

**Spaces, Places and Times of Solitude in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe**  
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Organized by Christine Göttler, University of Bern, in collaboration with Karl A. E. Enenkel,  
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster

**Abstracts of Contributions**

**Stefan Abel, University of Bern**

*Wolfram's 'soltâne': On the impossibility of an artificial paradise*

Wolfram of Eschenbach's Arthurian romance 'Parzival' (1200/10) written in Middle High German, describes different kinds of solitude: those of the *chevalier errant* in quest of adventure, of the lonely grieving widow and of the hermit. Wolfram begins the Parzival section of his work with the woodland solitude of Soltâne. Parzival grows up in Soltâne isolated from the courtly world and – at least so his mother Herzeloide intends – protected from the dangers of chivalry. This undertaking fails, however, for Parzival's noble birth predestines him to be a courtly knight despite her efforts. Soltâne differs from other places of solitude described in the romance through the negative connotation of *solitudo*, in which Parzival is *an küneclicher fuore betrogn*. There are however two more aspects that set it apart and that only become apparent upon comparison with the variations of this motif in other works, namely: Wolfram's source (Chrétien de Troyes) where it is an idyll outside time and space; in the old French 'Bliocadran', a later prologue of Chrétien's 'Conte du Graal'; in Wolfram's work itself; and finally in the 'Buch der Abenteuer', a fifteenth-century adaptation by Ulrich Füetrer. On the one hand the Soltâne presented in the 'Bliocadran' turns out not to be a place of solitude in the midst of untamed nature, but one that had to be created and cultivated. On the other hand Wolfram clearly differs from his predecessors by giving his Soltâne a religious connotation. He elevates it to a kind of Old Testament paradise which is undermined not only by the outside world – five knights who pass through Soltâne –, but also by the actions of the characters living inside it. The elevation to religious status culminates in one of the four versions of Wolfram's 'Parzival' where the editor interprets the name *Soltâne*, derived from Chrétien's *gaste forest soutaine*, as *soltanie* (sultanate), i.e. Egypt. This connects the escape of Herzeloide and her son (*vlihtesal*) with the New Testament Flight into Egypt (Mt 2,13–15). As a result Soltâne turns into a place of typological reference to Parzival, the later redeemer of Munsalvæsche, as both Adam and Christ. Finally, although Ulrich Füetrer's 'Buch der Abenteuer' (1473–87) dwells at length on Parzival's religious education in Soltâne, the forest nevertheless remains an intermediate stop which the young man suddenly leaves, *alls in die zeit bey in do tet verdriessen*.

**Isabella Augart, University of Hamburg**

*Stony solitudes: Rock formations in Trecento painting as sites of poetic inspiration and hermit contemplation*

My paper focuses on the relationship between solitude and material semantics in Trecento representations of rocky landscapes. Widening the standard narrative which understands representation of the Italian landscape as a 'progressive opening' (cf. Kemp's *Narrativierung der Tiefe*), I suggest an examination of the visual structures of seclusion, stratification and separation. How are visual barriers used to express individual and collective solitude in the pictorial narrative? The purpose is to develop an understanding of the twofold conception which seems to underpin the barren surroundings of the *luogo aspro*: Rocky surroundings can assume both positive connotations of bucolic ideals (cf. Petrarch's *locus alta sub rupe*), providing shade for poetic and artistic inspiration, and negative connotations of wilderness as non-places for humans. I will discuss the imitation and fiction of stone in the context of Thebaid depictions, stories of penitence, and artistic self-representations.

Incorporating work done on interiority and solitude, material semantics, and period religious practices, the meaning of the rocky solitudes will be analyzed in order to find answers to current debates: How do concepts of the *eremo* shift from the early desert fathers to urban surroundings and monastic contexts in the Italian landscape? How are the actual places and imaginative visualisations of them intertwined? What is the intercessory role of the combination, transgression, and fiction of materiality for religious contemplation?

