for example). He is driven by his blind obsession to control, and he sees the entire universe working for him. He then attempts to control and manipulate Nature by placing her within boundaries, definitions, and expectations, though he does so in vain.

Mapping forces the reader to confront his humanity by emphasizing man's limitations, which shakes the very foundation of his perceived identity; he can, however, remedy these insecurities by rising above his lot and measuring himself on the basis of his *animus*, that is through cognitive mapping.⁴ From this perspective, Fortune's promises no longer have a hold on him,⁵ as he realizes that life⁶ is not worth wasting on frivolous things, and even death itself is a trivial thing.⁷

His investigative journey through the cosmos liberates his *animus*, and he gains wisdom by cognitively mapping the world, which causes him to realize his smallness. He aspires to such wisdom, to gain knowledge through contemplation of Nature, because the pursuit in itself refines him; for example, to contemplate the imperceptibility of things is to contemplate the imperceptibility of the human soul—the divinely inspired part of him, thereby releasing him from the constraints of a stunted perspective⁸ and the issues associated with it.⁹

⁴*nec sorte me sed animo mensus*, 4a.15.1 (“measuring myself not on my lot in life but on my *animus*”).

⁵*despicere fortunam superuacua*, 6.32.5 (to despise Fortune whose promises are empty”).

⁶*pusilla res est hominis anima*, 6.32.4 (“A human's soul is a trivial thing”).

⁷*Ipsium perire non magnum est*, 6.32.5 (“To perish is not a great thing”).

⁸*acies humana non possit*, 7.30.4 (“human eyesight cannot [perceive the subtlety of cometary paths]”).

⁹In his “slow-mindedness and blindness” (*tardus et hebes*, 7.1.1”), man attempts to bring down the sublime from the sky, fitting them into theories and confines (Cf. 7.24.1.-7.24.2). To contemplate the celestial region where the divine inhabits is to gaze upon one's own immortality (1.praef.15).

“Mapping Seneca” is about interpreting the *NQ* as a map, a map that guides the reader on his journey through life. Seneca gives space for the reader to create his own projection of the world; he merely guides and does not force his reader to see the world from his perspective alone. Literary cartography allows the reader to build upon the narrator’s representation and transplant his own experience of the world onto the narrator’s map (Tally 2014: par. 5):

The narrator maps the spaces of the narrative while also exploring them, often forcing the reader to project his or her own “map” of the text while attempting to follow the itinerary of the narrator through this space.

The map becomes highly subjective and personal and contributes to what Tuan terms “sense of place” or “topophilia.” Tuan claims that geographic space needs human animators to make place, and this human element of “sense of place” suggests a strong link between people and the spaces they think about emotionally, mentally, and cognitively (Tuan 1974). By mapping space, Seneca emphasizes this link between people and their environment, which contributes to man’s understanding of his humanity and his relationship to and within the cosmos. Inserting man into the narrative helps him navigate not so much the physical world but rather his life: “The human condition is one of being ‘at sea’—both launched into the world and somewhat lost in it—and, like the navigator, we employ maps, logs, our own observations and imagination to make sense of our place” (Tally 2011: par. 1).

Geocriticism, which includes a variety of approaches to literary spatiality (Tally 2014: par. 1), allows modern scholars to analyze texts from a spatial perspective. Geocriticism moves away from analyzing texts from an egocentric or anthropocentric point-of-view to a geocentric

one, and in a work such as the *NQ*, which emphasizes the relationship between man and space, considering how Seneca maps space is integral to understanding the complexity of the narrative. Thinking spatially enables Senecan scholars to navigate the *NQ* in new ways by asking different questions and exploring how Seneca uses space to create “sense of place.”

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