

# SENECA'S INFLUENCE WITH NERO

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## Abstract: Seneca's influence with Nero

The present dissertation attempts to illuminate the enigma of the Seneca seen in Tacitus, Seneca *politicus*, and his capacity at the Palace. The project thus evaluates the three most accessible sources for both how Nero would have viewed Seneca, and how Seneca presented himself to Nero—Nero's childhood and education, *Apocolocyntosis*, and *De clementia*. Assessment of these sources through the game-theoretical model of signaling and signal games forms a model of their relationship, which itself becomes the thesis of the dissertation. The thesis contends that, post accession, Seneca engaged Nero in a didactic relationship focusing on philosophy, or rather, on his own insights into ethical decision-making and morality in interpersonal dealings. But the details surrounding this deduction nuance its interpretation. His presentation of philosophy to Nero smacks of practicality. It is opportunistic, utilizing the philosophically pro-paedeutic nature of Nero's education; and his own contribution to the imperial intellect, *clementia*, is not convincingly Stoic. Seneca wished to be trusted for his ability to offer advice on interpersonal dealings, and to form acute judgments about other people and their actions.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

For primary sources, *LSJ* and *OLD* are used respectively for Greek and Latin authors. Epigraphic abbreviations are as listed on the Clauss/Slaby *Epigraphik Datenbank* (<http://oracle-vm.ku-eichstaett.de/epigr/hinweise/abkuerz.html>). Papyri follow the conventions of the Duke Databank of Documentary Papyri. Journal articles are abbreviated according to *L'année philologique*. The only abbreviation that might be unfamiliar is *CHHP*, which refers to the *Cambridge history of Hellenistic philosophy*.

The following are the numbers for each of Seneca's *Dialogi* according to which they are cited:

- I - *De providentia*
- II - *De constantia sapientis*
- III - *De ira* 1
- IV - *De ira* 2
- V - *De ira* 3
- VI - *Ad Marciam de consolatione*
- VII - *De vita beata*
- VIII - *De otio*
- IX - *De tranquillitate animi*
- X - *De brevitae vitae*
- XI - *Ad Polybium de consolatione*
- XII - *Ad Helviam de consolati*

# INTRODUCTION

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Certain assumptions are oftener affirmed than actively demonstrated. While reputation and esteem not infrequently serve as sufficient reason to defer, some ideas have existed for long enough to gain intellectual tenure through their longevity. And, so, a point may go unchallenged or unchanged for decades. But Seneca's role at the Palace and his relationship with Nero have remained ambiguously defined for over a century.

René Waltz established the biographical template in which Seneca was studied for most of the twentieth century—the philosopher in politics model.<sup>1</sup> In brief, this is the enduring view that Seneca, a lifelong Stoic, “wished to act politically as a philosopher” starting in the 30s; and that subsequent to his recall from exile, “he was an intellectual in the seat of power” who “set himself the difficult task—or the insoluble and sterile problem—of philosophizing his politics.”<sup>2</sup> Accounts over the next fifty years changed little from Waltz's apologetic interpretation, with most alternating attention between biographical and philological matters.<sup>3</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano made the first considerable effort to engage the idea of Senecan political policy.<sup>4</sup> Italo Lana later pursued that idea, but his work greatly dilutes conjectures about Seneca the politician with the usual musings on him as a philosopher.<sup>5</sup> The politician was unable to escape the shadow of the philosopher. Nor did this change with the publication of Miriam Griffin's monograph, which maintained the model of Seneca's life used by previous biographers.<sup>6</sup> The breakthrough in her work was the consideration of Seneca as a political figure within a socio-politically accurate framework; and its organization, split between Seneca in his own words and those of others, would shape how the historical man was envisioned. Contemplation of Seneca as a political agent has stagnated since then, with most being content to frame Seneca *politicus* in Griffin's words—or those of her mentor, found scattered across two familiar volumes.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Vie de Sénèque* (Paris, 1909).

<sup>2</sup> P. Veyne 2003, 6; 14. That edition is merely a translation of the original, *Sénèque: entretiens, lettres à Lucilius* (Paris, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> e.g. F. Holland 1920, C. Marchesi 1944, R.M. Gummere 1922, P. Grimal 1948.

<sup>4</sup> *CAH* X, 711–17.

<sup>5</sup> Lucio Annaeo Seneca (Torino, 1955).

<sup>6</sup> *Seneca* (Oxford, 1976).

<sup>7</sup> R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958).

Consideration of Seneca as, foremost, an active philosopher proceeds from the surviving evidence. He plays an important but mostly mute role in ancient histories, and so exists primarily as a voice within his own philosophical creations—sources notoriously reticent regarding the man behind the Stoic. Seneca does not discuss his public career, friends and associates, or family life; and contemporary events are almost never mentioned, let alone any personal opinions about them. Thus the statesman Seneca supervenes upon the philosopher Seneca: the historical figure is taken as a function of his philosophical self-presentation. Yet is this correct? It seems natural to interpret the Tacitean Seneca through the lens of his philosophical corpus since the ‘who’ in human history is inseparable from, though not always attendant to, the ‘what’—and Seneca’s works provide a level of detail about an ancient personality that approaches the likes of Cicero and Augustine. The choice of this lens, however, is arbitrary. Take the Neronian policy of clemency. Where does this fit in as an example of Seneca’s own philosophy? Was it an idea that he realized during Claudius’ reign, that he encouraged to become official policy under Nero, and that he defended in *De clementia* on both philosophical and political grounds? Or was it a more purely political idea, a point of appeal to a butchered Senate that Seneca sought to endorse with philosophy, and so forge a high-minded role for himself in the new regime? Seneca the man is sufficiently ambiguous to deny a certain answer.

Seneca *philosophus* cannot be entirely excised, isolated, or dissociated from Seneca *politicus*. These two sides did, after all, inhere within man; and both the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia* present clear instances of Seneca aligning himself with philosophy and philosophical sentiment while at the Palace. What is more at issue is the tendency to see the historical Seneca as more *philosophus* than *politicus*.<sup>8</sup> Such an inclination is likely due to the surviving evidence. But if so, then it was also exacerbated by the practice of treating Seneca the politician as a separate entity from the philosopher—encouraged by such ideas as “there is a Seneca in whom Tacitus has no interest:

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<sup>8</sup> This was the case for Dio, whose opinion of Seneca almost wholly regards the philosopher—and with thorough negativity. But this slant may have arisen from a prejudice against western colonials or a literary bias.

the philosopher Seneca.”<sup>9</sup> This dichotomy may not be necessary. Certainly the evidence points to Tacitus not caring for philosophers or their philosophical motivations. Helvidius Priscus, the younger Pliny’s great Stoic hero, hardly shines in the *Historiae*; Musonius Rufus appears foolish for his campsite philosophizing; and only toward his exit is Thrasea Paetus revealed to be a student of philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Seneca, on the other hand, is not particularly recognizable as the writer of the *Dialogi* or his other works because he receives attention as a writer and rhetorician—pursuits that Tacitus was interested in.<sup>11</sup>

None of this entails that Tacitus’ Seneca does not represent the philosopher at work.<sup>12</sup> A philosopher is merely someone who strives to live his inner life true to the philosophical principles of a sect, and bears his outward mien accordingly.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, each of Seneca’s appearances in the *Annales* allows for the assumption that he was either acting as a moral compass, or was specifically called in to give ethically conscious advice.<sup>14</sup> It would therefore be safer to say that Tacitus lacked interest in the moral considerations of those situations mentioned, which is plausible.<sup>15</sup> They predominantly revolve around cover-up operations and internal debates about Nero’s leisure activities; and, as Tacitus reminds his reader, filling the pages with such speculation was beneath the dignity of history.<sup>16</sup> Still, Tacitus is a historian whose decisions should not be taken lightly. If he could suppress the philosophical ideology that governed Seneca’s tenure at the Palace, then one might well wonder about Seneca’s history and engagement with Stoicism.

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<sup>9</sup> M.T. Griffin 1976, 444; cf. D. Henry & B. Walker 1963, 98: “Seneca has long been considered as one of the supreme—one might say notorious—examples of the way in which the human personality can be divided and compartmentalized.”

<sup>10</sup> He also does not disagree with Julia Procilla’s decision to stifle her Agricola’s philosophical studies (*Ag.* 4.4).

<sup>11</sup> See further: J. Ker 2012.

<sup>12</sup> cf. R. Syme 1958, 551: “Dio’s prejudices involve him in sorry misconceptions. He regards Seneca as primarily a philosopher... Tacitus at once shows discretion. It was Seneca the statesman who mattered.”

<sup>13</sup> P. Hadot 1987, 225. Cf. Sext. VII.133 : τοῦ λόγου δὲ ἐόντος ξυνοῦ ζώουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ ὡς ἰδίαν ἔχοντες φρόνησιν.

<sup>14</sup> It is thus somewhat ironic that, in Seneca’s death scene, Nero’s moral awareness leads him to deny Paulina death alongside her husband. Perhaps patent, but never mentioned in commentaries.

<sup>15</sup> Fabius Rusticus, Seneca’s pupil, no doubt explained why the philosopher did what he did in his apologetic work on Seneca.

<sup>16</sup> Almost always in reference to the elder Pliny, e.g. *Hist.* II.101.1; *Ann.* XIII.31.1, XIV.51.1, XV.6.1, 53.3 f.

Thus it is unanimously agreed that Seneca was a central figure at the Palace. Yet aside from the ambiguous catchall ‘personal advisor’, no consensus obtains on his capacity in the Neronian court. Furthermore, given the ambiguity surrounding how Seneca positioned himself at the Palace, the basis of his relationship with Nero is equally unclear. Neither of these are insignificant lapses of knowledge. This dissertation will therefore address these questions about Seneca’s role at the Palace and his relationship with Nero, and attempt to answer them by delving into the source of his influence with the Emperor. As such, the thesis of this dissertation takes the form of a model of Seneca’s association with Nero, of how Seneca engaged Nero, of where he tried to anchor his hold on the young prince.

It is presently argued that the initial student-teacher relationship enabled Seneca to maintain a position of personal leverage with Nero by shifting the focus of his authority from rhetoric, which he still retained, to ethics—expressly a concern for just deserts in interpersonal dealings. Thus, in the two works that Nero would most likely have read, *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia*, Seneca emphasizes the importance of one’s mental state and the level of ethical awareness needed for good decision-making. To wit, philosophy and Seneca’s status as a philosopher appear as tactics in a larger strategy, both to retain his authority with Nero and enhance his influence in the realm of human resources. Not, however, to assert that Seneca was a philosophical hack or a Stoic charlatan. He most certainly was not. Yet nothing prevents philosophy from being of both personal and professional interest to Seneca.