**Barbara Baert, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven**

*The sleeping nymph: Genius loci and silence*

Towards the end of the fifteenth century Michael Fabricius Ferrarinus, prior of the Carmelite monastery in Reggio Emilia, reported in his chronicle that *super ripam Danuvii* a spring had been found with the antique sculpture of a sleeping nymph. According to Ferrarinus it had a strange inscription:

*Huius nympha loci, sacri custodia fontis,  
Dormio, dum blandae sentio murmur aquae.  
Parce meum, quisquis tangis cava marmora, somnum  
Rumpere. Sibe bibas sive lavere tace.*

Otto Kurz, *Huius Nympha Loci* (1953), Millard Meiss, *Sleep in Venice* (1966), Michael Liebmann, *On the Iconography of the Nymph of the Fountain* (1968) and Leonard Barkan, *The Beholder's Tale* (1993), have discussed the impact of this report as prototypical for the Renaissance sculptures of the sleeping Nymph in Rome and even for the development of the well known genre of the Sleeping Venus in painting. This paper contextualises the phenomenon of the sleeping nymph and its textual and artistic *Nachleben* from the point of view of the *locus amoenus* as 'silence'. Combining an iconological, an aesthetical-philosophical and an anthropological approach, this paper will contribute to a better understanding of the rhetoric and ekphrasis of sleep, voyeurism, water and silence within the cluster Space/Place/Solitudio in humanistic thinking.

**Carla Benzan, University of Essex**

*Alone at the summit: Solitude and the ascetic imagination at Varallo's Mount Tabor*

In the final decades of the sixteenth century the bishop of Novara Carlo Bascapè worked tirelessly to reconceive the Sacro Monte of Varallo as a new kind of *luogo sacro* that the Italian art historian Pier Giorgio Longo has described in terms of "a search for solitude and reflexive and interior communication with the soul of the beholding pilgrim." Longo is thus arguing that the architectural restructuring of the Passion chapels was the primary means of soliciting the individual reflection of the beholder. But Longo's account obscures the fact that solitary reflection at Varallo was solicited in many different ways. My proposed contribution to the edited volume *Spaces, Places, and Times of Solitude* seeks to enhance current understandings of solitude at this remote alpine pilgrimage site by turning away from the piazzas and palazzo of the Passion, and considering instead the enormous sculptural representation of Mount Tabor in the *Transfiguration* (c. 1570-1670). Moving between the idealised architectural palaces that contain the scenes of Christ's Passion and the palpable sculpture that presents his miraculous Transfiguration, solitude is solicited in order to remake pilgrimage. By renovating familiar exegetical literature on biblical mountains and ascetic retreat, the narrative of Christ's Transfiguration offers the promise of 'true' spiritual knowledge at its sculptural summit. Viewed from behind the screen, Varallo's Mount Tabor creates an alternative kind of *luogo sacro* by way of a corporeal surrogate of a biblical mountain from which the pilgrim is physically separated. In other words, the purpose of pilgrimage lies as much in imaginative reflection as in the physical, shared experience it provides. Bascapè's sacred place of solitude depended on a new kind of imaginative ascetic activity in order to supplant the problematic physical performance of piety. A more complex reflexivity is produced here where the viewer must travel imaginatively, and alone, to Tabor's summit.

**Mette Birkedal Bruun, University of Copenhagen**

*Solitudes with permeable boundaries: La Trappe and its repercussions*

The Cistercian abbey of La Trappe (Normandy) under Armand-Jean de Rancé (1626–1700) was an epitome of *solitude*. Visitors needed local guides to cross dense forests along muddy roads. The abbot had a highway removed to increase its isolation. The monks were taught to shun the world through silence and penitence and to regard the abbey as their tomb. News was banned and letters censored. Still, hundreds of visitors flocked to La Trappe to partake in temporary withdrawal; new quarters were built to accommodate them. The monastic *Constitutions* negotiate the disruption caused by the hospitality decreed by the Rule. Some visits stimulated literary activity. For example, the royal historiographer Félibien des Avaux, known for an account of Versailles (1674) and theoretical works on art and architecture, authored a detailed and aesthetically charged *carte de visite* (1671) to the duchesse de Liancourt so that she might imagine the serene Trappist life, explicitly catering to her *curiosité*. Together with pictures and plans of the precinct, such accounts fed the contemporary aristocratic *imaginaire* regarding La Trappe.

Rancé spread the ethos of solitude beyond the abbey. In his wide-ranging correspondence he urged men and women to withdraw from the world. One correspondent was Élisabeth d'Orléans (1646–94), Louis XIV's cousin. She was not to isolate herself completely, but to withdraw visibly in order that others might learn from her example. In his *Conduite chrétienne* (1697) Rancé taught her how to negotiate the intersection between the world and solitude, abiding by two sets of norms: those pertaining to her rank and those of the desert saints, and to strengthen her resolve with ten-day programmes of *retraite* centred on prayer and meditation.

While the monastic wall is described in absolute terms, the boundaries of Trappist solitude are porous and the notion of *solitude* flexible. Texts and visitors traverse the walls; virtual solitudes are shared by interpretative communities. This paper explores the dynamics and paradoxes of solitude as they come to the fore in constitutions, letters, and visitors' accounts.

**James Clifton, Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston**

*"Ne viderent oculi mei arbores": Landscape and prayer in eremetical and mystical practice and imagery*

Patristic anecdotes of ancient hermits, repeated by early-modern writers such as Heribertus Rosweyde and Robert Arnauld d'Andilly, occasionally signal the hermits' efforts to avoid distraction by their natural surroundings. A more nuanced treatment of the relationship between a solitary and his or her environment is found in John of the Cross's *Ascent of Mount Carmel* (ca. 1580). While John accepts that an "austere location is beneficial for the sure and direct ascent of the spirit to God without the impediment or detainment caused by visible things," he also argues that God "moves the will" in "those sites that have pleasant variations in the arrangement of the land and the trees, and provide solitary quietude, all of which naturally awakens devotion." He adds, however, that the orant should immediately forget the place and direct the will to God. John then adduces "anchorites and other holy hermits" and their studied rejection of the "loveliest and vastest wildernesses" in which they lived. He indicates that pleasant places for prayer may be valuable for avoiding distractions, but also implies that the very act of ignoring or rejecting such places in favor of a focus on the divine benefits the mystic.

My paper examines how the relationship between the orant and the natural environment was manifested not only in textual treatments of eremetical and devotional life, but also in early-modern depictions of solitaires and mystics, drawing examples from engraved series designed by Maarten de Vos, Abraham Bloemaert, and Antoon Wierix III. It further considers how this relationship informed the development of retreats for Discalced Carmelites in the Netherlands in the early seventeenth century, especially at Marlagne, under the aegis of Tomás de Jesús.

**Dominic E. Delarue, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven**

*Late medieval legendaries as a summa of solitude: Different forms of hermit iconography in the illustrations of the Legenda aurea and other hagiographic manuscripts*

In his analysis of the *Vitaspatrum* illustration in the *Rothschild Canticles* Jeffrey Hamburger points out that hermits are rarely depicted in the Western world before 1300. This observation can be supported by the lives of saints included in illustrated French legendaries of the thirteenth century where martyrs and other confessors outnumber hermits and anachorets, who are largely limited to Anthony of Egypt and Paul of Thebes. At the turn of the century, the increasing addition of other hermits, e.g. Simon Stylites and Paul the Simple, and the compilation of legendaries with the *Vitaspatrum* reflect an increasing interest in hermits and their exemplary religious way of life. Another effect of this change of interest is that in the case of saints (Benedict, Mary Magdalene) who spent a temporary period living in solitude, this is what is illustrated rather than scenes more significant for their life overall. Additionally, the artists pay more and more attention to the actual space in which the hermits live. A striking example of the phenomenon is certainly Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, which shows that the turn towards solitude is a phenomenon deeply rooted in different social groups and not limited to hermit orders and their entourage. Jacobus includes a number of somewhat obscure hermit saints (Pastor, Agathon, et al) despite his general intention of shortening the traditionally voluminous monastic legendary to one volume – a concept that would suggest limiting himself to the most prominent hermits. Although the Dominicans themselves lived within the city and strove for quite close contact with the ordinary believers, the reference to the roots of Christian monasticism in early hermitism seems therefore to be as essential for them as for the Benedictines, who refer to the different forms of early monasticism in their rule (a concept illustrated by the monk Jean de Stavelot in his typological *Vita Benedicti picturata* in the fifteenth century).

The paper aims to give an overview of the development of hermit iconography within the pictorial tradition of legendaries in the late medieval period and to establish a set of visual topoi (i.a. locus amoenus vs. locus desertus, cave vs. hermitage), facilitated by a close reading of selected manuscripts and printed editions. The paper further argues that the wide distribution of the *Legenda Aurea* in particular, and the illustrations in its vernacular versions, helped to shape a more sophisticated idea of hermitic solitude beyond the audience of religious specialists.

**Karl A. E. Enenkel, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster**

*Petrarch's construction of the Sacred Place in 'De vita solitaria'*

The contribution will analyse the most important early modern treatise on the topic of the contemplative life vs. the active life, Francesco Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*. Petrarch considers the history of solitude as described by the ancient Jews, the classical authors, and the Christian desert Fathers up to the mendicant orders, and defines his spaces, places and periods of solitude against this background. In so doing, he creates an intriguing mixture of literary discourse formations and autobiography, especially with regard to his country retreats in Vaucluse and Arquà in the countryside near Padua.

**Christine Göttler, University of Bern**

*The re-invention of solitude in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century art*

The refashioning and reformation of the religious self lay at the very center of sixteenth-century religious reforms. It will be argued that toward the end of the sixteenth century a particular tendency developed in elite Catholic circles interested in religious reform. This tendency constituted a virtual conflation of the place of self-reflection and mental prayer with the desert or wilderness (*eremus*) into which the early Christian anchorites withdrew to converse exclusively with God. With the revival of this eremitic spirituality, spurred especially by Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuits, desert imagery also entered, or rather re-entered, the visual repertoire of religious art. In written contemporary sources the 'wilderness' of the early Church Fathers is described as a hybrid site, composed of elements of both a *locus horribilis* or *locus melancolicus*, and a *locus amoenus*. The contribution will elucidate how this new imagery and iconography of the early Christian desert – an 'eccentric' and 'marginal' place,

which nevertheless was of central importance in early modern humanist and religious thought – could be adapted to meet both the religious and recreational needs of individual viewers.

**Agnès Guiderdoni, Université catholique de Louvain**

*Compositio loci: Constructing the imaginary desert of the soul in the emblematic literature*

Devotional emblematic literature offers its reader the opportunity to construct his/her own imaginary hermitage. To this end, the illustrative engraving shows the inner place that the soul must occupy in order to meditate, while the discourse that brings this imaginary place to life is developed in the text. In this paper, I would like to explore the representation of “spiritual solitude” and “spiritual retreat” as it evolved in meditative emblematics in France and the southern Low Countries. More specifically, I would like to address the paradoxical position and nature of the image in such literature.

After defining spiritual solitude in the seventeenth century and showing how it developed in the *topos* of the spiritual retreat, I shall examine how it was possible to build a spiritual oratory through images, starting with the explanation given by the Jesuit Louis Richeome in his *Tableaux sacrez* (1601). I shall then look at the way artists represented the “spiritual hermitage” using among my examples the *Cor Jesu amanti sacrum* series, engraved by Anthony II Wierix in Antwerp around 1586.

To sum up, I intend to follow the process leading from the idea of spiritual solitude and spiritual retreat, expressed in a metaphor, to the elaboration of the mental image of such a place and finally to the material shape of this spiritual hermitage.

**Christiane J. Hessler, Berlin**

*Dead men talking: The studiolo of Urbino – A duke in mourning and the Petrarchan tradition*

*Studioli*: This type of room, traditionally designed for solitary use, experienced a significant shift of emphasis in Duke Federico da Montefeltro’s *studiolo* at the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino. The introverted focus of this study – almost a spiritual autobiography – represents an intellectual self-portrayal of its owner through pictures originally enhanced with inscriptions. The décor of the Urbino *studiolo* promoted a special kind of intellectual communication with the self.

This paper will present the original thesis that acting under the deep emotion caused by the sudden death of his young wife Battista Sforza, as well as that of his “best friend” Cardinal Bessarion, the duke established a special and unique place for meditation. Its proportions and ambience were those of a dimly lit, confined space of sacred height, with intarsia reminiscent of choir stalls, in which the items typically displayed in *studioli* – well-chosen books and precious objects – could hardly have been encountered by coincidence, as mere illusionistic intarsia motifs, robbed of their real value.

The painted portraits of the 28 famous scholars in the upper half of the room, chosen by the duke and arranged in pairs, simulate a discussion, evoked by their lively gestures, that is being carried on outside time and place; the late Cardinal Bessarion is among them. One of the motifs of Petrarch’s apology of solitude helps to explain this. Petrarch’s recommendation to the *solitarii* – when in the desired state of rapture – was to enter into conversation with sublime spirits of the past (“colloqui cum omnibus, qui fuerunt gloriosi viri”). This experience was ultimately intended as a *conversatio librorum*. Its implications, which were certainly influenced by epistolary theories, were carried over to portraiture by fifteenth century art theoreticians, such as Leon Battista Alberti.

Making use of sources that have not been utilised before, such as letters of condolence, elegies, and statements by Bessarion, the aesthetics, cultural origins, and general framework of this amorphous, but self-revealing paradox are examined in the *studiolo* of Urbino – a place where the choice of solitude was intentionally meant to overcome real loneliness.

**David R. Marshall, University of Melbourne**

*Aristocratic solitude: The Villa Patrizi and the early modern romitorio*

The *romitorio*, or room decorated as a hermit's cell, was a feature of a number of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Roman palaces and villas associated with the Chigi family. They referred explicitly to the Thebaid, and, as Witte (2007) has shown, *romitorii* emerged in the seventeenth century in response to new devotional practices recorded in printed devotional handbooks. This paper explores the way such *romitorii* functioned as aristocratic solitary spaces, focusing on unpublished documentation and visual records of the Patrizi *romitorio*, first created before 1689 at the Vigna Patrizi for Francesco Felice Patrizi and redone by Giovanni Paolo Pannini in the 1720s when the Vigna Patrizi was rebuilt as the Villa Patrizi. I will argue that by the eighteenth century *romitorii* had become sites for the display of artistic ingenuity, drawing on a variety of baroque illusionistic traditions in painting, sculpture and architecture, and that in the process they became sites of 'sociable solitude' and aristocratic role-playing. Such role-playing was the object of parody during the eighteenth century in paintings by Hubert Robert, and reached its apogee in the recreation of the Villa Patrizi *romitorio*, destroyed in 1849, in Palazzo Patrizi during the 1880s.

**Walter S. Melion, Emory University**

*Emblemata solitariae Passionis: Jan David, S.J. on the solitary Passion of Christ*

The *Messis myrrhae et aromatum ex instrumentis ac mysterijs Passionis Christi (Harvest of Myrrh and Spices [Gathered] from the Instruments and Mysteries of Christ's Passion)* by Jan David, S.J. contains an extended subset of seven penitential emblems focusing on the intense experience of solitude endured, but also cultivated, by Christ at two key moments of the Passion – the Agony in the Garden and the Carrying of the Cross. The *Messis* forms part of the *Paradisus Sponsi et Sponsae (Paradise of the Bridegroom and Bridegroom)* of 1607, the third and most complex of four innovative Latin emblem books on religious themes composed between 1601 and 1610 by David, a renowned preacher and former rector of the Jesuit College in Ghent (1594-1602). The *Harvest of Myrrh and Spices* describes a garden planted with instruments and episodes from the Lord's Passion, whose fragrance the votary is urged to savor as he strolls down the various pathways, gathering the horticultural specimens into a bouquet piquantly redolent of the *passiones Christi*. Emblems 2, 3, & 4 – 'Horror in horto' ('Trembling in the Garden'), 'Angelica confortatio' ('Angelic Consolation'), and 'Sudor sanguineus' ('Bloody Sweat') – reveal how Christ initiates the Passion by entering into an increasingly solitary state of proleptic meditation on his impending sacrifice, the burden of which is seen gradually to weigh him down as if he were already carrying the cross. David claims that the experience of solitude is both intensely painful and immensely generative, causing Christ in his loneliness to bleed drops of blood that fertilize the garden and bring its seeds to fruition. Meditative solitude is also construed as a mimetic medium of transmission that allows the votary to transplant into his heart the solitary suffering of Christ ('et mala purpureis semine verte rosis'). Emblems 28, 29, & 30 – 'Baiulatio crucis' ('Carrying of the Cross'), 'Simon Cyrenaeus' ('Simon of Cyrene'), and 'Planctus mulierum' ('Lamentation of the Women [of Jerusalem]') – provide a chiasmic complement to emblems 2, 3, & 4: Christ is first shown carrying the cross in complete isolation and then, by stages, joining with compassionate co-sufferers whose presence converts penitential isolation into communitarian consolation. The sequence reaches its climax in emblem 31 – 'Veronica, seu Berenice' – in which the imprint of the Holy Face on the sudarium exemplifies how thoroughly, through the process of meditative prayer, one comes to be united with Christ in mind, word, and deed, ceasing to be alone ('suumque mens agitet Iesum, det manus, ora sonent'). My paper examines the nature and meaning of the *solitaria Passio*, as set forth in David's *Messis*, one of the Jesuit order's earliest and most influential emblem books.

**Eelco Nagelsmit, University of Copenhagen**

*The solitary tree: Mademoiselle de Guise between 'salonnière' and 'solitaire'*

Marie de Lorraine, known as Mademoiselle de Guise (1615-1688) lived in great state, befitting her rank as last remaining scion (after 1675) of one of the greatest aristocratic houses of France. Her household at the Hôtel de Guise in Paris included protégés such as the composer Marc-Antoine Charpentier, antiquary and genealogist Roger de Gaignières, and Philippe Goibault du Bois, a Jansenist sympathiser, translator of Cicero and Augustine and house kapellmeister. Following custom, the duchess occupied the first floor or *bel étage* of the palace. In addition to prestige spaces like a ballroom and a chapel, she had at her disposal apartments that included a private oratory, and a *grand cabinet* where she hosted her salon, gathering leading musicians and scholars for soirées of music, dancing, and conversation. Right underneath this room, and connected to it by a private staircase, was a mezzanine. Here the duchess established her real living space: an elaborate “*appartement des hermites*”. Modelled on such examples as the hermitage of Anne of Austria in the royal monastery of Val-de-Grâce (1645-1666), the space was furnished entirely in exotic woods, and decorated with an iconographic ensemble of woodcarvings of desert saints, as well as portraits of her relatives who had chosen the religious life. By withdrawing to a place downstairs, between the *bel étage* and the ground floor (which was destined for servants), she signified her humility to those attending her salon. However, according to the inventory made after her death, her retreat also featured such amenities as a bathtub and a collection of luxurious fur-trimmed silk bathrobes.

This paper investigates the role of architectural space, images, and interior decorations in relation to their function as the framework for semi-public performances in the salon as well as for prayer and meditative retreat. How did these two functions coexist, contradict, or confirm and reinforce each other, in the context of the duchess' worldly obligations and otherworldly aspirations?

**Richard Nemeč, University of Bern**

*Solitudo and ostentatio: The papal and royal-imperial residences of Benedict XI and Charles IV*

In a note on his translation of the pseudo-Augustinian *Liber Soliloquiorum Animae ad Deum*, the longtime chancellor of Charles IV, Johann von Neumarkt of the Duchy of Breslau, wrote that the Emperor himself was to determine whether he should continue working on the translation in Prague or at Karlštejn Castle. As the depository for the Imperial Regalia and, after Prague, the second main residence of the Kingdom of Bohemia, Karlštejn was a retreat for the high clergy, and a place where they could work. It can be assumed that the residences possessed appropriate liturgical rooms as well as the necessary working and living spaces. As, among other things, places of concentrated solitude and venues for public meetings, these spaces helped to enhance the medieval ruler's domain. Past studies of this early period in the Luxembourg era have only partially (if at all) understood such spaces as an integral part of residences and thus also of domains, although with its many different facets the residence was undoubtedly the nucleus of the Late Medieval domain. The question is to what extent the category of *private* seclusion – *solitudo* – became possible in the Late Middle Ages, and what form it took in relation to *public* show – i.e. *ostentatio*. Several types of primary sources (text/architecture) provide relevant hints; both constituents of a domain in the Late Middle Ages – *solitudo* as well as *ostentatio* – come together in a residence that offered a suitable framework for enhancing a ruler's domain. The baronial apartment – a specific set of rooms in the residence and an early sign of the gradual transformation of the fortress architecture that had been associated with itinerant rule – should thus be interpreted as an early example of the “state-building” architecture used for both permanent and temporary residential locations. In secular buildings, the architectural style functioned both externally and internally as a visual instrument for the House of Luxembourg, which had only recently established its position at the head of European politics. It was a form of government that defined its claims to power not only through legally binding and constitutional texts and fixed them through narrative writings, but that also asserted itself over the long term through secular architecture, consciously using aesthetics to consolidate its power. Residential architecture was a means of continuous communication that substantially shaped the era's cultural landscape. This paper compares the architectural models applied at the papal residence in Avignon (Benedict XII) and the royal and imperial residences in Bohemia (Charles IV) with the first forms of the baronial apartment consisting of public (*sala regia*) as well as private rooms (*studiolo, thalamus, locus*).

**Lars Nørgaard, University of Copenhagen**

*Crafting solitude: Individual and collective transitions at Saint Cyr*

In his *Discours sur les principaux devoirs et les avantages de la vie religieuse*, the future archbishop of Cambrai, François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon (1651-1715), presents a complex view on solitude. The sermon was delivered on 1 March 1692 on the occasion of a profession of simple vows at Saint Cyr. This place of withdrawal was situated close to Versailles and was built by royal initiative to educate the impoverished daughters of noble families. I will show how Fénelon engages this specific context by constructing a concept of solitude that is equally centred on religious contempt for the world *and* its reform. Important theological tropes such as ‘the desert’, ‘silence’, ‘indifference’ and ‘frui/uti’ go into this construction as well as references to Old Testament figures, the Pauline letters and the church fathers.

In Fénelon’s sermon the representation of an individual’s transition to a “monastic” code of conduct carries with it a critique of worldly manners. Solitude is what the community must *do* to avoid the temptations of the world. This understanding of solitude is central to another sermon delivered at Saint Cyr. On 11 December 1693, Louis Tiberge (1651-1730) delivered a sermon on the occasion of the first solemn vows professed at Saint Cyr. This highly elaborate liturgical event marked the transition of the entire educational space; it was now consecrated and regulated by the Augustinian rule. Taken together with Fénelon’s sermon, Tiberge’s construction of a ‘new’ space of solitude is investigated as it connects itself to the act of professing vows and to the transition *from* the world to a position *no longer of* the world.

**Bernd Roling, Freie Universität Berlin**

*Seeress in the Woods: The early modern debate on Veleda, Auricinia and Vola*

Thanks to Tacitus, who wrote about Veleda in his Histories, the figure of the ‘prophetissa’ living secluded in the forest and apparently prophesying like a female druid was already known to exist in Germanic mythology. Since the huge upsurge of interest in the study of northern antiquity sparked by Keysler, Bartholin and other scholars, the first German, Belgian and Dutch scholars of antiquity have tried to get to grips with this figure. How is she to be understood? Was she a diabolical figure, or a wise woman, testimony to the virtue of the women of the ancient Germanic tribes? The discussion gained a new layer of complexity when the ‘Vola’, the seeress to whom the ‘Voluspä’ poem is attributed, entered the picture. Was she perhaps a variant of the sybil, as Göransson and others maintained? What might her relationship have been to other medieval women with the gift of second sight, the reclusive prophetesses who also lived completely cut off from the outside world? This paper attempts to flesh out the figure of the female prophet-druid in the cultural history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

**Paul J. Smith, Leiden University**

*‘Passer solitarius in tecto’: Tribulations of a lonely bird in poetry and natural history, from Petrarch to Buffon*

The *passer solitarius* on the roof, to which the Psalmist compares himself (Psalm 102), is interpreted very differently by translators and commentators. The bird is usually a “sparrow”, but sometimes an owl, or a turtledove mourning for its lost beloved. For Luther the bird symbolises the believer, who is the lonely watcher in the night, while the world sleeps. For St. John of the Cross the bird symbolises the contemplative soul. The *passer solitarius* is therefore as indefinite as the two other solitary birds, mentioned in Psalm 102: the pelican (or bittern) in the desert, and the owl in the ruins. This semantic vagueness turns the biblical image into a poetical motif, in which poets can project their ideas of poetical *solitude*. Two examples: in one of Petrarch’s sonnets the lyrical I, in despair for his love for Laura, compares himself to the *passer solitario*. In the nineteenth century Giacomo Leopardi sees the bird as the symbol of the romantic poet, whose genius is misunderstood by the madding crowd.



Early modern naturalists also dealt with the bird, and came to different conclusions. Belon, for instance, discusses a *Paisse solitaire* – from the very precise description it is clear that Belon’s bird is an alpine accentor (*Prunella collaris*). Gessner also struggles with the bird’s identification, as can be seen in the various editions of his ornithological work. Aldrovandi, and later Willughby and Ray, gave the name *Passer solitarius* to the blue rock thrush, pictured and commented upon by George Edwards. Accordingly, Linnaeus (1758) gave the blue rock thrush the scientific name it still has today: *Monticola solitarius*.

In my paper I will discuss the early modern poetic and ornithological interpretations of the bird, that result from two competing worldviews, the “emblematic” and the “scientific” worldview (William B. Ashworth). I will pay special attention to the texts where both worldviews coincide, as is the case in the work of Buffon. Buffon discusses at length the solitary behaviour of the bird, giving an anthropologising interpretation of it.

### **Marie Theres Stauffer, University of Geneva**

*The hermitage in Bayreuth and the ‘Spiegelscherbenkabinett’*

In 1715 Margrave Georg Wilhelm started to build a small palace (the *Altes Schloss*) as the central feature of a court hermitage; the building was thus a retreat from the Margrave’s residence in the nearby town of Bayreuth. Here the margravian court imitated the ‘simple life’ and the regulations of a hermit order, of which the margrave himself was the superior. The courtiers dressed in monk’s habits, slept in tiny bare cells and ate food prepared for them by the ladies of the court from brown earthenware bowls using wooden spoons.

In 1735, when Margrave Friedrich took over the government of the margraviate, he presented the entire complex to his wife for her birthday on 3 July 1735. Wilhelmine immediately set about redesigning it, and in the following years the palace was rebuilt and the rooms magnificently appointed, without however destroying the original, grotto-like character of the building.

When Wilhelmine redesigned her own apartment, she included a Chinese-style mirror cabinet, an intimate room decorated with irregularly shaped mirrors of various sizes which covered the walls in random order – in complete contrast to traditional European taste. This room is not actually part of the suite of state rooms. Wilhelmine used the *Spiegelscherbenkabinett* as a retreat to write her memoirs. The proposed paper will deal with ‘retreat’ in a double meaning: It will analyse a building, which served first as an ascetic hermitage for the Margrave, and which was still used as a retreat by the Margravine, but one with sumptuous decoration. Regarding the mirror cabinet, I shall discuss it as a “space of reflection”, also in a double meaning: On one hand, it is a room in which mirrors create multiple reflections; on the other, this room was the place where Wilhelmine reflected on her own life.

### **Arnold Witte, Royal Netherlands Institute, Rome**

*From literature to architecture: Pliny’s diaeta and the origins of the early modern hermitage as a space for aesthetics*

According to Pliny the Younger’s literary description, his villa Lauretina contained two spaces for which he used the term *diaeta*. The first of these he described as a small apartment located in turrets; the second was situated on the ground floor and linked to the main body of the villa by means of a cryptoporticus. It consisted of three rooms and a terrace, surrounded by flowerbeds. Pliny described the latter as offering “profound peace and seclusion ... thanks to the dividing passage which runs between the room and the garden so that any noise is lost in the intervening space ... When I retire to this suite I feel as if I have left my house altogether and much enjoy the sensation... for I am not disturbing my household’s merrymaking nor they my work.”

Pliny’s description led sixteenth-century Roman antiquarians and architects to recreate this kind of space. Because of their ecclesiastical patrons and their use of these spaces, this architectural type became ‘contaminated’ with that of the hermitage, which possessed similar characteristics and a comparable use, resulting in a hybrid form that became the basic model for garden pavilions. Not only in Italy but also in France, Germany, England and even Ireland, this concept was adopted and adapted, oscillating between the classical *diaeta* and the modern hermitage. Examples of the first, classical,

type are at Raphael's Villa Madama in Rome, the Casino at Caprarola, and the Casino at Marino (Dublin). Examples of the (initially) religious type (sometimes literally forming part of monasteries), are in the garden of the Chateau de Gaillon, in the apartment for Maria Giovanna Battista de Nemours in the Santa Cristina in Turin, and in the park at Schierensee, close to Kiel. These examples illustrate how the place for seclusion originated as a location for study, but during the seventeenth century acquired a particular flavour of leisure and freedom from increasing social constraints. Indeed, the combination of these apparently conflicting secular and spiritual elements offered an ideal location for the disinterested consideration of art – both from a religious point of view and an aesthetic one – thus constituting a preferred location for private collecting, basically returning to Pliny's own concept.

**Steffen Zierholz, University of Bern**

*Solitude in the chapel of Fra Mariano del Piombo in San Silvestro al Quirinale in Rome*

The landscape paintings on the side walls of the chapel of the Dominican prior Fra Mariano del Piombo in San Silvestro al Quirinale in Rome are among the earliest monumental landscape paintings in a church space. Painted by Polidoro da Caravaggio between 1524 and 1527, they are always referred to as predecessors of classical landscape painting in Seicento Italy. They contain scenes from the lives of St. Catherine of Siena (Fig. 1), one of the most influential personalities in the history of the Dominican order, and St. Mary Magdalen, the exemplary penitent. As older studies have already pointed out, the spatial opposition of the two saints indicates a specific Dominican subject. The ascetic life of Mary Magdalen in the solitude of southern France served as an example for Catherine of Siena to reform her own life by directing it to the contemplation of celestial and divine things.

The idea of *solitudo* plays an important role in the lives of both female saints – although in different terms and with different meanings. While Mary Magdalen led a real penitent life in the *solitudo* of a rock face, Catherine of Siena created for herself an “inner cell” where she could retreat at any time into the solitude of her soul. My paper examines the visually dominating presentation of nature in the chapel, which has to be understood as a symbolic matrix seen in the context of solitude and retreat. Furthermore, considering the topographical site of the church, it will be argued that the two female saints represent two different models of withdrawal. In the case of Mary Magdalen a real-life withdrawal from the world, whereas Catherina of Siena represents a spiritualised model, actualising and legitimising the former ascetic ideal of Dominican life and everyday (spiritual) practice.