

## Translating Travel: A Persistent Analogy

The concept of travel in the younger Seneca has drawn the attention of readers and scholars. At times, Seneca appears obsessed with the inspiring power of specific locations (*Epp.* 41, 79, 86) whereas, on other occasions, he depicts travel as a diversion from self-improvement (*Epp.* 28, 114). Silvia Montiglio suggests that Seneca's writings show an ambivalence toward travel which can best be explained by variance in authorial voice (566-7). I agree that Seneca's writings show ambivalence toward the notion of travel, but I will demonstrate how this results from a unified concept of travel which is coherent with Seneca's Stoic outlook.

I will argue that Seneca primarily employs the concept of travel as an analogy for human life and the life journey. Both travel and life admit similar properties: we set out, we aim at a goal, we tarry, we may arrive somewhere or get lost on our way, but ultimately the journey ends. These basic similarities allow travel to function as an analogy for life, and Seneca employs this analogy to highlight several salient features characteristic of both: goal-directedness, aimlessness, and finitude. Seneca clearly represents these first two features of life/travel when, at the start of *De Vita Beata*, he warns us that we must seek the direct route toward obtaining a good mind, and not become distracted by the noises and voices along the way (*De Vita Beata* I.1-2). Additionally, travel, like life, comes to an end: "Nullum sine exitu iter est" (*Ep.* 77.13). The concept of travel throughout Seneca's writing is a collection of these salient features, which Seneca persistently maps onto human life.

Through understanding the interconnectedness of travel with the concept of life in Seneca we can arrive at the source of his ambivalence. To do so, I suggest that we invert the analogy and draw a conclusion about travel from what Seneca says about life. For Seneca and the Stoics, life is an indifferent. While life is preferred, if at some point it becomes slavish, burdensome, or

shameful, we are better off to cast it aside. Seneca's ambivalence toward travel can be understood if we read it as a Stoic indifferent, something which can be realized in a good or bad way, but which is inherently neither.

#### Works Cited

Montiglio, Silvia. "Should the Aspiring Wise Man Travel? A Conflict in Seneca's Thought."

*AJP* 127 (Winter 2006) pp. 553-586.