Several ideas are accordingly offered for consideration. The most prominent is the model of Seneca’s relationship with Nero, which suggests that philosophy heavily informed their post-accession connection. Subsidiary is the idea that Seneca’s Stoicism, primarily his interest in their ethics, was reinvigorated during or by his connection to Nero. These two assertions, though not necessarily dependent on one another, are closely related; and both support the idea that Seneca used Stoicism, or pursued the didactic role of a court philosopher, for the benefit of his public life. But Seneca’s role in public politics is far from clear.

That Seneca was Nero’s personal advisor is uncontroversial, less so the capacity in which he was consulted. He is usually regarded as a simple but important *amicus principis* whose favor with Nero stemmed from the friendship developed during their

student-teacher days.<sup>17</sup> Such a picture proceeds from Seneca's dominant role in Tacitus' *Annales* as an imperial confidant during times of scandal at the Palace, and as a consultant whenever problems with Agrippina arose.<sup>18</sup> His influence with Nero in these matters is presented as existing on a wholly personal basis, rooted in their affinity and trust. Seneca's influence was therefore susceptible to factors not otherwise documented, as seen by its decline after Agrippina's death. Ghostwriting is a different matter. Seneca's notorious job as imperial speechwriter more clearly results from his time as Nero's rhetoric tutor: Seneca was already Nero's authority on oratory and composition, and so remained in that role. The question is how Seneca came into that position. It would appear from Tacitus' description of the speech after Agrippina's murder that Nero delegated this responsibility to Seneca, but it is no less possible that Seneca sought it out at the beginning of the reign—perhaps to push an ideological agenda of clemency and senatorial independence.

Seneca thus appears to function as Nero's public relations agent. He became the voice of the regime through Nero's speeches, and coordinated with Burrus to suppress and contain matters of imperial embarrassment—be it Nero's musical obsession and charioteering, marriage problems, urban thuggery, general libertinage, or debauchery of his mother. But that unlikely comprised the bulk of his advisory work. Nero could (and did) consult age-mates and other friends when small personal crises arose,<sup>19</sup> and he would need fewer formal speeches as his *laissez-faire* attitude toward the Senate developed. What, then, was Seneca's usual source of work for Nero? If Dio is to be believed, Seneca sponsored the legislation that was responsible for the early excellence of Nero's principate.<sup>20</sup> Tacitus, in contrast, never suggests that Seneca involved himself in policy-making, or that the excellence of Nero's administration was legislative in origin. Indeed, no source registers any occasion when Seneca spoke in the Senate House or liaised with senators.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> e.g. J. Mannering 2013, 190; T. Habinek 2014, 10; J. Ker 2015, 119.

<sup>18</sup> Seneca himself seldom reveals familiarity with the workings and terminology of the *consilium principis*: *Dial.* V.39.3; *Ep.* 67.10; *NQ* II.43.

<sup>19</sup> e.g. M. Salvius Otho, Claudius Senecio, Anicetus.

<sup>20</sup> Dio LXL.4.2; J.A. Crook 1955, 47: "the really great, the makers of policy, were of course Seneca and Burrus." A groundless but common claim.

<sup>21</sup> cf. W.M. Calder 1976, 3: "He advises the *princeps*, ghostwrites his speeches, and promulgates 'official views'."

Seneca may have preferred the court to the Curia, but Tacitus is not the final word on Seneca's interaction with the Senate. The acts and edicts from the beginning of Nero's reign are suggestive, smacking of distinctly Senecan themes from the time. For in the spirit of the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia*, several laws sought to undo and invalidate aspects of Claudius' reign: reducing the reward paid to informers under the *Lex Papia*, prohibiting excessive fees for advocates by reinstating the *Lex Cincia*, altering certain obligations for quaestors designate.<sup>22</sup> Senecan initiatives? Perhaps. Against that idea is the plausibility of the Senate itself drafting such bills, especially given the assurance of their *libertas*. These initiatives would suppress legal attacks on the aristocracy, revert meaningful judicial discretion to the Senate, and thereby begin to neutralize the toxic environment of trials *intra cubiculum* that allowed men like P. Suillius and L. Vitellius to flourish—all primarily beneficial to the Conscript Fathers. Ultimately, however, it could go either way. Seneca's imperial speeches and literature could have galvanized senators to that particular legislative end, or Seneca could have himself been inspired by a preexisting conversations and motions in the Senate. The important fact is that Seneca publically engaged with topics of contemporary political importance while he was active at the Palace. He was not as impartial as his treatises would suggest.

The last of Seneca's major capacities under Nero is understood to have involved nominations and appointments to administrative posts.<sup>23</sup> Although his presence in Nero's most intimate affairs leads one to expect him being influential elsewhere, Seneca never explicitly appears as a powerbroker in the *Annales*. Plutarch reports that Otho's appointment in Lusitania was Seneca's suggestion, but this decision stemmed from a problem that was originally personal to Nero.<sup>24</sup> It is also assumed that Seneca influenced Domitius Corbulo's appointment to the East—"cetera belli per magistratos administrari possent."<sup>25</sup> Burrus, however, seems the more plausible *magister* given both his paramilitary position and that Corbulo possibly came from

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<sup>22</sup> Suet. *Nero* 10.1, *Aug.* 34, *Cl.* 19; Tac. *Ann.* XIII.5.1, cf. XI.7, 22.

<sup>23</sup> e.g. M.T. Griffin 1976, 80: "a third role in which Seneca is presented is that of selecting and dismissing imperial appointees, indirectly of course." E. Wilson 2014, 119: "Seneca's service to Nero was...as an advisor both in the selection and dismissal of other government officials."

<sup>24</sup> *Galb.* 20.1; Suet. *Otho* 2 f.

<sup>25</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.6.2.

Narbonensis. But those are rather small examples. The primary impression of Seneca's influence on politics otherwise derives from the timely presence of his friends and family in the administration. Seneca was suffect consul for six months in 55; the following year his brother Junius Gallio was made suffect, and his brother-in-law Pompeius Paulinus became the governor of Germania Inferior; and family friend Annaeus Serenus was made *praefectus vigilum* sometime under Nero before his death around 62.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Lucan was recalled from Athens to be honored with quaestorian rank, having neither served the military time nor yet met the minimum age limit.

The Annaei prospered under Nero. Nobody can deny that. Yet is this political influence in the intended 'unofficial' sense? The appointments are political, to be sure; and it is unlikely that any such decisions would have been made if Seneca had not preserved his relationship with Nero. But the inverse also holds true. If Seneca maintained strong ties to Nero, then it is hardly exceptional that he and his friends should benefit from such proximity to the emperor. The above appointments are examples of the perquisites that come with being the foremost *amicus principis*: none is a plausible instance of Seneca's purely professional or otherwise sage political advice. His ability to secure such concessions from Nero would have been rooted in the same dynamic that led Nero to consult him on his personal questions, namely friendship. And as such, they say little about Seneca's role at the Palace—or indeed his authority with Nero as an *éminence grise*.<sup>27</sup> They were personal favors, plain and simple.

The multiplex nature of Seneca leaves more questions than answers. His role as speechwriter and personal advisor are somewhat comparable since Seneca is only represented in these positions during extraordinary times. Similarly, his standing with Nero as a senator and political aide appears limited, with his influence palpably extending only far enough to reach his own personal circle. But characterizing Seneca *politicus* in this manner is more convenient than correct. It assumes that the Tacitean Seneca, because he is scarcely recognizable from the philosopher's own works, represents an unphilosophical side of his persona—that Seneca's philosophical thoughts are

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<sup>26</sup> That lack of retardation in the career of P. Galerius Trachalus (*PIR*<sup>2</sup>, G 30) is not positive evidence.

<sup>27</sup> Tacitus (*Ann.* XIII.14) attributes Pallas' dismissal from the position of *a rationibus* to Nero, although he has Agrippina (unaware of Nero's true involvement in matters) believe that it was the work of Burrus and Seneca. Britannicus' murder quickly made Nero's sense of initiative clear.

unrelated to what he is depicted doing.<sup>28</sup> The primary objection to this logic is that Tacitus only shows the symptoms of Seneca's influence, how it manifested itself with Nero. He leaves to conjecture the powerbase on which it was predicated. What prevents philosophy from having enabled Seneca's agency at the Palace? Nothing, in fact, as this dissertation argues that philosophy was crucial in Seneca's relationship with Nero and a major source of his influence over the young prince.

This dissertation addresses the question of Seneca's influence with Nero from the opposite direction of previous studies. It does not approach Seneca in the usual way, whereby his entire corpus is digested through a particular lens. Thus Marc Rozelaar through psychology, Villy Sørensen through humanism, Paul Veyne through Stoicism, and Emily Wilson through intellectual development.<sup>29</sup> Instead of a top-down construal of the dynamic between Seneca and Nero, here they are considered in relation to one another from the time they met: their relationship is constructed rather than broken down. From this vantage it is suggested that, to gain the role of a court philosopher-cum-teacher, Seneca professed an expertise in the intricacies of interpersonal transactions and personal assessments. He moved his intellectual focus away from philosophy as means of emotional self-help, to interactions that involve inherently interpersonal human aspects—intentions, motives, trust, welfare, responsibility. *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia* are the first instances reflecting this interest in the social and moral aspects of decision-making and decorum. Nor were these fleeting concerns. His studies would culminate in his longest extant treatise, *De beneficiis*, which also holds great pertinence to a regent because it deals with the maintenance of social cohesion within and across social groups—and the Princeps had the largest and most complicated social network at Rome.<sup>30</sup> These were the issues that Seneca wanted to involve himself with.

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<sup>28</sup> As by J. Bryan 2013, 142: "Tacitus presents Seneca primarily as an orator, with the prominence of his philosophical interests and self-identification as a philosopher increasing only as Seneca's influence over Nero fades."

<sup>29</sup> Resp.: Seneca: eine Gesamtdarstellung (Amsterdam, 1976); Seneca: the humanist at the court of Nero (Chicago, 1984); Seneca: the life of a Stoic (New York, 2003); The greatest empire: a life of Seneca (Oxford, 2014).

<sup>30</sup> Seneca's lost *De officiis* would have covered more practical ethics.

The course of this study traverses several barren patches (for reasons of specificity and otherwise) amid a bountiful field of research. The subject of personal influence on political affairs sits comfortably within the framework of respected scholarship on the Principate, such as that on political culture and court society by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill and Aloys Winterling;<sup>31</sup> imperial patronage and imperial favorites by Fergus Millar, Richard Saller, and Matthew Roller;<sup>32</sup> and relations between the Princeps and the Senate by Keith Hopkins and Peter Brunt.<sup>33</sup> The communal world inhabited by Roman senators also continues to be well researched, steadily for some time now under the aegis of Werner Eck. Yet the same cannot be said for the operations of Roman senators within their own circles. Evidence is certainly an issue, and likely the reason that many of Ronald Syme's substantial prosopographical papers centered on the younger Pliny.<sup>34</sup> But the Neronian age, particularly Seneca and Nero, hardly starves the historian for information.

Part I of the dissertation begins with the question of Seneca's incipient influence in the Neronian regime. Aside from being Nero's rhetoric tutor, how did Seneca and Nero connect with one another? The goal is to understand the background whence Seneca emerged as influential, and to identify any relevant factors in the dynamic of their relationship. To bring together the scattered evidence, and help decide what counts as relevant in as objective a manner as possible, a game-theoretical model of interpersonal assessments is adopted. A key takeaway from game theory is that, to put it most simply, people become more predictable to one another as they become better acquainted. The more deeply one understands another person's preferences, the easier it is to anticipate their actions. Importantly, this point holds true for all levels of personal information, from private knowledge about another person to insight into cultural normativity and the cognitive values (what is taken for granted) that regulate the social order. The latter two are significant because they afford recourse against the dearth of information on Nero as a person and his individual preferences. It recognizes that his relationship with Seneca was contingent on their

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<sup>31</sup> resp. *CAH X*<sup>2</sup>, "The imperial court"; A. Winterling 2009.

<sup>32</sup> F. Millar 1992, Chs. 4, 6, and 8; R.P. Saller 1982, Ch. 2; M.B. Roller 2001, Ch. 3.

<sup>33</sup> K. Hopkins 1983, Ch. 3; P.A. Brunt 1977, 1984.

<sup>34</sup> e.g. *Roman Papers* II, 477 ff., 694 ff.; III, 1135 ff.; V, 440 ff., 478 ff., 661 ff.; VI, 142 ff.; VII, 496 ff., 551 ff.

environment and, obvious but crucial, that the environment was not contingent on their relationship. There were certain sociocultural aspects that would perforce factor into their relationship. Game theory offers a way to organize these cultural-historical details where the normal empirical resources fail.<sup>35</sup>

Given what is known about Nero's childhood and education, philosophy becomes a clear means for Seneca to maintain their student-teacher dynamic in the political arena. By offering Nero advice from or instruction in a subject that was both intellectually accessible and helpful to his new position (as *De clementia* argues), Seneca could make a niche for himself at the Palace that was not so easily filled by other senators. Accordingly, the next objective is to see whether and how Seneca incorporates clearly Stoic thought in his private life, which is only accessible via his work *Apocolocyntosis*.

Part II contends that the *Apocolocyntosis* marks the known beginning of Seneca's concentration on morality,<sup>36</sup> and that it heralds the more public concern shown in *De clementia* for ethical interactions in law and government. The argument is pursued through a Formalist reading of the satire, and it is supported by the Stoic ethical theory apparent in the text. That, together with Part III on *De clementia*, informs the intellectual context which accompanied or enhanced Seneca's rise to prominence. And, together, they present a means to reassess his relationship and source of influence with Nero.

A secondary objective of Part II thus concerns the *Apocolocyntosis* as a self-presentation of Seneca. How might Seneca use the themes and concerns in the text

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<sup>35</sup> To define game theory briefly, an approximation of the old syllogism from RAND Corporation may be recited: game theory is the analysis of conflicts; conflict analysis is the means by which one prepares for war; game theory is therefore a means to prepare for war. Such a definition is by all means too narrow, not least because the theory of games has expanded beyond its Cold War application to nuclear deterrence. There is, however, merit in offering this definition, for war is nothing more than contest between two sides; and the present endeavor seeks insight into how one figure sought to gain rather than exert his influence. J.D. Williams 1966 is the classic, and still recommendable, introduction to game theory for non-mathematicians.

<sup>36</sup> All Stoic philosophy is arguably moral because it is virtue-ethical system of philosophy. Thus anger is a moral issue for the Stoics because it is a non-virtuous state of being and therefore only begets immoral actions. What is meant presently is that the *Apocolocyntosis* represents the first clear instance of Seneca concentrating on transactional morals, which is to say virtues and vices that necessarily involve some kind of interaction with another being. For instance, one can be angry with another person and not take any action (seething), but one cannot be cruel or brave without performing a cruel or brave action.

to (re)brand or (re)present himself? Accordingly, attention must be paid to what Seneca felt he had the right to satirize and how he went about it. This reading of the *Apocolocyntosis* finds his voice to be confident and secure. He has no need for the previous regime, and he is certain of his right to embarrass the senatorial decision to deify Claudius. Seneca presents himself in the *Apocolocyntosis* as a man above the political fray, as only concerned with personal morality, individual goodness, and justice. *De clementia* corroborates his attitude that these were the topics around which he wanted to establish his new relationship with Nero.

Part III expands the idea of Seneca *vox moralitatis* by examining *De clementia*. The previous chapters have established a background for Seneca to move forward with philosophy as part of his relationship with Nero; and *De clementia* is obvious evidence of an attempt to imbue the new regime with a philosophical conscious. But Seneca's virtue of *clementia* cannot be a Stoic virtue if it exists as he describes it—namely, a means to inhibit or balance out cruel or excessive tendencies. This mistake is so elementary, however, that it seems unlikely to have been what Seneca meant. This dissertation therefore offers a reformulation of *clementia*, which resolves the inherently un-Stoic element, but which consequently leads to an ethical absurdity. These problems do not suggest that Seneca was intimately familiar with (or, alternatively, a strict believer in) Stoic ethics at the time when *De clementia* was written. *Clementia* and its concomitant ideas appear to be more of a circumstantially important topic to Seneca than a long-standing conviction he held because of Stoicism.

*De clementia* puts Seneca forward as a man greatly concerned with the ethicality and behavior of others. It couches Seneca's politically relevant views on imperial jurisprudence in philosophical terms, and it presents his concerns for Nero as the educator he had always been to him—except, rather than rhetoric, Seneca aims to center their working relationship on his own thoughts about the proper and responsible conduct of oneself and one's actions. Whereas the *Apocolocyntosis* only offers his opinions about the actions of others, *De clementia* splits its focus between the introspective self-grading of one's own inclinations and the necessity of accurate interpersonal assessments to guide one's decisions. It is therefore proposed that Seneca wanted his ethical sensitivity to be a reason that Nero valued him, and that Seneca's influence

with Nero was based (at least in part) on his insights into people. Stoicism thus appears to be a professional asset, a tool in Seneca's political arsenal.

At this point it should be explicitly noted that much of the analysis contained herein is literary rather than historiographical or historical. Such a methodological decision warrants an explanation. As alluded to above, this dissertation utilizes ideas from fields beyond the classics to organize and interpret the available evidence. Game theory was briefly mentioned in the context of Part I, but no formal explanation has been given of what game theory exactly is or its prevalence in the classics.

Game theory has contributed immensely to the modern understanding of economic and social processes, and it also stands as a profitable tool for classicists. At its core, game theory studies rational decision-making among interdependent entities in an attempt to determine the type of behavior that would best serve the interests of a 'player' in a 'game' against other players. A game is defined as an interdependent situation—a scenario where the outcome depends on the strategies (courses of action) and decisions of all players in the game. A player is defined as an entity with a set of preferences, the abstract combination of which is called 'utility'. Utility denotes the hierarchical grading of effects (positive or negative) that an event has on a player's subjective 'welfare', which refers to a normative list of relative states of wellbeing that finds validation in other underlying (philosophical or cultural) systems.<sup>37</sup> Drawing on such a framework could be particularly valuable for Roman history, where the application of a game-theoretical foundation would impose a sense of structure that is generally lacking in the usual literary-historical analysis—should the mathematical form of presentation not be a terminal discouragement.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the minimal overlap between classics and mathematics, a handful of classicists have nonetheless tried to apply game theory to their chosen area of study. Of the four examples which could be found, one is a book on public and political violence at Rome, two are articles focusing on the prisoner's dilemma, and the last is

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<sup>37</sup> e.g. the relative welfare of the Roman provinces could be assessed apropos of their gross domestic product per capita. But people are another matter. They must be evaluated with regard to explicit and implicit statements about their wellbeing. Nero, for instance, would find a higher utility in a schedule that *ceteris paribus* allowed him to write more poetry than addresses to the Senate—or so it may be surmised.

<sup>38</sup> One example of how it could be done: S.J. Brams 1980.

an article focusing on the Penelope's suitors. The results have been mixed. As such, an Appendix has been created to illustrate what a formal application of game theory to Roman history might look like, and thereby act as a point of methodological comparison to the studies discussed below.

Gabriel Herman and Catherine Tracy have both written interesting articles that show how the human-natural principles behind the prisoner's dilemma respectively appear in the Athenian courts and the *Odyssey*. Tracy uses the prisoner's dilemma to explain certain instances of cooperative behavior among non-allied individuals, whereas Herman seeks to use the existing taxonomy of games to explain certain forensic phenomena. Both authors utilize game theories, along with their corresponding implications about human nature, to offer intelligent explanations for why certain individuals or groups of people acted in the manner that they did. But their approach differs from the present one in a crucial way. Instead of constructing a game from the ground up and offering a solution based on one's own particular interpretation of the literary or historical events, both scholars seem to have started with a solved game (the prisoner's dilemma) and then returned to the primary sources to seek an instance of it. There is nothing inherently objectionable to this inversion of the usual approach. Merely the versatility of game theory, hence its usefulness, is curtailed if one's research is limited to situations that conform to games which have already been mapped out and solved.

Similar to Tracy, Ruth Scodel also focuses on interpersonal dynamics in the *Odyssey*. She interprets the behavior of Penelope's suitors in original and compelling terms, but without any clear input from game theory.<sup>39</sup> Scodel considers the suitors in three different scenarios, and rationalizes their behavior (planned and actual) within the context of these situations. This approach seems to stem less properly from game theory than from situational analysis, which is a term which Karl Popper coined in *The poverty of historicism*.<sup>40</sup> Situational analysis aims to provide a positive explanation of behavior by attributing a dominant goal or motive to agents, whose particular actions can then be rationalized by the principal restraints imposed on them by their

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<sup>39</sup> The article has the topical tag of 'game theory' on JSTOR.

<sup>40</sup> K. Popper 1957.

circumstances. And Scodel does exactly that. Her method is therefore not game-theoretical because it does not explain characters' theoretically optimal decisions or their decision-making in terms of what other characters could do or ought to do. Perhaps it is also worth noting that Scodel never explicitly stakes her methodology in game theory.<sup>41</sup>

Somewhat different is the work by Paul Plass, *The game of death in ancient Rome*, which stands as the one example to concentrate on both Romans and the early Principate. Game theory first appears in the last three chapters of the work,<sup>42</sup> but it appears more as a talking point or segue than an analytical instrument being put to use.<sup>43</sup> The primary concern in the last third of this book is the situational dynamic between the emperor and individuals whom he plans to execute; and using the language of game theory, Plass acutely deconstructs various iterations of this scenario. He investigates the cultural forces acting on the players, the social and political ramifications of political suicide, and the intellectual discussion of this phenomenon at Rome, all of which offers insight into typical Roman preferences and considerations while under such duress. Undoubtedly his analytical approach has been influenced by game theorists, as he considers (*inter alia*) decision-making in terms of what other players could do.<sup>44</sup> It is, however, unclear where game theory itself factors in, or how "Plass spells out the rules implicit in Roman political suicide" by "using game theory as a model."<sup>45</sup>

It is important to remember that game theory has two sides to it. There are the games, which are a taxonomy of strategic situations, and then there are the theories

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<sup>41</sup> All Scodel writes is (in reference to the title of the article, namely *The suitors' game*): "I borrow the term 'game' from the game theory widely used in the social sciences...A rigorous application of game theory to a literary text would be foolishly reductive. Furthermore, game theory would require assigning a quantitative value to each possible outcome for each player. Still, a perspective influenced by game theory can clarify what strategies are available to the characters and the rationality or lack of rationality of their choices" Game theory is not, of course, a single model, as the expression "the game theory" would suggest. Moreover, one can argue that literary texts are a prime target for game-theoretical analysis precisely because authors generally provide the relevant information about a character's thoughts and personality to understand their actions, or at least offer enough information to intuit motives and preferences.

<sup>42</sup> P. Plass 1995, 87 f.; 133. And also in the Addenda: 158; 228 f. (n. 2); 248; 259.

<sup>43</sup> M.T. Griffin (2000, 236) also fails to see it as an applied tool in the work: "There is a valuable discussion (87–9) of the relation of such modern analytic tools as game theory and gift exchange, complete with 'scenarios', to the literary means used by ancient writers in uncovering the general principles governing behaviour." Two other reviewers fail to mention game theory at all: J.S. Ruebel 1998; T. Wiedemann 1998.

<sup>44</sup> He also discusses the minimax decision rule: 126 f.; 250 n. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Taken from the publisher's description on the back of the book. Game theory, it should be clear, is the study of models (situations). It is not itself a model.

about how players will act in those games and why. Plass surveys various occasions of political suicide, notes the players' tactics and the rationale behind their actions, and thus concentrates on framing these instances in terms of games—which is to say, as situations of conflict involving interdependent decisions.<sup>46</sup> Yet none of these instances are set up as a game, either formally or informally.<sup>47</sup> Instead, as it becomes clear in Chapter 10, the primary sources were scoured in order to find the cultural concerns and social rules governing these situations *qua* games. By synthesizing his observations and conclusions, Plass can fashion two matrices that show the potential actions and payoffs for each side in this situation.<sup>48</sup> But he never develops this into an extensive-form game or solves the matrix as it is presented.<sup>49</sup> Ostensibly, they only act as a concise representation of the strategies in this overall dynamic.<sup>50</sup>

Although the accuracy of Plass' description of mandatory suicide is not presently germane,<sup>51</sup> it should be noted that descriptions and explanations of situations using the jargon of game theory is not itself an application of game theory. To think of situations in terms of its players, their preferences, the costs of different actions, the utility gained or lost from certain outcomes—this is strategic thought framed in game-theoretical terms. Strategic thought is certainly a preliminary part of game-theoretic analysis: one must first build a game in order to theorize how to play it optimally or hypothesize why people would opt for a certain strategy. But without a hypothesis to explain why a game is played in a certain way, there is no game *theory*. Nevertheless, Plass' strategic understanding of this relationship and his cost-benefit analysis of the players' various tactics is trenchant and valuable, and neither requires game theory for validation.

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<sup>46</sup> A 'conflict' is simply a competitive situation in which each side desires an outcome that compromises the optimal outcome of the other side.

<sup>47</sup> An example of a formally constructed game is offered in the Appendix. An informal construction is found *infra*.

<sup>48</sup> P. Plass 1995, 123 and 125. The figures are not presented in the usual matrix configuration for normal-form games, for which see *infra*. He calls the first one a "payoff matrix of sorts" (pg. 123).

<sup>49</sup> Figure 2 in the Appendix is an example of a game in extensive form. Figure 1 is a normal-form game.

<sup>50</sup> cf. J.E. Lendon 1997, 88: "But his appeal to the intellectual Rube Goldberg device of game theory to analyze this phenomenon, besides muddying the waters with baffling charts and lingo, begs the question of why the emperor should bother to play so artificial a game at all." The matrices were also not very intuitive to this reader.

<sup>51</sup> Its reception appears to be mixed, e.g. P. Walcot 2000, 130 f. "*The Game of Death in Ancient Rome* still leaves me unconvinced that bloodshed in the arena and political suicide can be linked together...or that game theory helps us to understand the latter."

As for this dissertation, several concepts from economics and its sub-disciplines have broadly shaped the present understanding of the texts and the historical period in question. Of those ideas to influence how the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia* have been read, perhaps none has been more influential than the concept of ‘signaling’ and the attendant ‘signaling game’.<sup>52</sup>

Signaling, in brief, is the process whereby one party communicates attributes about himself to another party via indirect means. College degrees are one example of a common signal: a person with excellent grades from an elite school sends a strong signal of intelligence. Although this theory was originally developed in the context of labor markets by the economist Michael Spence,<sup>53</sup> it does not seem inapplicable to Seneca’s situation circa 55, when Nero’s need for a *rhetor* was dwindling.

An extended analogy might go as follows. The job market consisted of the formal and informal positions at the Palace and more generally in the government. Following Claudius’ death, Nero became the main employer in this industry; and with the acquisition of these new resources and responsibilities, his interests and priorities changed. Seneca had been a long time partner with Nero, and clearly wished to continue their relationship. But rhetoric lessons would no longer be the commodity that they used to be: Nero had responsibilities more pressing than his final year of education. Seneca must consider if and how he wants to adapt to this new market, and what would facilitate any such adjustments. Accordingly, the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia* should be scrutinized for signals relevant to Seneca’s evolving relationship with Nero because, by design, they convey aspects of Seneca that are difficult to observe directly—and Seneca had complete control over the narrative. Much more than his opinions, these texts signal how Seneca wanted to be viewed by Nero and what political issues he wished to be associated with.

Here a distinction should be emphasized. Signals are not synonymous with the intertextual message of a text. *De clementia*, for instance, registers Seneca’s conviction

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<sup>52</sup> The literature on signaling, as with many ideas from Nobel Prize winners, is voluminous. See: D.M. Kreps & J. Sobel 1994; R. Sloof 1998, 45 ff. (esp. 54–8); N. McCarty & A. Meirowitz, 2007 214–9.

<sup>53</sup> M. Spence 1973 and 1974. The model was inspired by ideas from international relations, and would eventually earn Spence a Nobel Prize in 2001 (shared, as common, with two other economists) for its contribution to information economics.

in the political suitability of clemency while also heavily implying that Seneca disagreed with Claudius' theory of law and justice. The prior point can be derived from the textual narrative, the latter extrapolated with some historical context. These are Seneca's opinions, however, not signals sent by the text itself. Instead, the relevant signal emanates from the very fact that he wrote a work which communicates such a message. By its mere existence, *De clementia* signals that Seneca was knowledgeable about and actively interested in personal morality and ethical issues involved in interpersonal transactions. To communicate these facts about himself, Seneca could have simply told Nero that he was a very conscientious and high-minded individual, just as anyone can simply assert his own intelligence. Yet the mere statement of a case does not prove itself. Nero cannot see into Seneca's mind to confirm that he makes decisions according to Stoic moral guidelines. Signaled traits, on the other hand, derive from perceived evidence for that specific trait.<sup>54</sup> Seneca could signal his preoccupation with just and moral interactions if he did something that Nero would interpret as conditional on the existence of such concerns. *De clementia* fits that bill.

Signals also differ from intertextual messages in respect to their detectability. Perception of intertextual messages primarily depends on the author: discernment of a signal is more of a cooperative process. If Seneca wishes to make a point or otherwise convince his audience of something, then he alone is responsible for the clarity, cogency, and efficacious delivery of that message. But if Seneca wants to signal his conscientiousness to Nero, he must do something that the Emperor recognizes as a signal for said attribute.<sup>55</sup> Here it is important to mention that Spence's original formulation stipulates that the process of acquiring a signal does not improve the quality of the signaled attribute. To use education as an example yet again, a degree from a good university signals diligence and intelligence irrespective of what was studied. The award of the degree is what matters.

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<sup>54</sup> Upon reading this some might proclaim that the idea of signaling is decidedly circular: a signal is a signal because it is intended and recognized as a signal. But it should be circular. The signaler ought to take the action that he expects the receiver to recognize as a signal: the anticipated response of the receiver is precisely what makes a particular signal worthwhile in the first place. If the game is not circular, then a player is making a mistake.

<sup>55</sup> e.g. the charge that Seneca, following the death of Burrus, began to write verse because Nero was poetizing (Tac. *Ann.* XIV.52). This action could potentially send Nero the signal that Seneca's personality and interests were still compatible with and relevant to his own.

Implied in Spence's theory is a lack of correlation between how an attribute is signaled and the value placed on said signal.<sup>56</sup> In other words, a signal cannot be more valid than another signal because it was produced in a different manner. Thus, if an employer believes that degrees from elite universities signal intelligence, then a job applicant with a degree in history from Oxford would send a signal of intelligence equivalent to an applicant with a degree in physics from Harvard. One applicant could send a stronger signal of intelligence if he graduated with more honors than the other, but the presence of that more distinguished student would not invalidate the signal of intelligence from the other. Similarly, when these observations are applied to a literary context, the genre or style of a text cannot be said to affect the legitimacy or value of its signals. Literary conventions affect how information is transmitted, not the information itself; and the validity of a signal is not affected by the process used to create the signal. *Apocolocyntosis* would therefore signal Seneca's moral compass and sense of priorities no less honestly or authentically than *De clementia*. That is why both texts are considered on equally important terms.

So go the salient differences between signals and intertextual messages. How else has the idea of signaling shaped this thesis? Most generally, it has allowed the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia* to be seen as symbols of intent. The internal message of these works conveys certain opinions and exhortations; and the works themselves, when understood as an intellectually coherent whole, signal Seneca's active dedication to moral behavior. But these texts are also didactic. The signaled attribute (morality and conscientiousness) is the quality inversely championed in the *Apocolocyntosis*, as well as the thing that Nero is told to learn about in *De clementia*. Seneca effectively tries to increase the value of a commodity that he claims to possess: he encourages demand while standing to supply. That is what any ad campaign does. Commercial advertisements often aim either to notify consumers of a company's ability to supply a commodity, or to engender the desire for said commodity in consumers.<sup>57</sup> No dif-

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<sup>56</sup> For further discussion and other assumptions on which Spence's theory rests: D.N. Barron & M. Rolfe 2012, 167 f.

<sup>57</sup> In economic terms, Seneca offers Nero an 'experience good', which is a service or product whose characteristics and utility can only be verified with consumption—e.g. restaurants, cruises, and education.

ferent, the particulars of Seneca's message advertise what he wanted to supply by highlighting their importance. These insights affect the final interpretation of Seneca's influence and relationship with Nero, and are accordingly integrated into the concluding segments of this dissertation.

Lastly, in preparation for the study itself, the present understanding of the historical situation should be clarified. This excursus is framed in game-theoretical terms and ideas. The incorporation of these ideas is less formal than the example in the Appendix, but just as impactful on the overall outcome.

To reiterate, this dissertation reads into the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia* for information relating to Seneca's relationship with Nero because they represent an ideological and philosophical self-presentation from Seneca. They contain personal ideas and beliefs that Seneca wanted others to know about. Yet this does not testify to their currency or situational worth. Context is needed to appraise the economic value of these ideas, insofar as Nero had needs to be supplied—or, as suggested, needs not yet realized or created. Part I thus attempts to expose these 'market opportunities' by viewing Nero's early childhood through the lens of social-scientific theories about preference, choice, and individual judgments. But how those ideas are to be applied, as well as how the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia* are to be contextualized, depends on the envisioned dynamic between Seneca and Nero. An explanation of their situation accordingly follows. Here is where the ideas and formal tools provided by game theory have had their greatest impact.<sup>58</sup>

Of particular interest to the current focus on influence and person-to-person relationships is the branch of game-theoretical literature regarding models of bargaining and arbitration. Both types of model analyze decisions and decision-making, and both share the advantage being able to account for factors such as reputation and honesty in negotiations. They differ, however, both mathematically and in their fundamental meaning. Models of bargaining are rooted in game-theoretical postulates

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<sup>58</sup> On the narrative aspect of game forms (e.g. matrices and game trees): M. Morgan 2007. If a social phenomenon in the real world appears before a game form is attributed to it, framing the situation in a model narrative allows it to be represented by a game form. For the architecture of game theory: T. Grüne-Yanoff & P. Schwinzer 2008.

about rationality,<sup>59</sup> whereas arbitration models stem from postulates about morality. Bargaining models anticipate situations where the players' utmost concern is the maximization of their immediate payoff, and therefore they are less concerned with moral consideration than risk.<sup>60</sup> Arbitration models attempt solutions that satisfy certain moral criteria (usually equity), or adhere as close as possible to certain standards, norms, and other moral precepts.<sup>61</sup> To put it otherwise: arbitration inherently involves moral considerations because the arbiter must contemplate what is good for each party, bad for each party, and what is best overall. Seneca's rise to prominence might then be cast as an ongoing negotiation between himself, Nero, and Agrippina. What follows is an interpretation of that dynamic according to such terms.

Seneca *rhetor* and Nero were unequal parties (Seneca more capable, Nero more powerful), each benefitting from their initial partnership, which Agrippina presided over. In reality, however, Agrippina's arbitral role was nominal. The fundamental dynamic was a bargain between Seneca and Agrippina, who compensated Seneca for having a particular relationship with her son. Further, this arrangement was only necessary insofar as Nero lacked his own bargaining power. That was bound to change, and did most dramatically when he became the emperor. Thereafter Tacitus' narrative begins to indicate that Seneca desired a fully cooperative (unmediated) relationship with Nero. Yet tellingly, Tacitus does not represent Agrippina's loss of authority over Nero as inevitable. It was something that Seneca and Burrus worked for.

Nero's assumption of power changed the status of the preexisting bargain between Seneca and Agrippina. The payoffs of the original bargain for each party would have included, for Agrippina, furtherance of her *spes dominationis*; for Seneca, fulfillment of any debt to Agrippina, political advancement, or remuneration; for Nero, sociocultural capital in the form of an education and association with Seneca. Certain goals for this arrangement had thus been fulfilled by 55, namely Agrippina's. Seneca, however, still stood to gain from a relationship with Nero; and Nero still needed Seneca's educational services. It was more efficient (involved less compromise) for these

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<sup>59</sup> Rationality is understood as the behavioral motivation to maximize one's own payoff. Rational behavior will therefore never opt for dominated strategies. Strategies are dominated when they always yield less utility than every other available option, or when it is always better to choose another option.

<sup>60</sup> i.e. the function of how favorable or unfavorable others' plans are to one's own wishes.

<sup>61</sup> R.B. Braithwaite 1955.

two to communicate directly, since now Nero could guarantee his own bargains. But such an arrangement was not necessarily more advantageous for Nero. He had his mother to consider.

Putting aside for now the idea that Agrippina's conduct increasingly embittered Nero, who consequently looked for someone else to listen to, a one-on-one arrangement with Seneca may not have been immediately preferable. Both Agrippina and Nero stood to incur some disadvantage. Agrippina would lose her status as pseudo-arbitrator for her son, which is a situation that contains certain unknowns for Nero, such as the level of cooperation between Agrippina and his tutor.<sup>62</sup> Seneca did, after all, owe his station to Agrippina no less than any of her other yes-men—though this was evidently more a concern with Burrus. But in reality, or at least according to the historical narrative, Agrippina's conduct drove Nero to reorient his (social, moral, or personal) alliance toward Seneca. In technical terms, Nero came to treat Seneca as though he could offer more utility than Agrippina.<sup>63</sup> In plainer terms, Nero acted as if he believed that having Seneca as his social or moral conscience was more beneficial to his desires than having Agrippina remain as his highest authority, and that the benefits of having Seneca as such not merely countervailed but fully outweighed the downsides of demoting Agrippina. Seneca could try to reinforce this impression, and apparently did.

Tacitus suggests that Seneca and Burrus cooperated in a strategy to gain control over Nero by supplanting Agrippina's socio-moral precedence with "praeceptis eloquentiae et comitate honesta."<sup>64</sup> This approach is deceptively acute. Kingmakers rarely fail to be their own undoing, for they effect another's predominance through duress or astuteness—and both of those engender mistrust in the new ruler. It therefore seems to be no coincidence that Nero's advisors would employ the opposite tools in their efforts. Yet not everything was stacked in Seneca's favor. Against the philosopher were the invisible but inexorable forces of society and culture that had kept Nero

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<sup>62</sup> On the dynamics of rational behavior under certainty, risk, and uncertainty: J.C. Harsanyi 1977, 22–47.

<sup>63</sup> For some psychological insight into the perception of utility: D. Kahneman & C. Varey 1991.

<sup>64</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.2.1.

obedient to his mother. But luckily for Seneca, as Tacitus reports, Agrippina’s “superbia muliebris” enervated those bonds. Thus Nero “exueret obsequium in matrem seque Senecae permetteret.”<sup>65</sup> Negotiations would have to be reformed.

A new dynamic called for a new set of terms and conditions. In a reversal from the original negotiation, where Agrippina came into the deal-making process with a significant source of leverage—namely her husband, or rather her influence over him—Nero was now the party making decisions. He and he alone would decide what demands were in his best interests. Further, unlike the first iteration of this game, the later dynamic arguably resembles a bargaining game more closely than it does arbitration. Whereas Agrippina had to offer Seneca terms that were fair enough to secure his services in the first game, Nero was under no obligation in the second game to find an equitable mean between his own inclinations, Seneca’s suggestions, and Agrippina’s requests. Nor could Nero come to any such decisions without personal bias, as an arbiter should. All political decisions would affect Nero’s welfare either palpably or imperceptibly because he was the (head of) State. Nero could not be neutral when making political decisions: to say that someone could impartially decide what is best for himself is paradoxical. It thus seems reasonable to suggest that, in these trilateral situations of bargaining, risk and payoff guided Nero’s decisions more than principles of morality. This is not to say that Nero’s decision-making process excluded moral considerations, only that pros and cons would have been assessed by how they impacted Nero’s welfare rather than by how they adhered to a set of ethics. That would certainly seem to be the case when he decided to have his mother killed.

The other major change in the second game is the powerbases at play. Seneca’s influence with Nero was clearly in good standing with the Emperor at this time. Agrippina’s leverage fared far worse, however; and crucially, she is not presented as aware that her maternal authority was no longer the selling point that it used to be. She first uses disparagement then flattery to get what she wants, both of which fail because their efficacy as negotiation tactics rests on the innate importance of her word *qua* mother. But that inherent authority also seems the crux of their conflict. For while Nero could downplay Agrippina’s parental authority, he could never deprive her of that maternal role or singlehandedly change the cultural the norm of deference to

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<sup>65</sup> id. 14.1; .2.1.

one's parents. That might begin to explain why Agrippina does not appear to have changed her strategy with Nero.

To understand this new arrangement at the Palace, the respective sources of power must be considered further. As mentioned, this dissertation aims to interpret Seneca's source of authority with Nero and, more generally, what he could hope to achieve from it. Perhaps the most salient feature of their relationship for the current discussion is the most obvious: Seneca gave advice, made recommendations, and offered counsel. He was not in the position to make demands of Nero, nor could he reasonably do so. The root of his influence—the thing that would make Nero want to approach Seneca for guidance—was, as is argued here, his philosophical insight into handling issues equitably. Agrippina's leverage was less theoretical.

It seems uncontroversial to suggest that Agrippina acquired a large network of supporters and allies during Claudius' reign. People with power and wealth tend to attract those seeking power and wealth. The names of her clients, however, are not readily forthcoming; and those who do appear offer little information.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, accounts of Agrippina's rise and fall affirm that her power emanated from extensive contacts in the Senate and Praetorian Guard, and ample equestrian patrons.<sup>67</sup> And that seems reasonable enough, though some might overemphasize the importance of her Praetorian loyalists.<sup>68</sup> Having the support of the only armed force in Rome would certainly factor into the machinations of any would-be conspirators, but Agrippina's recorded style of politicking was too nuanced to rely wholly or even primarily on force.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, as her son would realize, legions could still march on Rome. A solid balance, with friends on all tiers of the political spectrum, would thus help ensure stability—that prized political commodity. But of these centers of power, Agrippina's people at the Palace often go undiscussed.<sup>70</sup> The one clear example is Pallas; and Werner Eck has surmised that Nero quickly dismissed the *a rationibus* specifically because access to imperial wealth was Agrippina's greatest resource in the political game at

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<sup>66</sup> Little can be gleaned from the likes of Alledius Severus, Antonius Felix, P. Celerius, Claudius Balbillus, Creperius Gallus, Faenius Rufus, Julius Spartiaticus. Other individuals, like Vitellius (*cos. III*),

<sup>67</sup> e.g. M.T. Griffin 1984, 30; A.A. Barrett 1996, 101–3, 147; J. Burns 2007, 64 f.

<sup>68</sup> cf. A.A. Barrett 1996, 118 ff.; T. Mommsen 1996, 145–7.

<sup>69</sup> But, as J. Ginsburg (2006, 17–34) details, Tacitus' description of Agrippina's caution and long-game scheming provides a clearly literary foil to Messalina. It should not be fully trusted.

<sup>70</sup> In contrast to Mommsen (*supra*), who singularly emphasizes the Praetorian Guard, B.W. Henderson (1903, 56–61) sees Agrippina's power as heavily tied to Pallas.

Rome.<sup>71</sup> That idea would likely be supported by another biographer of Agrippina, Anthony Barrett, who observes in Agrippina the conservative treatment of money as a means to maintain and expand one's power.<sup>72</sup> Yet their interpretations of Agrippina's power at the Palace differ in an important way.

Under Claudius and then her son, Agrippina clearly intended to grow as a political actor. Yet the abovementioned accounts of the period 54–55 reject the idea that Agrippina could have kept a majority of the Conscript Fathers under her sway while Nero was emperor. She was, first of all, a woman; and the Senate had its pride. She was also unlikely able to evoke the same sympathy that she could have elicited while Messalina was the imperial consort. Moreover, she plausibly intended Seneca as her liaison to that august body. But soon into Nero's reign she lost her ability to influence government business. Eck's narrative suggests that Agrippina's ability to influence state affairs was rooted in the lack of opponents on her level, that she only reigned supreme through Claudius or in a vacuum.<sup>73</sup> Hence she attacked Domitia, her former in-law, who stood to undermine Agrippina's absolute control over Nero—her future conduit to power. When un-removable sources of competition appeared, such as Seneca and Burrus, she sought support elsewhere. Agrippina would have had other friends in the Senate,<sup>74</sup> but Burrus could no longer be relied on. Other officers in the Praetorian Guard would have to be courted.<sup>75</sup> This gravitation toward military allies caused Nero to remove her personal bodyguard and her from the Palace. In Barrett's estimation, however, Agrippina's power itself was the thing that failed.

Barrett's narrative presents Nero as proactively seeking to undermine Agrippina's sources of power and influence on all levels.<sup>76</sup> Thus he dismissed Pallas to cut off her access to imperial funds, reversed Claudian legislation to reduce the prestige of her position as *flaminica*, and repealed specific laws (such as the mandatory production of a gladiatorial show by quaestors-designate) to reduce the potency of Agrippina's powerful reserves of money. Yet none of Nero's actions completely deprived his

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<sup>71</sup> W. Eck 1993, 68: "Denn viele Dienste mußten durch große Geldgeschenke erkaufte werden."

<sup>72</sup> A.A. Barrett 1996, 131.

<sup>73</sup> W. Eck 1993, 60–71 (esp. 67–9).

<sup>74</sup> It is unclear whether the allies of her opponents, such as Narcissus, became indifferent or hostile after Claudius' death. The one known example, Vespasian, simply receded into private life until she was murdered. See further: B. Levick 1999, 20; R. Mellor 2003, 72.

<sup>75</sup> cf. A.A. Barrett 1996, 118–22.

<sup>76</sup> *id.*, 143 ff.

mother of her ability to make credible threats.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps that is why, years after she had been removed from involvement in intimate government business, Nero nonetheless felt compelled to have her killed.<sup>78</sup> It may therefore be suggested that Nero's distinct inability to cripple Agrippina politically was because a significant part of her power over him rested in the fact that she was his mother. Agrippina could remain a problem because there was a sociocultural dimension to her power over Nero that could not be taken away.<sup>79</sup> Society itself, to which all the parties involved were inextricably bound, expected that Nero would respect his mother and at least consider her wishes. And Nero knew it. Even after Agrippina's clear and ignominious ouster, he made sure that she was still honored with games across the Empire and that her birthday was officially celebrated.<sup>80</sup> Agrippina was a source of tension that Nero could not entirely deal with.

There are several observations to expand upon. Foremost is the stalemate of the Nero-Agrippina game at the Palace. It seems plausible that this stasis could have been a product of their respective strategies: Agrippina wanted to regain control over her son, while Nero pursued a course that required independence from his mother. There is no evidence that Nero shunned his mother because he objected to how Agrippina sought to use her influence. Indeed, if Nero's literary depiction is anything close to the historical figure, he was probably disinclined to care about how the government was run or who was running it—so long as it remained unproblematic. Yet that does not explain why they remained at loggerheads or why their relationship never adjusted to their respective goals. If Agrippina could have achieved her objectives without Nero, she would have presumably embarked on that course after her expulsion from the Palace; and if Nero could have found a way to pursue his own goals while also satisfying his mother to some degree, he presumably would have been urged to make that compromise. Neither changed, however, which suggests that neither saw

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<sup>77</sup> On threats and reputations (or credibility) in games: S.J. Brams, 2003, 29–62.

<sup>78</sup> The discussion of reciprocal surprise attacks by T.C. Schelling (1960, 207–29) is recommended to shed potential light into Nero's rationale.

<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, consider the conclusion of J. Potters & F.v. Winden (1990, 78): "Due to the willingness of the interest group to exert pressure, the government is more or less forced to take account of the interests of the group." Agrippina could thus, by virtue of her existence, have been a constant factor in Nero's political decisions—which might help explain his ostensibly sudden desire to have her killed.

<sup>80</sup> W. Eck 1994, 69.

value in a unilateral alteration of their strategy. That is an observation which will be returned to briefly.

Here it seems salutary to remember that strategy differs from tactics. Supporting Britannicus, guilt trips, and sexual advances were all purported tactics (or sub-games) that Agrippina employed in pursuance of her grand strategy; and although her plan may have been flawed if put into practice,<sup>81</sup> it was her tactics that were actively failing. Agrippina never got the chance to see if her strategy of controlling Nero would achieve her goals because she was killed before it could happen, but one could argue that her strategy was *de facto* unsuccessful since it encouraged her own demise. Nero, on the other hand, was having short-term success within these sub-games, although he would later find out that his strategy did not comprehensively address his desires for personal independence (or the like). Nero and Agrippina therefore continued to make decisions according to their respective strategies because neither had a sure and positive incentive to change on their own. Why that was so is unclear. It may have to do with Agrippina's innate, though clearly ineffectual, source of influence with Nero as his mother. But whatever the reasons behind the deadlock, their strategic relationship is familiar.

This particular situation, where neither player perceives any benefit from a unilateral change in strategy, appears similar to what is known as a Nash Equilibrium.<sup>82</sup> In basic and informal terms, Nash's equilibrium is a solution to a game whose players find no incentive to change their own strategy after considering their opponents' strategy.<sup>83</sup> 'Solution' here denotes a mathematic derivation of what players are likely to do in a game—to be illustrated momentarily. To make this concept clearer, the conflict between Agrippina and Nero can be oversimplified and then represented by a 'normal form' game, which is a matrix of the various payoffs for the different possible actions. The ordered pairs  $(x, y)$  represent the rank of preference that Nero

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<sup>81</sup> i.e. controlling Nero would not actually facilitate the acquisition of her goals.

<sup>82</sup> Named after the Princeton mathematician John Nash, who won the Nobel Prize in economics in 1994. The concept was first introduced in 1950 in his brief (32 page) and casually written PhD thesis, and is the undisputable keystone of all modern game theory.

<sup>83</sup> J. Nash 1950, 3: "Thus an equilibrium point is an  $n$ -tuple  $s$  [i.e. a set of strategies] such that each player's mixed strategy maximizes his pay-off if the strategies of the others are held fixed. Thus each player's strategy is optimal against those of the others."

(*x*) and Agrippina (*y*) have for each outcome, with 1 being the least preferable and 6 being the most desirable.

Nero ( <i>x</i> ), row Agrippina ( <i>y</i> ), column	Agrippina demands something of Nero.	Agrippina withholds demands from Nero.
Nero yields to Agrippina's wishes.	(1 [Nero], 6 [Agrippina]) Confrontation, deal made. Agrippina gets her way: Nero appears weak.	(3, 2) Missed opportunity. Agrippina incorrectly infers Nero's response: Nero avoids showing weakness.
Nero refuses to help Agrippina.	<b>(6, 4)</b> <b>Confrontation, stalemate. Agrippina's request is unsuccessful: Nero stands his ground. None show weakness, but Nero appears strong and gets his way.</b>	(5, 1) No encounter, no deal. Agrippina correctly infers Nero's response, and is deterred from approaching him. Nero has reached a point where he can disincentivize his mother from pestering him.
Nero asks Seneca to intervene.	(2, 5) Confrontation, indecision. Nero requests assistance, appears intimidated. Agrippina is not outright rejected, gains another opportunity to secure her goal.	(4, 3) Preemptive action. Nero foresees a request from Agrippina and has Seneca plan for contingencies. Agrippina is thoroughly outmaneuvered, but is still powerful enough in Nero's mind to warrant anticipatory actions.

The solution to the game is the scenario denoted by (6, 4). The outcomes offered to Nero by 'refusing' and to Agrippina by 'demanding' are always better than (viz. 'strictly dominate') the other payoffs, which leads to a stalemate. Agrippina and Nero would accordingly stick to these strategies until the game changed, and are therefore in equilibrium.<sup>84</sup> Hence Agrippina continued to engage Nero on various issues—deriding his relationship with *debilis* Burrus, *exsul* Seneca, and Acte; and trying to pressure him through Britannicus, the Praetorian Guard, and perhaps Rubellius Plautus.<sup>85</sup> Agrippina's source of authority with Nero as his mother was unique and inalienable, which could also explain why she persisted in her strategy to control Nero. She could neither buy off the Emperor nor outgun him, but she was his mother, and this seems to have given her the reasonable expectation that Nero might once again

<sup>84</sup> M. Peterson 2009, 241: "Rational players will do whatever they can to ensure that they do not feel unnecessarily unhappy about their decision. Hence, if a rational player is about to play a strategy and knows that he could do something better, given that his assumptions about the opponent are held fixed, then the player will not choose the non-optimal strategy." Note that choosing the optimal strategy does not mean that it will secure the best possible outcome. In the game *supra*, for instance, the optimal decision for Agrippina is to demand, but the optimal outcome requires Nero yield, which he naturally is disinclined to do.

<sup>85</sup> Agrippina's primary bargaining tactic would seem to be threats, on which: T.C. Schelling 1960, 35–43.

become receptive to her words and wishes. The real game between Nero and Agrippina would, however, have been far more complex, but the historical narrative still gives the general impression that their strategies were such that, once they had been chosen, neither side could reach a better outcome by single-handedly switching to another strategy. The dynamic between players expressed by Nash's equilibrium may thus be offered as an explanation for Nero and Agrippina's post-accession relationship.<sup>86</sup>

That is the present conception of the situation circa 55. It has several clear deviations from previous accounts. Perhaps most distinct is the idea that Agrippina's political influence was stifled by her own strategy to gain further power. This interpretation differs from previous accounts, such as those by Eck and Barrett, in that it limits Agrippina's lack of political efficacy to her dealings at the Palace and specifically with her son. Agrippina only sinks into obscurity if her failed threats and bargains are taken as a symptom of her political bankruptcy. And that idea warrants some hesitation. If Nero sought to deprive Agrippina of power on and off the Palatine, it would suggest that she was an effective political actor in the face of rivals; and if Agrippina was a paper tiger at the Palace, or if she was drowned out by other advisors, then Nero's anti-Claudius legislation and Tacitus' depiction of his efforts to downsize her influence would imply that she was still formidable in other regards. Moreover, Agrippina was born into the governing class and had been an active participant in political affairs for several years by the time Claudius had died. It seems unlikely that her political network was neutered by the end of 55, or that none of her resources was useful to Nero. So what held back her negotiations with him? The observable byproducts of their relationship do not offer a complete picture. The epiphenomena do, however, inform certain aspects and qualities of their respective strategies, whence further characteristics of their game emerge. The strategic stalemate (equilibrium) between the two players is the most notable of these attributes, as it would help explain Agrippina's ostensible lack of political conspicuity.

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<sup>86</sup> The Nash equilibrium obviously ended before Nero had Agrippina killed. Whenever it ended and whatever caused it to end are both unknown, but something clearly caused Nero's strategic profile to change. The ancient sources are, quite predictably, silent on these circumstances. But given Nero's documented timidity, one may surmise that it was a response to something rather than caprice.

Another important observation regards Agrippina's resources and personal power. The historical record shows that Nero was able to handle each tactic devised to further Agrippina's strategy. Why? Agrippina may have simply chosen actions that were misguided or were otherwise inapposite to the situation. Yet even so, one should suppose that Agrippina selected these actions with rationality. She had reason to believe that such actions would work. But this comes with a prominent caveat: rational is not synonymous with correct.<sup>87</sup> A successful outcome is not always the product of a logical decision.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, the players in this game did not have perfect information. Agrippina did not know everything about her son, his preferences, and his process of risk assessment; and some of what she did know had changed after he became emperor. The assassination of Britannicus shows that she either lacked a critical piece of intelligence,<sup>89</sup> or had assessed a crucial bit of information incorrectly—namely, how Nero would rank his preference for possible actions and their consequences.<sup>90</sup> Agrippina intended her *détente* with Britannicus to threaten Nero, and in that she succeeded. Nevertheless, her calculus failed to gauge the class and caliber of reactions that Nero would deem reasonable.<sup>91</sup>

Agrippina's resources, station, and connections would thus inevitably factor into her decisions. They would, however, prove difficult to use effectively if she could not estimate Nero's own evaluations of certain consequences. And it seems safe to say that this happened at least once, with Britannicus.<sup>92</sup> Her failure to regain control over

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<sup>87</sup> As for what constitutes rational, see any of the twenty-two essays in A. Mele & P. Rawling 2003.

<sup>88</sup> For example, it was not rational for Charles XII of Sweden to attack the tenfold-larger Russian forces besieging the city of Narva in 1700, not merely because the attack was almost certain to fail, but also because there was no strategic incentive to attack. Nevertheless, the Swedes' attack happened to coincide with a blizzard, which blinded the Russian forces, thereby leading them to win an outstanding upset.

<sup>89</sup> The threat in this chicken game, namely Britannicus, was not credible because Agrippina did not have unilateral control over him. In a traditional game of chicken, where two drivers speed toward each other, Driver A does not have the active ability to make Driver B turn away. They go toward each other until one 'chickens out' and swerves away. In killing Britannicus, Nero did not make Agrippina swerve out of the way (to continue the analogy); rather, he took away her car, which is to say her ability to play that particular game. For further information on chicken games, see system number 66 in A. Rapoport & M. Guyer 1966.

<sup>90</sup> i.e. his ordinal utility function. On preferences and utility functions: T. Grüne-Yanoff & S.O. Hansson 2006.

<sup>91</sup> For a look into the human-behavioral aspects of decision theory: H. Gintis 2009, 1–29.

<sup>92</sup> Nero's strategies in the game that arose when Agrippina allied herself with Britannicus (on which see note *supra*) were strictly dominated. He could listen to his mother, which was undesirable, or opt to disregard his mother, which was risky (in the technical sense) as it made defection a more favorable option for Agrippina. The flaw in this dynamic is that the new game was itself the source of Agrippina's

her son should not, therefore, be considered to result merely from a dearth personal power, influence, and allies. The application of those resources mattered just as much as their quality.

So where does this leave Seneca? If influence with the Emperor was something desirable, then having a main competitor locked down and committed to an unproductive strategy would have been an advantage. But how would Seneca maneuver himself into a position of positive influence? It is one thing for Nero to consult Seneca because he loathes his mother and simply needs alternatives to her: it is something completely different for Nero to consult Seneca because Seneca's opinion is itself valuable or because he has a recognized area of expertise. What would Seneca do or say in the early months of Nero's reign to stake his place at the Palace? His two earliest post-accession works, as will be argued, highlights his interest and concern for just and moral interactions; and in the context of the above-described game, signaling such a concern hardly seems arbitrary. That, however, is a thought which can be revisited later.

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threat (her bargaining piece); and unlike her maternal authority, which only she could reasonably cripple, Nero could dismantle this leverage. Nero could have sought to win over Britannicus, thereby jeopardizing the validity of Agrippina's threat, but he chose the more definitive solution. Thus he put an end to Britannicus and the game.

PART I  

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MILESTONES TO INFLUENCE

From 13 October AD 54 until the death of Afranius Burrus in 62, L. Annaeus Seneca had a relationship with the Emperor Nero that saw him act, in the words of Tacitus, as one of the “*rectores imperatoriae iuventae*.”<sup>93</sup> The period comprised the final years of Nero’s adolescence, Britannicus’ timely death, outbreak of war with Parthia, the assassination of Agrippina, the destruction of Laodicea in an earthquake, rebellion in Britain, the ignominious defeat of two legions, and the reappearance of the *maiestas* trial. During that convulsive span of eight years Seneca appears as a man with serious and consistent political heft—a man with interests in affairs far beyond the realm of letters.

Wit and words, it is true, can take one far; and Seneca’s career and compositions attest to his energy and talent. But Nero’s tutelage was not the beginning of Seneca’s connection to the Palace. His style of oratory incurred the hate of Emperor Gaius, whose sisters he became acquainted with—both Agrippina and Julia Livilla.<sup>94</sup> Seneca was familiar enough with the latter to make plausible a charge of adultery, for which he was banished to Corsica in 41. A full seven years of exile was long enough for the philosopher to prostrate himself in a letter to an imperial freedman, publicizing the predictable—he wanted to leave the island. Hopes became reality in the year 49, when Agrippina petitioned her new husband Claudius to recall him. And despite (or perhaps for) Seneca’s sins, the wish was granted. Returning to Rome with a debt of gratitude to repay, if not an outright proviso,<sup>95</sup> Seneca assumed the role of *praeceptor* to Agrippina’s son, the young prince Domitius. Close to five years pass before Seneca resurfaces, no longer a tutor, but *princeps eruditorum ac potentia* of the new regime.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Ann.* XIII.2.1.

<sup>94</sup> *id.* XII.8.2: “quia Seneca fidus in Agrippinam memoria beneficii et infensus Claudio dolore iniuriae credebatur.” G.W. Clarke 1965 speculates on this *beneficium*.

<sup>95</sup> *Σ Juv.* 5.109: “...revocatus est. qui, esti magno desiderio Athenas intenderet, ab Agrippina tamen erudiendo Nerono in palatium adductus.”

<sup>96</sup> *Plin. NH* XIV.51.

The most available explanation for Seneca's immediate prominence in Nero's reign proceeds from his role as one of the imperial tutors. For although Seneca improved in tact and finesse over the course of the Neronian principate, his prominence was not just starting to grow when Claudius died. Seneca acquired positive influence with Nero in the years prior to his accession. Seneca's significant influence at the beginning of Nero's reign raises the main question of Part I. What in Nero's circumstances, both before and during the tutorial period, could have shaped their relationship? Questions about the personal terms of Nero's initial friendship with Seneca cannot, however, be answered.<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless, a significant aspect of their affable association has been attributed to Nero's animosity toward Agrippina, whose maternal influence Seneca undermined with displays of lenience and charity.<sup>98</sup> It is strategically logical to suppose that Seneca actively tried to eclipse Agrippina's authority, or that he directly operated on Nero. The shortcoming with this theory is that the historical narrative can only back such claims in the period after Nero's accession.<sup>99</sup> But any strategic interaction with Emperor Nero, whether duplicitous or honest, would make take their initial years of contact into account, as would anything that Seneca chose to signal to Nero through his written works. That period was, after all, the genesis of Seneca's influence and the grounds on which their recorded interactions were built.

That is the focus of Part I. How, then, to begin developing an account of this relationship? As mentioned in the Introduction, the dynamic presently being investigated—the interaction between Seneca, two of his works, and Nero—is envisaged in terms of the economic model known as 'signaling'.<sup>100</sup> Signals, to reiterate, are actions taken by players that communicate unobservable information about their unobservable qualities (viz. 'types') to other people, who can observe these signals but not the types in themselves. To be credible, signals must first be 'affordable' by the signaler,

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<sup>97</sup> cf. M.T. Griffin 1976, 68: "In fact, the transition from being a tutor who was also a friend to being a friend who was also a tutor must have been imperceptible." On the relationship between duty and friendship: D. Konstan 1997, 131–5.

<sup>98</sup> Thus M.T. Griffin 1984, 73–6; D.C.A. Shotter 1997, 12–4; J. Ginsburg 2006, 41. Each points to Tac. *Ann.* XIII.12–4 as (their only) evidence.

<sup>99</sup> Nero's paternal aunt Lepida used *largitio* and *blandimenta* on Nero (Tac. *Ann.* XII.64.3).

<sup>100</sup> Explained plainly throughout C. Camerer 2003, Ch. 8.

meaning that the cost of producing a given signal must be less than the benefits obtained from the receiver of the signal—supposing that it is correctly decoded. *De clementia*, for instance, is a valid signal of Seneca’s ethical sensitivity because it demonstrates that morality and virtue are things which he has considered in detail. Secondly, the signal must have a cost that it is too ‘expensive’ to broadcast for people lacking that particular quality (or ‘type’). Again, *De clementia* is a valid signal for Seneca’s ethical consciousness because his work is developed enough that it could not be reproduced by someone who was not heavily invested in ethical theory and moral philosophy.

The idea of signaling figures most directly in the analysis of Parts II and III with their basic question of ‘what is Seneca signaling to Nero?’, respectively in the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia*. To reach that point, however, one must know both what signals Nero could reasonably notice and understand, and what signals would be appropriate for Seneca to send. But this relationship from two millennia ago is obscured by bias and scarcely recorded. Further, the idea of ‘Seneca and Nero’ has only survived in less than impartial literature or literature with its own agenda. What sources can reveal the actual people? To supplement this lack of specific details, the present approach toward these questions has been informed by the scholarship of social choice theory. This theory offers a means to combat the general lack of information on personal relationships between specific ancient personalities.<sup>101</sup>

Social choice theory is concerned with occasions where a decision must be made by someone who is influenced to a degree by the usually conflicting views or preferences of a number of individuals. It aims to provide models or frameworks that explain the behavior behind such decision-making, and is accordingly studied by economists, political scientists, and philosophers. Yet given its very general application, social choice lacks a specific academic discipline to call home.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, the mathematical form of its presentation likely deters potential readers, who misinterpret the convenience of logical notation for mathematic complexity. Importantly, however, the

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<sup>101</sup> Although by no means an introduction to the subject, a wide variety of topics is covered in H.W. Gottinger & W. Leinfellner 1978, which still attempts “to give potential newcomers to the field an authoritative guide to the multiple cross-links between” social ethics and decision theory (pg. viii).

<sup>102</sup> So general, in fact, that there was an editorial backlash in the 1980s against the number of papers being published on the subject, e.g. *Econometrica* LIV, 447–53; *Review of Economic Studies* XLVIII, 1.

key monographs and articles (and literature surveys) in social choice theory usually eschew notation;<sup>103</sup> and specifically for the classics,<sup>104</sup> the work done on elections and committees could prove informative.<sup>105</sup> But unlike game theory or the model of signaling, social choice theory is a collection of models rather than a unified theory or single practice. There is no single framework or model to work from. In order direct the analytical focus, Part I draws on the various research concerning human interaction from social choice theory. This allows the available evidence to illuminate the personal factors that would both impact Seneca's influence with Nero, and inform an understanding of what could constitute 'valid' signals from Seneca to Nero.

Under the influence of social choice theory, Part I focuses on the social norms involved in Nero's early relationship with Seneca in order to highlight Seneca's value and importance to Nero as a Roman aristocratic male. The norms of society and the cultural values are instructive because individuals in a society must interact, and implied in these situations of interaction and decision-making are the harmonizing force of social norms.<sup>106</sup> Norms in this sense are the aspect of human societies that emerged to solve issues of collaboration, inequality, and conflict.<sup>107</sup> These should be values common to both Seneca and Nero, and could thus predictably (for Seneca) affect how Nero acts. Moreover, one's interpretation of norms is shaped by what one believes others would do in similar situations.<sup>108</sup> That is notable because, if Seneca could assume a position of moral authority in Nero's personal life, he could have a direct influence on how Nero interprets events and makes decisions.

More specifically, the moral and cultural ideals of the governing class require consideration. Social and cultural-historical knowledge speaks to the expectations of specific classes of individuals: it elucidates the systemic demands and institutional ob-

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<sup>103</sup> K.J. Arrow 1950 & 1951 are responsible for increasing interest in the subject. For a proper introduction: J.S. Kelley 1988. There are a number of review articles by A. Sen (1976, 1977a, 1977b, 1979) that would provide a novice with a sound basis.

<sup>104</sup> Aside from R. Geuss 2002, no other classics article could be found to mention social choice theory.

<sup>105</sup> e.g. R.A Newland 1982 and M. Dummett 1984 on election systems, and D. Black 1958 on committees.

<sup>106</sup> On norms as motivators in decision-making: E. Fehr & U. Fischbacher 2004.

<sup>107</sup> Thus E. Ullman-Margalit 1977.

<sup>108</sup> Numerous studies have documented this same phenomenon: R. Sugden 1998; 2004, 154–65; T.N. Cason & V. Mui 1998; C. Bicchieri 2006; C. Bicchieri & A. Chavez 2009; E. Krupka & R.A. Weber 2009.

ligations that were part of Nero's experience as a member of the aristocracy. The values of elite Roman society at large could accordingly enhance Seneca's influence with Nero or otherwise engender trust or admiration for him by virtue of Seneca's position and achievements.<sup>109</sup> Nero's relationship with Seneca could, therefore, be modeled in terms of Seneca's social importance (what Romans 'should' value) or cultural weight (what Romans 'would' admire), but this would only offer insight into the suitability of Seneca's association with the Emperor.<sup>110</sup> Although these 'types' would not be a strictly personal source of influence because Nero's individual preferences are unknown, they would nonetheless be a force acting on their relationship to Seneca's advantage because society (of which Nero was a part) gave them importance. These qualities would be the source of socioculturally valuable signals that Seneca might wish to emphasize.<sup>111</sup>

Aside from the norms that Seneca and Nero would relate to as Romans and aristocrats, there should also be a more circumstantial consideration of the elements affecting Seneca's influence. These would be the situational details of Nero's life that made it easier for Seneca to assume a position of authority, and for Nero to be receptive to his tutor's interests and beliefs.<sup>112</sup> These aspects of Nero's life would also furnish Seneca with a domain for signals that could be reliably detected by Nero, since these would be areas or topics appreciable by both.<sup>113</sup> Nothing, however, can be weighed from Nero's perspective: there is no way to tell what issues he would have prioritized.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, Seneca's strengths in Nero's eyes would lie in the differ-

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<sup>109</sup> Trust being most basically a product of behavior that shows (a) the competence to perform according to expectation (B. Nooteboom 2002), and (b) the interest in maintaining a relationship (R.J.J. Wielers 1997; F.E. Six 2005).

<sup>110</sup> H. Garfinkel 1967, 35: "a society's members know the moral order as perceivedly normal courses of action."

<sup>111</sup> Especially given the types of actions (many normative) that signal trust and trustworthiness: R.M. Kramer 1999; M. Bacharach & D. Gambetta 2001, 148–84; R. Hardin 2002; F.E. Six & A. Sorge 2008.

<sup>112</sup> This kind of relatability can lead people to reciprocate trust even when it is decidedly not to their advantage: J. Berg *et al.* 1995; J. Cox 2004.

<sup>113</sup> Notable because successful signaling can help stabilize reciprocal cooperation in a relationship: R. Nesse 2007; P. Barclay 2011.

<sup>114</sup> Importance *qua* predominance might still be plotted according to a statistical conceptualization of norms: T. Geiger 1962; M. Sherif 1967.

ence between what Nero could achieve on his own compared to what they could accomplish together.<sup>115</sup> That grants some level of personal importance to areas of commonality between the two.

Along these lines, Nero's home life both during and before his tutorials with Seneca would be an aspect to explore, as it would certainly affect his impression of Seneca. One means to gauge Seneca's stature in Nero's personal life would be his ability to facilitate or enable Nero's adherence to elite norms and fulfillment of the ruling class' goals. A goals-oriented approach would illustrate potential sources of Seneca's influence without prejudging any importance to Nero. That, however, is only half of what is revealed. Aside from how Nero can positively affect his sociocultural welfare through Seneca, the same information also illuminates areas of Nero's life that could have been particularly apt for Seneca to give advice on. Again, these would be areas open to signaling from Seneca, but they would be particularly effective targets because Seneca can both signal their importance and assist Nero in pursuing them.

Thus far there has been little differentiation between how Nero would make decisions and how Seneca would go about giving advice to Nero. Is there an analytical need for such a distinction? In this dissertation, not particularly: Nero and Seneca were part of the same social system that defined their thinking. Decision-making can be seen as an interconnected process that, from a person-to-person perspective, taps into the macro side of the societal latticework. Decisions are conceived within a mind, and thus shaped by personal traits, but the parameters of the mind—what it can conceive, and what within that area is possible—are shaped by the society in which it was formed. Advice is much the same. It, too, is a product informed by interpersonal comparisons because it operates within the additional boundary of what the advisor thinks is possible for another person.

If decision-making and advice giving operate similarly here, then the same question can be asked of both processes. How can decisions be organized on a scale

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<sup>115</sup> Since cooperation can be analyzed or understood as a function of perceived outcome-probability: P. Dasgupta 1988; D. Gambetta 1988; R. