

# Roman historical exempla in Seneca

Autor(en): **Mayer, R.G.**

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## IV

R.G. MAYER

### ROMAN HISTORICAL EXEMPLA IN SENECA

The theme of the paper which I have the honour to present to this gathering concerns Seneca's use of Roman historical examples. Professor Grimal proposed this suggestive topic, rich in detail and significance, and I am grateful for it, since an engagement with the issues it presents opens up to us something of value not only in Seneca the writer but in Seneca the man as well. For I think we shall see that Seneca's intimate acquaintance with the tradition, both rhetorical and moral, of referring behaviour to an exemplary standard fired his own ambition. Thus it happened that, towards the end of his life, he exhorted his correspondent Lucilius to join him in aiming to become an exemplary figure: *nos quoque aliquid et ipsi faciamus animose; simus inter exempla* (Ep. 98, 13). Seneca aspires to exemplary status himself, if only he can find an opportunity to exercise courageous resolve. Nero offered him the chance he longed for and he rose to the occasion (as his nephew Lucan regrettably did not).

Tacitus records for us the memorable scene, when Seneca received the *mandata imperatoris* (Ann. XV 60-64). (The philosopher's sense of theatre in his last moments will be later rivalled by Mary, Queen of Scots, on the scaffold.) But what strikes the attention is the moral synthesis of both following and

setting an example. The example Seneca follows on the one hand is signalled plainly enough, for he had long had ready to assist his passage from life that poison which snuffed out those condemned by the public sentence of the Athenians (Tac. *Ann.* XV 64, 3). Socrates here is the model! And yet there is a note of Roman ambitiousness even here. For the Roman was never content merely to imitate, he aimed also to rival his model (*aemulari*, *aemulatio*) and surpass it. (In the literary world we see this throughout Latin literature; Seneca himself for example aims to rival Euripides by combining elements from both the Greek *Hippolytus* plays in his own *Phaedra*.) Now at his death Seneca aimed to outstrip Socrates in this particular: whereas Socrates sent his wife Xanthippe away, Seneca not only allowed Paulina to be present, he even consented to her earnest wish to die with him. The wedded pair surpass their solitary model, and so become models themselves, as we see later at the death of Thrasea Paetus, whose wife Arria yearned to join him (Tac. *Ann.* XVI 34).<sup>2</sup> That a model is being created Seneca himself observes (if Tacitus faithfully reports the gist of his final utterances) when he says to his wife: *non inuidebo exemplo*. He does not begrudge her achieving exemplary status. His own position is as clear for he claims to be leaving as an inheritance to his friends *imaginem uitae suae*, a model by which they may shape their own lives. So it is that in death Seneca crowned his lifelong practice of referring to *exempla*, by himself becoming one. There is,

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<sup>1</sup> For this see K. DÖRING, *Exemplum Socratis. Studien zur Sokratesnachwirkung in der kynisch-stoischen Popularphilosophie der frühen Kaiserzeit und im frühen Christentum*, Hermes, Einzelschrift 42 (Wiesbaden 1979), 18-22.

<sup>2</sup> For Thrasea's imitation of Seneca see M.T. GRIFFIN, *Seneca. A philosopher in politics* (Oxford 1976), 370. Of course Arria, as Tacitus noted, had the *domesticum exemplum* of her mother to follow.

I believe, something essentially Roman in his aspiration and I would like first to set before you some considerations on this point.

The imitation of examples is a practice central to Roman social life, moral behaviour and literary production. Students of Latin literature are used to this concept of imitation, and it need not be emphasized at this gathering. It should nonetheless be recalled that literary imitation is only one aspect of an all-pervasive tendency among the Romans to seek out what was best in any department and turn it into a pattern for imitation and, if possible, emulation. Let us briefly observe the principle at work in the social and moral life of Rome.

Two institutions demonstrate their use of role-models: *contubernium* and the *tirocinium fori*. In the army a young officer was placed under the protection of a senior commander, whose accommodation he shared. From him were learned the rudiments of military life. But since the life of a camp can easily turn to licence it was important that the senior officer should be a good man whose influence would shape the youth's character. We therefore find Cicero stressing the moral qualities of Q. Pompeius, on whose staff Caelius served (*Cael.* 73 *castissimo homini*; cf. *Planc.* 27). Tacitus observed that Agricola was able to imitate the best men — *sequi optimos* — under Suetonius Paulinus (*Agr.* 5, 1). The general himself sets an example for his young staff to follow.<sup>3</sup>

So too in the forum of Rome. Tacitus, again, provides us with a statement of the principle of enrolment in public life (*Dial.* 34). The young man is entrusted to a leading public figure whom he attends constantly so as to learn the procedural ropes.

<sup>3</sup> Seneca alludes to the value of this traditional form of moral guidance at *Ep.* 6, 6: *Metrodorum et Hermarchum et Polyaeum magnos uiros non schola Epicuri sed contubernium fecit.*



The word Tacitus uses for «attend» is *sectari*; it is important to recall that the word has among its senses «imitate». Once again the model is to the fore in Roman training. It should be stressed that these older men in camp or in the forum are aware of their function as setters of examples.

The appeal to examples was, I believe, the cornerstone of a Roman's moral training as well. We can see it in operation in a variety of ways. The chief model was one's father or family generally. Cicero often refers to the *domesticum exemplum*.<sup>4</sup> Seneca too appeals to the principle at *Clem.* I 9 where he sets before the young Nero an account of Augustus' *concilium amicorum* to serve as a *domesticum exemplum*; in a yet more flattering manner in the *Consolatio ad Polybium* (15, 2) Seneca has Claudius, as chief comforter, rehearse examples of grief bravely borne, especially within the imperial household: *contentus nostrae domus exemplis ero*. (Nor was the concept unknown to the Greeks, who speak of οἰκεῖον παράδειγμα<sup>5</sup>; but it should be recalled how much less respect a Greek father commanded, compared to a Roman *paterfamilias*.) Moreover society at large was a pool from which to fish examples of behaviour both to avoid and to imitate. Two literary texts provide evidence.<sup>6</sup> First, in Terence's *Adelphoe* 410-419 the severe father, Demea, is delighted to learn from the slave, Syrus, that his nursling, Ctesipho, has rebuked the more laxly reared Aeschinus. Demea congratulates himself that the boy is turning out *similis maiorum suorum* (411), a reference to *domestica*

<sup>4</sup> See *TLL* V 1, 1869, 15; an instance in Terence will be referred to below; cf. Plin. *Epist.* V 8, 4: his uncle provides him with a *domesticum exemplum* for writing history.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Isoc. *Or.* I (*Demon.*) 9; *Or.* V (*Phil.*) 113; Xen. *Cyr.* VII 5, 86.

<sup>6</sup> See H. KORNHARDT, *Exemplum. Eine bedeutungsgeschichtliche Studie* (Diss. Göttingen 1936), 26-34.

*exempla*, picked up later, *domi habuit unde disceret* (413). Ctesipho is, in addition, *praeceptorum plenus* (412); precepts, as we shall see, were the rival medium of moral instruction. Then Demea expounds his technique:

*inspicere, tamquam in speculum, in uitas omnium  
iubeo atque ex aliis sumere exemplum sibi.*

He makes it clear that the choice of *exempla* is to be both for imitation (*hoc facito*) and for avoidance (*hoc fugito*). A question at once arises. The *Adelphoe* is of course modelled upon a play of Menander. What would the original Demea have said about his moral training of Ctesipho? I wish we knew, for it is my belief that in this passage we have an instance of «Terenzisches im Terenz», a freely Romanized rendering of the Greek model. My belief is encouraged by two factors. First, commentators do not point to any similar technique of following examples encouraged in other Greek writers who describe the ideal education of the child; Plato's *Protagoras* 325d is usually referred to, but it does not recommend the application of *exempla* (neither does *Soph.* 229 e). Secondly, I fancy that Terence is trying to make Demea as like a Roman father as possible. My next literary text will illustrate what I mean.

In the fourth satire of his first book Horace is defending his satirical calling (*Sat.* I 4, 103-126). He argues that his role as a satirist is no more than a continuation of the practice of his own father, who accompanied Horace as a boy on his way to school (*Sat.* I 6, 81). It was perhaps on those early morning strolls (we may imagine it so) that the sort of admonitions Horace describes took place. Individuals are singled out as *documenta* of bad behaviour (110; the word is a synonym of *exemplum*). For admirable behaviour Horace's father points to the *iudices selecti* (123). This technique of moral instruction by example is explicitly contrasted with the abstract ethics of the philosopher, i.e. *praecepta* (115-116); the *traditus ab antiquis mos* as embodied in or

flouted by individuals is the only standard of behaviour, which the professed *sapiens* can account for but not replace. Now it would be imprudent to suggest that Horace's father must have acted as his son describes; the autobiographical element may be fictionalized after all. But it is important that Horace is defending his satirical poetry by linking it to a form of moral instruction by *exempla* which Roman fathers must have used. If they did not, then Horace's defence collapses; he must be appealing to a universally recognized Roman practice, inculcated with all the traditional authority of a *pater*.

That the Romans themselves were conscious of their reliance upon examples as the medium of moral training is clear from a number of texts. Cicero is convinced that Rome has outstripped Greece in providing *exempla* of moderation (*Fin.* II 62), for the city is stuffed with them (*Off.* III 47). Quintilian picks up the boast, but with a telling alteration: *quantum... Graeci praeceptis ualent, tantum Romani, quod est maius, exemplis* (*Inst.* XII 2, 30). Examples are worth more than precepts, actions speak louder than words. The emperor Augustus keenly sought out *exempla* which he would transcribe and dispatch to his subordinates (*Suet. Aug.* 89, 2).<sup>7</sup> More systematic were the collectors of *exempla*: Hyginus, Varro, Nepos, Pomponius Rufus and above all Valerius Maximus.<sup>8</sup>

I have dwelt at some length on this preliminary exposition of the moral role of *exempla* in Roman culture for three reasons. First, because it helps to show that Seneca fits squarely into a

<sup>7</sup> These references are drawn from the admirable article by A. LUMPE, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* VI (1966), 1229-1257.

<sup>8</sup> For Valerius see now G. MASLAKOV, «Valerius Maximus and Roman historiography. A study of the *exempla* tradition», in *ANRW* II 32, 1 (1984), 437-496; his collection does not seem to be *oratorum in usum* but designed to exhort the general reader.

native tradition. He is not citing *exempla* simply because it was the approved method applied by rhetorical training (but of course it was that too); the imitation of models was central to an ordinary Roman's moral experience. Secondly, the choice of exemplary material is found to be inexhaustible, and even provided by one's contemporaries. This makes a difference when we compare Seneca to the later Greek moralists. Their *exempla* tend to be fossils, museum exhibits lovingly preserved.<sup>9</sup> The tradition Seneca inherited is altogether more lively, so that he quite naturally appeals to his own experience or to the recent past for examples: *nec semper confugiamus ad uetera* [sc. *exempla*] (*Ep.* 83, 13). (You will therefore pardon me, I hope, if I interpret the word «historical» somewhat freely.) Thirdly, the Roman tradition encouraged not just learning from *exempla* but setting an example oneself!<sup>10</sup> Seneca pretty clearly has this role in mind for himself in his *Epistulae*, as we shall see later.

What of the Greek tradition, we may ask at this point? Above all, did systematic ethics provide an impulse for the use of *exempla*, as it clearly did for *praecepta*? It has recently been suggested that Posidonius, whose work was used and discussed on several occasions by Seneca, may have given a lead in this

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<sup>9</sup> Plutarch castigates those who in political speeches cite inappropriate *exempla*, which he reckons are better left to sophists; but his own preferred *exempla* are nonetheless rooted in the remote past (*Praec. ger. reip.* 17, 814 B-C); Dio Chrysostom complains that speakers refuse to cite contemporary instances and prefer antiquity (*Or.* XXI [*Pulchr.*] 11). I owe these references to Mr. E.L. Bowie.

<sup>10</sup> An early instance of such self-consciousness is found in Plautus; Philolaches, in his grand *scena* in the first act of the *Mostellaria*, compares his former moral life to the plan, *exemplum*, of a house which others copied (103; 128; 132; 154-155). The detail may of course have been in Philemon's original; see Ed. FRAENKEL, *Elementi Plautini in Plauto* (Firenze 1960), 168 n.1.



matter as well. Seneca, indeed, provides the evidence, above all in *Epist.* 95, where he lists the psychagogic strategies adopted by Posidonius: *non tantum praeceptionem, ... sed etiam suasionem et consolationem et exhortationem necessariam iudicat* (*Ep.* 95, 65). He goes on to add to these aetiology and ethology, the description of each virtue. In his commentary on this important passage Kidd detects a hint that Posidonius' own historical writings served an ethological function by making history a descriptive pattern for ethics.<sup>11</sup> He is led to this chiefly by what Seneca goes on to say. He likens Posidonius' ethology to Virgil's description of the points of a sound horse in the third *Georgic* (75-81 and 83-85); then he says that the poet has inadvertently described the brave man. Surely, Seneca reckons, this description fits Cato the younger (his favourite figure from Rome's past), for he embodies these very *signa* and *notae* of excellence. But is this reference to a particular person necessarily characteristic of Posidonius' ethology? I for my part doubt it. After all Posidonius can be set into the tradition of Theophrastus' *characterismos*<sup>12</sup>, which, like Virgil's account of the good horse, is entirely typical and needs no reference to an historical embodiment. My hunch is therefore that the dragging in of the younger Cato is typical of Seneca's method and of his preference for the concretely historical; it may have nothing to do with Posidonius' *ethologia*. Apart from him there appears to be no philosophical opinion about the value of *paradeigmata* in moral discourse. It is Seneca who seeks to give them an enhanced role.

<sup>11</sup> Posidonius, Fr. 176 Edelstein-Kidd = 452 Theiler; see I.G. KIDD's *Commentary* (Cambridge 1988), (ii) 651. Livy certainly sees history as serving such a function; in his account the dying Lucretia has acted so as to provide an example: *nec ulla deinde impudica Lucretiae exemplo uiuet* (her last words, I 58,10).

<sup>12</sup> See R.G. USSHER (ed.), *The Characters of Theophrastus* (London 1960), 28.

In returning to the everyday use of examples among the Romans themselves, I must not neglect, especially with Seneca, the rhetorical and literary tradition. Much has been written to illustrate this central role of the *exemplum*<sup>13</sup>; I shall quote but one text, from Quintilian again: *in primis uero abundare debet orator exemplorum copia cum ueterum tum etiam nouorum, adeo ut... quae conscripta sunt historiis aut sermonibus uelut per manus tradita quaeque cotidie aguntur debeat nosse* (*Inst.* XII 4, 1)<sup>14</sup> This prescription is admirably carried out by Seneca, who, as has been noted, does not confine his citation of *exempla* to those consecrated by his predecessors' use. He is full of instances from the recent past and clearly relies on everyday experience (*quae cotidie aguntur*), oral tradition (*sermonibus tradita*) and personal recollection for his sources.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed let us, in turning now to Seneca himself, look briefly at the sources of his *exempla*.<sup>16</sup> Though his Greek historical examples are not my concern, I should like nevertheless to draw attention to his acquaintance with Herodotus, who supplies,

<sup>13</sup> Most notably by H.W. LITCHFIELD, «National *exempla uirtutis* in Roman literature», in *HSCP* 25 (1914), 1-71. I would also refer to S. BONNER, *Roman Declamation in the Late Republic and Early Empire* (Liverpool 1949), 61-62, and to R.G. AUSTIN's note on Virg. *Aen.* VI (Oxford 1977), p. 233.

<sup>14</sup> It is the view of R.G. AUSTIN in his commentary (Oxford 1948), p. xxx that this somewhat token section would have been expanded.

<sup>15</sup> Seneca founds *exempla* upon personal reminiscence at *Const.* 17, 1; *Ben.* IV 31, 3; *Ep.* 47, 9 (Callistus) and 122, 10-13 (Acilius Buta) and 14-16 (Albinovanus Pedo on Sex. Papinius); some of these are anecdotes.

<sup>16</sup> See H. SCHENDEL, *Quibus auctoribus romanis Lucius Annaeus Seneca in rebus patriis usus sit* (Diss. Greifswald 1908), who reasonably warns of the difficulty in tracking the sources of so well-read a man.



but perhaps not quite directly, a fair bit of matter!<sup>17</sup> Once Seneca names a Roman historian as source of a story, Claudius Quadrigarius (*Ben.* III 23, 2). On another occasion he cites M. Brutus' treatise *De virtute* for the *exemplum* of the exile in Mytilene of M. Claudius Marcellus, *cos.* 51 B.C. (*Helv.* 9, 4 ff.). His reading of the letters of Augustus and of Cicero generated *exempla* at *Brev.* 4 and 5, and at *Ep.* 97. The possible use by Seneca of Valerius Maximus provoked a scrupulous essay by R. Helm<sup>18</sup>, who was right to stress that Seneca's rhetorical training will have kept him alert for the capture of suitable specimens, so that we must not always expect a single literary source. Moreover the source may do no more than provide bare information for Seneca to distort or ornament as his context requires. Perhaps the most acute investigation of Seneca's reading was made by Fr. Münzer!<sup>19</sup> In the important appendix to his study of the Roman nobility, «Die geschichtlichen Beispiele in Cicero's *Consolatio*», Seneca's indebtedness to that work for his own *consolationes* was convincingly argued, especially as concerned the figure of M. Horatius Puluillus (cf. *Marc.* 13, 1). In Livy's account (I 8, 6-9) no exemplary character enhances the story; that is reckoned to be a contribution of Cicero. It may be worth making the point that the *consolatio* is the one prose form handled by Seneca which appears to have a well-defined format<sup>20</sup>; at any rate, in *Marc.* 2, 1 he professes to be breaking

<sup>17</sup> See A. SETAIOLI, «Della narrazione all' *exemplum*. Episodi erodotei nell'opera senecana», in *Atti del Convegno internazionale «Letterature classiche e narratologia»* (Perugia 1981), 379-396.

<sup>18</sup> «Valerius Maximus, Seneca und die 'Exemplasammlung'», in *Hermes* 74 (1939), 130-154.

<sup>19</sup> *Römische Adelsparteien und Adelsfamilien* (Stuttgart 1920; repr. Darmstadt 1963).

<sup>20</sup> See R. KASSEL, *Untersuchungen zur griechischen und römischen Konsollationsliteratur*, *Zetemata* 18 (München 1985), esp. 95.

with the traditional pattern by setting out his *exempla* before the *praecepta*. It is perhaps the less surprising therefore that, in composing *consolationes*, Seneca should have in mind an identifiable model, especially Cicero's famous work (it was still being read by St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and Lactantius). I turn now to a point which has been somewhat neglected by those who have investigated Seneca's literary sources, his inaccuracy and its likely cause.

That Seneca's historical *exempla* contain «howlers», blatant errors, is well known. The most startling is the fictionalized conspiracy of Cinna, already referred to as a *domesticum exemplum*.<sup>21</sup> Now such errors may be owed to lapses of memory, but Quintilian offers another explanation that has hitherto been passed over. At *Inst.* X 1, 128 he praises Seneca's vast *rerum cognitio* but adds: *in qua tamen aliquando ab iis quibus inquirenda quaedam mandabat deceptus est*. The busy man relied on secretaries or friends, perhaps, for information (we may recall that Cicero consulted Atticus for help with his *Consolatio*; cf. *Att.* XII 20, 2 = 258 Shackleton Bailey, XII 22, 2 = 261 Shackleton Bailey, XII 24, 2 = 263 Shackleton Bailey); their research was not always reliable, and, especially with Greek *exempla*, Seneca is convicted of error. On the other hand he shows a certain scrupulosity at one point. He refers anonymously to that well known Roman leader who, like Leonidas the Spartan, took three hundred men to draw away the enemy (*Ep.* 82, 21-22). Why does he not name the man? Perhaps because in three separate histories he was given a different name! Cato the elder, who had also compared him to Leonidas, called him Q. Caedicius, but Quadrigarius gave his name as Laberius (*A. Gellius*, III 7). Livy, who ought to be Seneca's source, refers

<sup>21</sup> For this see M.T. GRIFFIN, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 409-411 and R. SYME, *The Augustan Aristocracy* (Oxford 1986), 266.

to him as L. Calpurnius Flamma<sup>22</sup>. It seems that Seneca, who sometimes prefers not to name the famous exemplary figures to whom he alludes, here chooses silence over philological inquiry<sup>23</sup>.

Seneca draws most liberally on his own age; the reign of the *principes* provides him with numerous *exempla*. Attempts to arrange these various stories into a consistent pattern reveal a conventional enough attitude to the principate and the emperors.<sup>24</sup> As we might expect, Caligula is a monster, whose reign forces into prominence exemplary figures like Pastor (*Ir.* II 33, 3-6). Notable too is Julius Kanus (*Tranq.* 14, 4-10), who thanked Gaius for his order of execution; what draws our attention in Seneca's account is this opening remark: *Kanus Iulius, uir inprimis magnus, cuius admirationi ne hoc quidem obstat, quod nostro saeculo natus est...* Seneca, like Tacitus later on, sees that the times are not so degenerate as to be unable still to throw up an exemplary figure or two<sup>25</sup>; this is the sort of encouragement he may have wanted on his own way to becoming exemplary; his own fate would prove little different from Kanus'. (It is possible that Kanus was, like Seneca, implicated, at however great a remove, in a conspiracy.) Seneca's attitude to the other *principes* is conventional, so far as his use of them or

<sup>22</sup> See Fr. MÜNZER, in *RE* III 1, 1373, s.v. «Calpurnius», 42.

<sup>23</sup> Seneca refers allusively to Porcia, who died by eating live coals, at *Prov.* 6, 9; to Aemilius' sons at *Polyb.* 14, 5; to Q. Marcius Rex at *Ep.* 99, 6; to M' Curius Dentatus at *Ben.* VII 7, 5.

<sup>24</sup> See especially M.T. GRIFFIN, *op. cit.* (n. 2), 210-217, whose bibliographical references to the useful studies of W.H. ALEXANDER need one addition, viz., «Seneca the philosopher in account with Roman history», *Trans. Royal Soc. of Canada*, Sect. 2, 3rd Ser., 41 (1948), 20-46.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Tac. *Hist.* I 3, 1: *non tamen adeo uirtutum sterile saeculum ut non et bona exempla prodiderit.*

of figures who lived in their reigns as *exempla* indicates his own opinion.

I turn now to the styles of narration and the presentation generally of the *exempla* in the prose works. One of Seneca's favourite literary devices is the list; indeed lists are something of a vice in all his writings. (In the tragedies, for instance, one dreads a reference to the Labours of Hercules or the Tortures of the Damned since this is bound to trigger off a list.) We find the same technique used with *exempla*. So for instance at *Prov.* 3, 4 he offers a list of Fortune's adversaries: *ignem experitur in Mucio, paupertatem in Fabricio, exilium in Rutilio, tormenta in Regulo, uenenum in Socrate, mortem in Catone*. The list reappears in *Ep.* 98, 12-13 (the one, be it recalled, in which Seneca exhorts Lucilius to aim at exemplary status): *singula uicere iam multi: ignem Mucius, crucem Regulus, uenenum Socrates, exilium Rutilius, mortem ferro adactam Cato... Fabricius diuitias imperator reiecit...* Its personnel is reduced to the quartet Regulus — Cato — Rutilius — Socrates at *Ep.* 67, 7 and to the trios Socrates — Regulus — Cato at *Ep.* 71, 17 or Rutilius — Socrates — Cato at *Marc.* 22, 3 and *Tranq.* 16, 1 (though Pompey and Cicero flesh out the latter).<sup>26</sup> These figures are the small change of the exemplary tradition, and Seneca's «hopping» style is justly calculated to give them no more weight than they deserve. What is so disarming about this accumulative technique is Seneca's self-consciousness in its use. Consider *Ep.* 24. Lucilius is troubled about the outcome of a trial and Seneca encourages him to anticipate the gravity or duration of misfortune. There are many *exempla* to forearm him (24, 3). Can anything be worse than exile, prison, burning, death? Look at those who have despised such misfortunes. Then our old friends reappear: Rutilius

<sup>26</sup> Reliance on these canonical figures was noted by E. ALBERTINI, *La composition dans les ouvrages philosophiques de Sénèque* (Paris 1923), 216-219.



in exile, Socrates in prison, Mucius with his hand in the flames (24, 4-5). At this point Lucilius is imagined as erupting in annoyance: «*decantatae... in omnibus scholis fabulae istae sunt: iam mihi, cum ad contemnendam mortem uentum fuerit, Catonem narrabis*» (24, 6). Lucilius is alert to Seneca's rhetorical strategies, he anticipates the final *exemplum* and dismisses them all as outworn. Seneca's answer is a defence of his method: *non in hoc exempla nunc congero, ut ingenium exerceam, sed ut te aduersus id, quod maxime terribile uidetur, exhorter* (24, 9). Nonetheless he does rehearse the final hour of Cato, insisting upon its pathos. He even ventures to put into Cato's mouth a lively denunciation of Fortune.

Seneca's art is admirable here. He knows his *exemplum* is well-worn — we may recall its appearance in a *satire* of Persius (3, 44-48), and so he sets about investing it with new importance. The imagined interruption of Lucilius detaches Cato from the list and isolates his greatness. The additional use of direct speech enhances his significance over the others. (When Seneca deploys Cato, he often puts words into his mouth; cf. *Prov.* 2, 9-10 and *Ep.* 71, 15). The speech has its rhetorical figures, notably the one called emphasis by the Greeks, whereby the speaker refers to himself by name.

Now Seneca is clearly aware of his somewhat academic deployment of traditional *exempla* in lists, so he turns the tables on Lucilius and offers a brand new *exemplum*, this time of a morally undistinguished man who nonetheless rose to the occasion of dying well, Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio, *cos.* 52, the father-in-law of Pompey. His suicide in North Africa was immortalized by his reply to the question «where was the general»: «*imperator se bene habet*». Now this story was deservedly famous; Livy related it (*Perioch.* 114) and it is found in Valerius Maximus (III 2, 13). But Seneca revitalizes it with rhetorical *colores*; he sets this Scipio alongside his ancestors, whose fated renown in Africa he comes to share; conquering

Carthage is less than conquering death; Scipio dies in the only way suitable for the superior officer of a Cato (*Ep.* 24, 9-10). So we see Seneca here improving upon a somewhat overworked device, the list. In *Epist.* 24 therefore the traditional enumeration does not act alone but serves as foil to the clinching *exemplum*, Scipio. Seneca's literary resourcefulness never deserted him.

Lists can be troublesome because shapeless, but two devices helped to impose some control. First, there is a clear tendency to group *exempla* into threes; secondly, the rhetorical crescendo determines the order of *exempla* within the list.

Grouping into threes was clearly enjoined in the rhetorical schools.<sup>27</sup> Cicero favoured trios of *exempla* himself<sup>28</sup>, and Seneca follows suit on numerous occasions.<sup>29</sup> More impressively the trio can be organized into a crescendo, a rhetorical device to which Professor Grimal drew attention in his edition of *De breuitate vitae*.<sup>30</sup> After urging the moral desirability of *otium* Seneca offers three instances, Augustus, Cicero, and Livius Drusus. In the last it is hinted that Drusus' restless soul could only find repose in a self-inflicted death. (It is also remarkable that the *exempla* are in reverse chronological order.) A more striking crescendo is found in *De prouidentia* (3, 5-7). After the list, to which I have already referred, Seneca elaborates on the supposed misfortunes of three of his exemplary figures, Mucius,

<sup>27</sup> See Quint. *Inst.* IV 5, 3, and A.N. SHERWIN-WHITE's note on Plin. *Epist.* II 20, 8 *sufficiunt duae fabulae an scholastica lege tertiam poscis?*

<sup>28</sup> See H. SCHOENBERGER, *Beispiele aus der Geschichte, ein rhetorisches Kunstmittel in Ciceros Reden* (Diss. Erlangen 1910), 60-3.

<sup>29</sup> Trios of *exempla* will be found at *Ir.* I 11, 5-7 (Roman generals); *Ir.* III 22-24 (anger controlled); *Marc.* 20, 4-6 (Pompey, Cicero, Cato should have died sooner); *Helv.* 12, 4 (Greek philosophers); *Helv.* 12, 5-7 (Romans); *Helv.* 13, 4-7 (Socrates, Cato, Aristides).

<sup>30</sup> L. Annaei Senecae *De Breuitate Vitae*, ed. P. GRIMAL (Paris 1959), 8.



Fabricius and Rutilius. The trio is bound together by the figure anaphora, for each section begins with the words *infelix est*. Highly rhetorical too is the development of the sections in a series of ironical interrogatives. The first two are also linked by a sudden change of direction signalled by *quid ergo?*; Seneca goes on to ask further ironical questions, *felicior esset...?*. The last *exemplum* is the most dramatic. It is devoted to P. Rutilius Rufus, cos. 105 B.C., who is one of Seneca's favourite figures because he was both a Stoic (he is called *noster* at *Ben.* VI 37,2) and a *nouus homo* like Seneca.<sup>31</sup> Indeed Rutilius had entered the tradition of *exempla* before Seneca's day; he is to be found in Cicero (*Nat. deor.* III 80), Ovid (*Pont.* I 3, 63-66) and Valerius Maximus (especially II 10, 5). Seneca sets him apart from the previous two *exempla* by abandoning the change of direction introduced by *quid ergo? felicior esset* and putting a small speech of defiance into his mouth. The use of speech of course raises the emotional temperature, and here too rhetorical devices are prominent. Rutilius speaks three sentences which begin anaphorically: «*uiderint... uideant... uideant*». The central sentence lists Sulla's atrocities, visible to those who stayed in Rome; the objects are all connected by *et*, the figure polysyndeton. The last sentence is a brisk and pointed epigram: «*uideant ista qui exulare non possunt*».

Similar devices to those described above will be found in *Ben.* V 16, where Seneca lists those who may be deemed ungrateful to the state: Coriolanus, Catiline, Marius, Sulla, Pompey, Julius Caesar, Antony. Here too each section begins anaphorically with the key word, *ingratus*, followed at once by the name.

<sup>31</sup> He appears, often in lists, elsewhere at *Marc.* 22, 3; *Vit.* 18, 3; *Tranq.* 16, 1; *Ben.* V 17, 2; *Ep.* 24, 4; 67, 7; 79, 14; 82, 11; 98, 12. For an account of Rutilius see G.L. HENDRICKSON, in *CP* 28 (1933), 153-175, esp. 175 for his exemplary status.

Seneca starts at any rate a crescendo, the sentences increase in length up to the fifth *exemplum* (two lines to Coriolanus, four to Catiline, five to Marius, eight to Sulla, and ten to Pompey).

Two further observations about Seneca's narrative style will close these remarks. When he chooses he can compose periodically. A good specimen is found at *Ben.* III 37, 4, where he lists sons who surpassed their parents in returning kindnesses (once again the list is linked anaphorically with *uicit*). The last *exemplum* runs thus:

*uicit patrem imperiosum quidem Manlius, qui cum ante ad tempus relegatus esset a patre ob adulescentiam brutam et hebetem, ad tribunum plebis, qui patri suo dixerit diem, uenit, petitoque tempore, quod ille dederat sperans fore proditorem parentis inuisi et bene meruisse se de iuvene credebat, cuius exilium pro grauissimo crimine inter alia Manlio obiebat, nactus adulescens secretum stringit occultatum sinu ferrum et «nisi iuras» inquit «te diem patri remissurum, hoc te gladio transfodiam. in tua potestate est utro modo pater meus accusatorem non habeat».*

An impressive piece of writing, with abundant subordination, such as we do not associate with Senecan prose style. (I venture to suggest however that a son banished for stupidity could hardly have devised the pointedly menacing final sentence, «*in tua potestate est utro modo pater meus accusatorem non habeat*».) Nonetheless Seneca has elaborately constructed his narrative so that it culminates in this *sententia suspiciosa*.<sup>32</sup>

Some *exempla* are narrated in such a way that they turn into small declamations. Such will be found at *Ben.* VI 31, but since it describes Xerxes and Demaratus, an Herodotean theme, I had better do no more than mention it. More relevant to my theme

<sup>32</sup> The *exemplum* was traditional, be it noted; cf. Cic. *Off.* III 112 and Val. Max. V 4, 3; VI 9, 1.

is the *domesticum exemplum* provided at *De clementia* I 9. Though the story of Cinna's conspiracy is quite baseless, as I have already noted, the manner of its telling is remarkably full — so much so that it probably deserves to be called an anecdote, and left as such to Professor Grimal. Nonetheless the narrative stands out for its neatness: the background is sketched in short sentences. Then there are brisk passages of direct speech, a most dramatic presentation.

The placement of *exempla* within the prose works can also be an artistic device. Above all the writer's decision to illustrate his point by referring to historical figures indicates to the reader that the topic is important, since it receives this reinforcement. It is not enough to establish a truth, it must also be rammed home. Professor Grimal has demonstrated Seneca's technique in his essay on the composition of *De breuitate vitae*, and Mr. Hijmans has observed that the core of *Ep.* 122 is flanked by *exempla* which thus contribute to the clear articulation of the letter<sup>33</sup>. It seems too that a good place for digressing a bit was just before the peroration, according to Cicero (*De orat.* II 80). Seneca adopts the practice in *Const.* 17-18, where he gives examples of men who could or could not endure verbal abuse (*contumelia*); Caligula he particularly dwells on before making his conclusion in section 19.

The distribution and use of *exempla* across the prose works deserves attention. One class of treatise, the *consolatio*, traditionally made frequent demands upon a store of *exempla* (as well as *praecepta*); Seneca openly avows this character of the genre at *Marc.* 2, 1 and he adheres closely to the established practice. His innovation in this particular is a reliance upon contemporary

<sup>33</sup> «Le plan du *De Breuitate Vitae*», in *Studi in onore di Luigi Castiglioni* (Firenze 1960), I 415-416 = *Rome, la littérature et l'histoire* (Rome 1986), I 496; B.L. HIJMANS Jr., *Inlaboratus et facilis. Aspects of structure in some Letters of Seneca*, Mnemosyne, Suppl. 38 (Leiden 1976), 161-162.

instances which are tailored to the addressee (we may contrast the practice of Plutarch in his *Consolation to Apollonius*). The other prose treatises and dialogues more or less constantly draw upon *exempla*. The third book of the treatise *De ira* (= *Dial.* V) is specially rich in historical references, and Seneca announces (13, 7) that he intends to set out a select list of *exempla* illustrating the dangers of anger and the benefits of repressing it. The strategy at this point is transparent. For Seneca has already said in the previous two books just about all that can be said concerning the dangers of anger, and that not without considerable repetition, as Lipsius long ago observed in his brief introductory remarks to the first and third books. Seneca, we may suppose, was aware that his argument was running out of steam, so he stokes the flames with new and abundant fuel, *exempla*. The treatise *De beneficiis* abounds in historical references, especially to the emperors and their ways of conferring gifts on their subjects; here, as we shall see later, Seneca uses the device to criticize behaviour he finds repellant.

The great exception among the prose works is formed by the *Letters*. These, considered generally, make little use of *exempla*, although some (e.g., 24 and 71) rely heavily on them. The reasons are not hard to guess at. First, the use of *exempla*, just because it was inculcated as an ornament of literary style, must have seemed alien to the style appropriate to familiar letters; Seneca himself defines this as *inlaboratus et facilis* (*Ep.* 75, 1). *Exempla* were too obviously an adornment to suit an uncomplicated genre. Secondly, where illustration is wanted, the immediate experience of the correspondents is likely to provide it. Scipio Africanus is a traditional *exemplum* (cf. *Ben.* III 33, 1-3 and V 17, 2), but his role in *Ep.* 86 breaks the bounds of the ordinary *exemplum*. Seneca's excuse is that he has visited the great man's villa, and his description of the visit prompts moral reflections on contemporary luxury. *Vice versa*, Seneca is minded to find fault with modern fashions in travel, which he



contrasts with the single horse of Cato the censor (*Ep.* 87, 9-10). Moreover the realism of the letters is enhanced by the use of contemporary figures as examples. Claranus of *Ep.* 66 is here remarkable; physically deformed he was nonetheless well advanced in moral improvement. Seneca says such a man was born to provide a model; when he comes, towards the end of the letter, to refer to Scaevola and his burnt up hand, we may feel that it is the modern instance which gives fresh vitality to the hoary *exemplum*, rather than the other way round.

It is worth asking, as we turn away from the topic of style and presentation, what motives prompt Seneca's selection of *exempla*. To be sure some are so traditional that they could hardly be ignored (e.g., Mucius, Fabricius, Camillus). Beyond this we may suspect that choice is guided by any number of motives. A basic impulse, noticed but dismissed by Seneca himself in *Ep.* 24, 9 was display (*ut ingenium exerceam*). The perfect orator, as defined by Cicero, was expected to have an *exemplorum uis* (*De orat.* I 18) and to display it on appropriate occasions. But which *exempla* might prove appropriate depended on the speaker's taste or bias. Let us consider the use made of *exempla* to flatter or to criticize.

Flattery is unmistakable in two of the *Consolationes*, *Ad Marciam* and *Ad Polybium*. The purpose of flattering Polybius, whose brother has died, is thinly disguised; Seneca aims to conciliate Claudius. To this end the imperial household provides the lion's share of *exempla*, and even Claudius himself is raised to exemplary status. The strategy is a neat one, for Seneca deploys the figure *prosopopoiia* (*Polyb.* 14) and has Claudius rehearse the *exempla* drawn from Rome's history (there are, I fear, a considerable number of blunders, exposed by Lipsius). The list of bereaved Romans is impressive: the Scipios, the Luculli, the Pompeii and then Claudius' own family, Augustus, Gaius and Lucius, Tiberius and Drusus Germanicus (his father), even Marc Antony. The parade is closed with Claudius' own

losses. Now this sort of farrago was appropriate to the *consolatio* as a literary form, but it would also have piqued Claudius' learning. Seneca praises him for it (14, 1: *omnia exempla... tenacissima memoria rettulit*), but in the famous Lyons tablet we find Claudius himself citing historical precedents to the Senate in order to recommend his proposal to enfranchise the Gauls.<sup>34</sup> It was the sort of learning he liked and Seneca dishes it up to please him indirectly.

The flattery offered by choice of *exempla* in the *Consolation to Marcia* similarly focusses on the imperial household, but the motive is less easy to identify if the date of composition of the work falls outside the time of Seneca's exile, a point generally agreed nowadays.<sup>35</sup> Seneca begins by asserting that Marcia's character (*mores*) is *uelut aliquod antiquom exemplar* and, inverting the usual order of topics in works of consolation, he passes at once to the citation of two *exempla*, both women, both of the imperial household. But the first, Octavia, Augustus' sister, is an example to deter, for her grief at Marcellus' death was never assuaged. The second, Livia, is dwelt on, both because she sets an example to follow and because she was specially close to Marcia (*Marc.* 4, 2). Moreover Seneca describes how she gave herself over to the spiritual care of a philosopher, Arius Didymus (Seneca does not mention that he composed a consolation for Livia). Now Arius, who certainly used Stoic teachings, serves as a role-model for Seneca himself, offering philosophical comfort to a well-born lady.

<sup>34</sup> See ILS 212 = E.M. SMALLWOOD (ed.), *Documents illustrating the principates of Gaius, Claudius and Nero* (Cambridge 1967), 97-99 no. 369.

<sup>35</sup> C. FAVEZ discusses the *exempla* in his edition of *Dialogorum liber VI: Ad Marciam de consolatione* (Paris 1928), pp. LII and LXI-LXIV; for the date of the work see K. ABEL, *Bauformen in Senecas Dialogen* (Heidelberg 1967), 159-160.



Later in the work Seneca returns to the use of *exempla* in a passage much indebted to Cicero's self-consolation for the death of Tullia.<sup>36</sup> This fresh outburst refocusses upon the imperial household (section 15), and both Augustus and Tiberius are cited as examples of self control amid bereavement. This section is capped by the next (*Marc.* 16) with a host of female *exempla*: Lucretia, Cloelia and two Cornelias (the mother of the Gracchi and the mother of Livius Drusus; the second Cornelia's presence is probably owed to a recollection once again of Cicero for she is not a traditional figure in lists of *exempla*<sup>37</sup>). In this work then we see Seneca adapting his selection to the individual: he dwells on women and on the imperial household to appeal to Marcia.

Nero is artfully flattered via *exempla* as well. I have already referred to the long story of Augustus at *Clem.* I 9. What makes the opening of the section specially remarkable is Seneca's candid exposition of the young Octavian's blood-stained path to the purple. The reason for this is plain enough: Nero's accession had been guiltless; Seneca made much the same points in the speech he (presumably) composed for Nero to deliver before the Senate (cf. *Tac. Ann.* XIII 4, 1). Nero's predecessors are also criticized in *De beneficiis*: Claudius at I 15, 5-6, Tiberius at I 7-8, and of course Gaius at II 12. But it would be imprudent to see in these critical *exempla* a dissatisfaction with imperial government. Seneca remains loyal to the system which after all had promoted him to the ranks of the *nobilitas*. Indeed we see him still flattering Nero in the story of L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, *cos.* 54, at *Ben.* III 24. As Seneca tells the story Nero's great-great-grandfather owed his life to a loyal slave who refused to

<sup>36</sup> See n. 19.

<sup>37</sup> See Fr. MÜNZER, *op. cit.* (n. 19), 399; the mother of the Gracchi on the other hand is traditional and cited in *Helv.* 16, 6.

administer poison to him after his defeat by Julius Ceasar at Corfinium.<sup>38</sup> Suetonius has no reason to be so gallant and corrects the story: Domitius took the poison out of fear, repented of his act and vomited it up; he freed the slave who had sensibly mixed a less than lethal dose (Suet. *Nero* 2, 3).

Criticism too is found (not, of course, directed at the addressees), most obviously in the *exempla fugienda*, some of which have already been noticed. More subtle is the use of an *exemplum* provided by Cn. Cornelius Cn. f. Lentulus, *cos.* 14 B.C., deployed at *Ben.* II 27, 1-2. For all his wealth and nobility this Lentulus was a stupid man, rescued from his follies by Augustus whose liberality he ungraciously belittled when he insisted that public affairs left him no time for oratorical pursuits. As Sir Ronald Syme has noticed, Seneca, the *nouus homo* whose career was owed to talent, not to advantages of birth, is merciless to those who claim ascendancy by reason of pedigree alone.<sup>39</sup> Stupidity in a *nobilis* is also witheringly noticed at *Ep.* 70, 10, describing the suicide of the alleged conspirator M. Scribonius Libo Drusus, *pr.* A.D. 16. Seneca's contempt is devastating: *adulescentis tam stolidi quam nobilis, maiora sperantis quam illo saeculo quisquam sperare poterat aut ipse ullo*. Drusus' rank had weakened his sense of reality.

Seneca further retaliates upon a decayed but still privileged aristocracy in the contemporary figures of Q. Fabius Persicus, *cos.* 34, and C. Caninius Rebilus, *suff.* 37. Persicus owed his advancement to his distinguished ancestors (*Ben.* IV 30, 2); he

<sup>38</sup> The story is also known to Plutarch, *Caes.* 34, 6-8, and Pliny, *Nat.* VII 186. It is worth recalling that Lucan too flatters Nero by always speaking well of Domitius Ahenobarbus in his poem, *De bello civili*; he says nothing of the abortive suicide at II 478-525.

<sup>39</sup> See R. SYME, *Tacitus* (Oxford 1958), II 571.

was personally a degenerate.<sup>40</sup> He is linked in depravity with Rebilus at *Ben.* II 21, 5-6: they tried to help Julius Graecinus defray the cost of games, but he rose above the temptation (and so provided Seneca with an *exemplum magni animi*). Similarly at *Ben.* IV 31,3-5 Seneca tells an unrepeatably disgusting story about Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus, *suff.* 21 (?)<sup>41</sup>, but ironically allows that it would not do to leave the great grandson of a *princeps senatus* without office. (For all that, Seneca's father allowed that this Scaurus was able albeit lazy, cf. *Contr.* 10 *praef.* 2-3, and Tacitus says of him evenhandedly *insignis nobilitate et orandis causis, uita probrosus* [*Ann.* VI 29].) Seneca can therefore reflect by choice of *exempla* upon the society of his own day and its behaviour.

Syme is surely right to regard all these *exempla* as something more than casual instances of bad behaviour; a prominent sort of well-born parasite is arraigned. But we must also bear in mind the declaimer's love of strong meat; Seneca's rhetorical training surely contributed something to the choice of Hostius Quadra at *Nat.* I 16 as an *exemplum* of the uses to which distorting mirrors could be put. (But Seneca announces this as a *fabella*, which I had better leave to another of our company.) Degraded behaviour had its own fascination, as Juvenal knew.

On the other hand, Seneca may be detected as rehabilitating historical figures who have received a bad press, for instance Q. Aelius Tubero. His *parsimonia* was a byword, and Valerius Maximus says that he deserved defeat at the polls in his candidacy for the praetorship because he served niggardly meals to the Roman people (VII 5, 1). Seneca is of a different mind, not least because he recalls (what Valerius either forgot or never

<sup>40</sup> As was his father according to Valerius Maximus III 5, 2; the degeneracy of the line is noticed by Juvenal too (8, 13 ff.).

<sup>41</sup> Cf. the same vice in Natalis, *Ep.* 87, 16.

knew) that Tubero was an eminent Stoic, a pupil of Panaetius. The frugal public dinners were a lesson in moderation to the Roman state: *censura fuit illa, non cena* (the assonance is pointed; *Ep.* 95, 72-73). Seneca is here setting the record straight on behalf of a fellow Stoic.

It is time to turn to the central issue, the value of *exempla* to the moralist. Seneca has strewn through his works abundant testimony to their use. A number of the passages to which I shall refer are well-known, so I want to begin with one that has, I believe, been unduly neglected. *Ep.* 120 opens with a reference to Lucilius' request for instruction on the issue of how we come to conceive of moral excellence in the first place. Seneca says that there are two roads. First, we create an analogy between bodily and spiritual health (*Ep.* 120, 4-5). Secondly, we observe particular actions in history which were deemed generous, brave, or humane, e.g., Fabricius' magnanimity towards Pyrrhus, or Horatius Cocles on the bridge. These *exempla* are of course defective morally, but we overlook their flaws in order to create from them an *imago uirtutis* (*Ep.* 120, 5-8) — the word *imago* should henceforth be borne in mind. On this account, historical *exempla* drawn from Rome's past are not mere ornaments of discourse, rather they perpetually represent to succeeding generations the sort of actions which lead us to conceptualize *uirtus*. If this formulation is Seneca's own, then we may say that he is trying to do what no philosopher had done before him, namely, to create a basic function for *exempla* within a moral system. This would harmonize with his earlier statement that the *memoria* «remembrance» of great men is as powerful as their living presence (*Ep.* 102, 30), a theme he goes on to develop in *Ep.* 104, 21-22. The exemplary figures never become ciphers.

The chief reason for their continuing value is their moral success. The trouble with the average human being is that he believes that what he cannot do is impossible generally (*Ep.* 76, 22). The exemplary figure — whose function is clearly taken over by the



saints of the Church — is living proof that the virtuous life is possible.<sup>42</sup> Moreover a figure drawn from history is more reliable than a myth; Seneca says that we know Cato existed but are bound to discount the poetic fictions surrounding Ulysses or Hercules: *excussa iam antiqua credulitate* (Const. 2, 1-2). Whenever someone complains of the difficulty of maintaining a high standard of ethical behaviour, the moralist can point to those who have succeeded, Socrates and Cato (Ep. 104, 26-33). Such men endure misfortune — why? *Ut alios pati doceant, nati sunt in exemplar* (Prov. 6,3). Their lives are lessons. Since the lesson has to be learned by each and every one of us the value of *exempla* can never be diminished. What is more, the tally of exemplary figures is always growing. Seneca recalls the phrase I have just quoted when he refers to his crippled friend, Claranus: *mihi uidetur in exemplar editus* (Ep. 66, 4).

*Exempla* have the edge on other forms of instruction, according to Seneca. They are more direct than *praecepta*: *longum iter est per praecepta, breue et efficax per exempla* (Ep. 6, 5). They are more efficacious than dialectic or syllogisms. Zeno's proofs that death is inconsiderable sway no-one; what we need is exhortation, fortified with examples of those who defied death: the Fabii, the Spartans at Thermopylae (Ep. 82, 20). What is worse, a syllogism can be overthrown by experience. Zeno's arguments against drunkenness are quashed by the counter-*exempla* of Tilius Cimber and L. Calpurnius Piso, cos. A.D. 15; syllogisms have less force than the exemplary figures of Alexander and Marc Antony. The foulness of the vice is to be shown up *rebus, non uerbis* (Ep. 83, 8-27). Seneca is reinforcing a distinction found earlier in Cicero, *Tusc.* III 56, who saw two means of

<sup>42</sup> See Hildegard CANKIK, *Untersuchungen zu Senecas Epistulae Morales*, Spudasmata 18 (Hildesheim 1967), 23-27; W. TRILLITZSCH, *Senecas Beweisführung* (Berlin 1962), 32-36.

disclosing the truth, *disputandi subtilitas* and practical *exempla*; it was one thing to argue that nature needed very little to sustain existence, another to refer to the honourable poverty of Fabricius. Cicero goes on to clinch the moral point: if Fabricius endured poverty how can others refuse to? We see here the persuasive value of historical *exempla*. Drawn from the past which was common to all Romans the exemplary figure was hallowed by tradition. Reference to him or her made common ground between the moralist and his audience. The philosopher above all, whose essentially Greek intellectual discipline might render his doctrine suspect to some of his fellow Romans, would welcome the historical *exempla* for this very reason. Romans could be shown to embody the *praecepta* of the Stoa.

Seneca carries his exemplary figures into the citadel. He sees them not just as vivid proofs that the moral life can be lived but as a sort of guardian angel. At *Ep.* 104, 21 he encourages Lucilius (and us, his readers) to live with these exemplary figures: *cum Catonibus vive, cum Laelio, cum Tuberone*. Reflection upon their lives and endurance will prepare us to suffer as well. Our colleague, Madame Armisen-Marchetti, has recently published an essay on Seneca's use of this spiritual exercise, the *praemeditatio malorum*.<sup>43</sup> At *Tranq.* 11, 9-12 Seneca shows how misfortunes may be anticipated by contemplating exemplary figures of the past; the wealthy should reflect on the fate of Sex. Pompeius, public figures upon Sejanus, rulers on Croesus. In *Ep.* 4 Lucilius is encouraged to prepare himself for the sort of losses that afflict even the most powerful by reflecting on the fates of Pompey, Crassus, and Caligula (*Ep.* 4, 6-7). *Ep.* 24, which has already been referred to often, is also an encouragement to anticipate misfortune. Lucilius' anxieties about the outcome of a lawsuit are to be

<sup>43</sup> «Imagination et méditation chez Sénèque: l'exemple de la *praemeditatio*», in *REL* 64 (1986), 185-195.



placed into proper perspective by contemplation of the fates of numerous historical Romans who endured far worse than he is likely to. The justification for this exercise is simply stated on two occasions: *quidquid fieri potest quasi futurum cogitemus* (Ep. 24, 15) and *quidquid fieri potuit potest* (Ep. 98, 14; cf. in a different context Ep. 63, 15: *hodie fieri potest quidquid umquam potest*). Thus *exempla* pass from being rhetorical ornaments back to their essential role in the Roman world, that of helping to shape the moral life of the individual. They become companions of our self-examination.

The crown of a life lived in accordance with virtue is the achievement of exemplary status. I have already indicated at the beginning of this paper that Seneca's aspirations, especially towards the end of his life, tended this way. He makes a tactful suggestion at the close of Ep. 11, where he encourages Lucilius to choose a spiritual director whose ghostly presence will deter from wrong-doing — Cato perhaps or Laelius or (§ 10) *eum cuius tibi placuit et uita et oratio et ipse animum ante se ferens uoltus: illum tibi semper ostende uel custodem uel exemplum*. Now the use of oneself as an exemplary figure is hardly unique to Seneca; a recent study exposes a considerable tradition.<sup>44</sup> But Seneca came to his consciousness of exemplary status only late in life when he turned to a new literary form, the personal letter. No other literary genre was so well adapted to the role he was creating for himself. The *Epistulae* require self-exposure, as the *Dialogi* do not. Seneca exploits the new form fully in transmitting the portrait of his moral consciousness. It must be stressed that the portrait is painted with an end in view. First of all,

<sup>44</sup> See B. FIORE, *The function of personal example in the socratic and pastoral epistles*, *Analecta biblica* 105 (Roma 1986), 84-100 for Seneca's place in the tradition. Horace, Propertius (cf. III 11, 8: *tu nunc exemplo disce timere meo*) and Tibullus (cf. I 6, 85-86) deserve consideration in this regard.

Seneca aspires to immortality; he compares his correspondence to Cicero's with Atticus (*Ep.* 21, 4)<sup>45</sup> and, more relevantly, to Epicurus' with Metrodorus (*Ep.* 79, 15-16). The justification for his hopes was that men might contemplate a life lived in accordance with virtue (*Tac. Ann.* XV 63, 1). To that end Seneca claimed to be leaving his friends an *imago* of his life (*Tac. Ann.* XV 62, 1; I trust the historian has picked up the word from the account of Seneca's death recorded by his secretaries, cf. *Ann.* XV 63, 7). Let us dwell on the connotations which this word *imago* might have had for a Roman.

A Roman who had held curule office acquired the *ius imaginum*, the right at his death to leave to his heirs a waxen representation of his features. Now this *imago* was no mere family portrait, offered as a memento of one's looks. As we know the *imagines*, prominently displayed in the atrium, were a spur to imitation.<sup>46</sup> Thus when Seneca, who had held the consulship, at the point of death told his friends that he was leaving them *imaginem uitae suae* we must see that it is something more than a dead metaphor. He had every right to leave a waxen image, but that would not have been good enough. Wax is inanimate: *imago res mortua est* (*Ep.* 84, 8). Seneca wanted to be like Cato, whom he described as *uirtutum uiua imago* (*Tranq.* 16, 1): a living representation is so much more than smoke-stained wax. Reviewing his career and his moral writings in the face of death Seneca saw that he had accomplished the goal which he set Lucilius and himself: *simus inter exempla* (*Ep.* 98, 13). As an exemplary figure Seneca hoped to live forever in the minds of men. Our gathering proves that he succeeds to this day.

<sup>45</sup> D.R. SHACKLETON BAILEY omits reference to this clear proof that the letters to Atticus were available publicly; cf. *Cicero's Letters to Atticus* I (Cambridge 1965), p. 61.

<sup>46</sup> See Afran. *Com.* 364 and Cic. *De orat.* II 226; cf. *Ep.* 64, 9: *quidni ego magnorum uirorum... imagines habeam incitamenta animi...*?

## DISCUSSION

*M. Abel:* Ich möchte dem Vortragenden danken für den reichen wissenschaftlichen Gehalt seiner Ausführungen. Die Darlegungen bieten Anlass, kurz auf die Frage zurückzukommen, die wir gestern zu klären versuchten: das Problem der Bauweise des Senecanischen Dialogs und seine unterschiedliche Wertung durch Lipsius und manche Moderne. In Ihrem Beitrag (S. 159) referieren Sie Lipsius zu diesem Problem (Komm. 1; 18; 40; vgl. auch 27). Ist nicht die *transitio* — verstanden im Sinne des Auctor *ad Herennium* (IV 35) — ein Beweis dafür, dass Lipsius den kompositorischen Tatbestand ungenau wiedergibt? Der Wortlaut (*Ir.* II 18, 1 f.) zeigt deutlich eine Gliederung der *argumentatio* in einen theoretischen Teil (*quae de ira quaeruntur*) und einen praktischen Teil (*remedia*) mit einer Einteilung des ersten prophylaktischen Unterabschnitts (*quaedam ad universam vitam ... in educationem et in sequenda tempora*). Mir scheinen dies starke Indizien, in diesem Einzelfall, aber auch darüber hinaus, das negative Urteil des Lipsius zu überdenken, wenn nicht zu berichtigen. Freilich ist es für eine endgültige Entscheidung unerlässlich, die Untersuchung von der groben auf die Feinstruktur auszuweiten.

*M. Mayer:* Lipsius paid close attention to indications of *partitio* in the dialogues and drew attention to the one you mention. I also recall that he particularly criticized the repetition in several books of the *De ira* of the description of the physical tokens of anger (he says in his note to *Ir.* I 1, *ubique diffuse et cur toties?*). Now it may be that these serve a structural role, but there remains an aesthetic dimension. If the physical traits, as listed, are much the same, and related in unvaried terms, then mayn't Seneca be guilty of failing to employ *variatio*?

*M. Mazzoli:* Farò tre brevi osservazioni. Per la prima mi rifaccio a un mio intervento sulla relazione di Mme Armisen-Marchetti, relativo alla dottrina sull'analogia esposta nell'*Ep.* 120. Se nel § 5 è la natura che fornisce per via analogica il modello della *res* morale, nei §§ 6-7, come molto opportunamente M. Mayer indica, è la storia. Cambiano i referenti ma *imago* ed *exemplum* cooperano alla stessa funzione, *demonstrandae rei causa*: è evidente la circolazione di pensiero tra la Sua relazione e quella di Mme Armisen.

Seconda osservazione. Lei limita molto l'impulso dato a Seneca dalla tradizione greca nell'uso degli *exempla*. Vorrei però ricordare l'influenza esercitata sul filosofo dalla diatriba greco-latina come bacino collettore d'un ricco materiale di aneddoti, crie, apoftegmi (cf. A. Oltramare, *Les origines de la diatribe romaine* [Genève 1926], 176 ss.). Il vero «Senecanisches in Seneca» sta piuttosto nel deciso svecchiamento, da Lei segnalato con chiarezza, di questo materiale, con l'ampio ricorso a *exempla* della più recente storia romana.

Terza e ultima osservazione. Ho molto apprezzato la conclusione della Sua esposizione, che mostra perché le *Epistulae morales* siano l'opera di Seneca meno ricca di *exempla*. Si potrebbe affermare paradossalmente che ciò accade perché è la più ricca, anzi non è che una collezione di *exempla*, in cui Seneca propone *imaginem vitae suae* e in subordine quella del suo corrispondente Lucilio. Ricordo in proposito gli importanti contributi di Michel Foucault sul «racconto di sé» in Seneca («La cura di sé», in *Storia della sessualità* III [ed. it. Milano 1982], 43-71; «La scrittura di sé», in *Aut-aut* 195-196 [maggio-agosto 1983], 5-18).

*M. Mayer:* Insofar as moralists who addressed themselves to a wide public aimed to deploy every strategy of persuasion, including the *exemplum*, it is fair to say that Seneca is a part of their tradition. It remains my conviction however that the chief influence upon Seneca was the moral instruction common to his fellow Romans generally.

*M. Lana:* L'affermazione che Seneca ha cercato di fare ciò che nessun filosofo aveva fatto prima di lui — «namely to create a basic function for *exempla* within a moral system» (cf. *supra* p. 165) — non mi è parsa emergere in



maniera cogente dalle argomentazioni dell' *exposé*. Penso che sarebbe utile che il prof. Mayer chiarisse più ampiamente il suo giudizio.

*M. Mayer:* You put your finger on a weak point; I don't venture to suppose that I can offer a more satisfactory explanation. It may be that Seneca, in explaining how we come to the notion of moral excellence, decided to refer to historical *exempla* as our starting-place for no special reason, or at any rate, not for the reason I have suggested. To be sure, he doesn't pursue the issue in any depth here, a thing he might have done in the *Libri moralis philosophiae*. It simply struck me as odd that he didn't say that our first notions of moral excellence are formed by the actions we observe happening around us. Rather he refers to the sanctified heroes of the past, perhaps just because they are preserved for us by traditional esteem. This would mean, I suppose, that our notion of goodness or excellence is inherited.

*M. Lana:* La trattazione è stata condotta con rigorosa aderenza al tema specifico («esempi storici romani») inquadrata nell' argomento generale di quest' *Entretiens* (Seneca e la prosa latina); tuttavia mi sembra che, avendo inteso il prof. Mayer individuare la funzione globale che Seneca attribuisce all' *exemplum* nel complesso della sua opera, non si possa evitare di prendere in considerazione anche le tragedie di Seneca, che sono, per così dire, tutta una galleria di *exempla* (in senso negativo piuttosto che in senso positivo), non potendosi negare *mea quidem sententia* che il testo senecano avesse anche una destinazione pedagogica.

*M. Mayer:* I have no reply to make to this observation.

*M. Lana:* Penso che la trattazione e la sistemazione degli *exempla* storici romani apparirebbero più convincenti se fossero accompagnate da una valutazione del noto giudizio negativo di Seneca sulla storia, sulle opere di storia e sul lavoro degli storici e se fossero inquadrare tenendo conto di tale giudizio.

Non sempre è possibile valutare l' *exemplum* storico, in Seneca, prescindendo dalla storia vera e propria. Penso, in particolare, al giudizio storico-politico sulla decisione di Bruto di uccidere Cesare, in *Ben.* II 20-21, che si

sviluppa con tutta una serie di considerazioni attinenti a scelte e a programmi di azione e di vita fondate su una presa di posizione politico-morale sulla crisi della Repubblica.

*M. Mayer:* To be sure, Seneca recommends that the *iracundus* should calmly amuse himself by reading history (*Ir.* III 9, 1), but I don't know that he sets a low value on history generally (but for every Sallust there may have been dozens of entertainers like Quintus Curtius, who depressed the value of historical writing). What he deprecates is minute *philologia*, ridiculed at *Brev.* 12, 3-6. I agree about the importance of the condemnation of Brutus at *Ben.* II 20; I haven't discussed it because I am in agreement with Mrs. Griffin's treatment (cf. *supra* p. 152 n. 24).

*M. Hijmans:* I join the preceding speakers in thanking you for a beautifully structured and highly informative paper. My question regards its first section, in which you observe that the use of *exempla* is a social and cultural phenomenon of greater importance in Roman than in Greek society. Is it not possible that you somewhat undervalue its presence in Greek contexts? The coupling of experienced soldiers and young recruits in the Spartan and Theban armies comes to mind, as does the duo Phoenix — Achilles in the *Iliad* — and of course Homer is forever present in the Greek World. On an entirely different level, though quite relevant in the context of our discussions, one may mention the endless series of anecdotes concerning the various philosophers in Diogenes Laertius' *Vitae*. Whatever their literary function in his biographies I must suppose they had their place in the educational curricula of the Greek philosophical schools of the Empire. Another instance is the use of *exempla* in Epictetus, though he, of course, is a Roman (one of his *exempla*, I recall, is Helvidius Priscus) as a Greek could be.

*M. Mayer:* You must be right to stress the value of the role-model in the Greek world. What strikes me is that the Romans, at an early stage, institutionalized their practice and gave it appropriate names. It is their self-consciousness that matters. But of course the human being is naturally imitative everywhere (cf. Arist. *Po.* 4, 1448 b 5-10). What you say about the lives

of philosophers is most suggestive. Can we be sure that biographical information was part of the curriculum? It should also be recalled that the curriculum may have omitted an account of Epicureanism altogether (cf. C. Pélékidis, *Histoire de l'éphébie attique* [Paris 1962], 267); but Epicurus is the clear model for Seneca himself in the letters.

*M. Hijmans*: Do we know what Lipsius' rhetorical frame of reference was?

*M. Abel*: Lipsius' Kommentar liefert uns vergleichsweise zuverlässige Hinweise über sein Arbeitsverfahren (Ausg. 41652, S. I). Entgegen dem Rat eines Kollegen benutzte er die Ausgabe des Erasmus von 1529 (abgedruckt bei W. Trillitzsch, *Seneca im literarischen Urteil der Antike* [Amsterdam 1971], II 423 ff., bes. 434 f.). Es ist gut denkbar, dass sein eigenes ungünstiges Urteil über Senecas Komposition durch Erasmus bestimmt oder mitbestimmt ist.

*Mme Armisen-Marchetti*: J'ai noté lors d'études antérieures que Sénèque n'insère pour ainsi dire jamais d'images (métaphores ou comparaisons) à l'intérieur d'un *exemplum*. Vous signalez quant à vous que les *exempla* se font plus rares dans les *Lettres*. Or c'est aussi dans les *Lettres* que l'on trouve les images les plus nombreuses et les plus colorées. Tout se passe comme si image et *exemplum* s'excluaient l'un l'autre, Sénèque considérant l'image comme plus adaptée à la forme épistolaire.

*M. Mayer*: I have no comment on this observation.

*Mme Armisen-Marchetti*: Une remarque encore. L'*exemplum* même du sage, pour Sénèque, est Caton d'Utique. Pour les anciens stoïciens, c'étaient Ulysse et Hercule. Pourquoi leur substituer Caton? Parce que Ulysse et Hercule sont des personnages légendaires? Ils l'étaient tout autant pour les Grecs hellénistiques. C'est plutôt, me semble-t-il, parce qu'ils ne deviennent des modèles que par le biais d'une interprétation allégorique, qui fait d'eux des symboles. Au symbole, Sénèque préfère donc l'exemple concret, immédiatement intelligible pour le lecteur profane. Ce souci d'être compris sans le relais

d'une culture marque plusieurs des choix stylistiques de Sénèque: on l'observe entre autres dans le traitement qu'il réserve à la métaphore.

*M. Soubiran:* Votre développement liminaire, qui insiste sur le caractère romain des *exempla* et rappelle la méthode d'éducation du Déméa des *Adelphes*, m'a fait mieux comprendre — cela ne concerne pas Sénèque, mais vous me le pardonnerez — le caractère non-romain, et ridicule, des pères de comédie (chez Plaute surtout). Car à l'inverse du *pater familias*, ces pères ne sont pas exemplaires, au contraire: revêches, bornés, avarés, paillards quelquefois, dupés toujours, ils proposent ce qu'il faut éviter, non ce qu'il faut imiter. Je crois donc avec vous que les vers de Déméa sont bien, comme vous le dites joliment, du «Terenzisches in Terenz»: l'exception confirme la règle.

Autre chose: vous notez à juste titre le style périodique, inattendu chez Sénèque, de l'*exemplum* de Manlius (*Ben.* III 37, 4). Or un récit ainsi condensé en une seule phrase, très chargée en subordonnées, ressemble fort à ceux dont Valère Maxime est coutumier: chez lui aussi les anecdotes sont souvent ramassées de la même manière. Y aurait-il un style spécifique de l'*exemplum*, dont Valère Maxime souvent et Sénèque par exception nous fournissent le témoignage?

Ma dernière remarque est si téméraire que j'ose à peine la formuler. Je me demande si divers procédés d'écriture, qu'on n'a pas coutume d'étudier conjointement, ne constituent pas différents aspects d'un même phénomène. Le plus bref, ponctuel en général (il porte sur un mot unique, mais peut à l'occasion se prolonger un peu), serait l'image et la métaphore. Un peu plus développée déjà est la comparaison en forme, surtout s'il s'agit d'une comparaison épique (ou tragique) de type homérique, qui peut s'étendre sur plusieurs vers (parfois près d'une dizaine). Lui correspondrait, en prose oratoire et philosophique, l'*exemplum*, de dimension analogue mais de fonction évidemment différente. Au sommet enfin viendraient les vastes développements annexes, plus ou moins directement rattachés au sujet principal, que connaît le genre didactique, en prose (Sénèque, *Nat.*; Pline l'Ancien) ou en vers (Lucrèce; Virgile, *Georg.*; Manilius). J'anticipe ici, très indiscrètement et sans doute maladroitement, sur ce que M. Grimal doit nous dire de la digression. Le caractère commun de ces divers procédés serait d'écarter pour un moment



le lecteur du thème principal de l'exposé, souvent abstrait et difficile, et d'ouvrir en quelque sorte une fenêtre, plus ou moins large, sur un autre univers, souvent plus concret. Je songe aux dispositifs des théâtres antiques, où des ouvertures ménagées dans le mur de scène permettaient, ainsi que M. Grimal l'a bien montré à propos de la *Phaedra*, d'apercevoir un autre espace, intérieur celui-là, et d'autres personnages. Telle serait aussi, dans le domaine de l'écrit, l'effet de ces techniques d'expression. Mais ce sont là, j'en ai peur, des spéculations bien aventureuses: je prie qu'on les pardonne au profane que je suis.

*M. Mayer:* M. Soubiran hits the nail on the head in observing how often Valerius Maximus aims at periodic style in the narration of his *exempla*. I wonder myself if there wasn't a sort of fashion for this sort of thing; or perhaps it could be called a literary game, and one tried to pack as much circumstantial detail into a single sentence as possible. A good illustration of what I am trying to describe occurs in Cicero, *De orat.* I 181-182, the account of C. Mancinus' loss of citizenship.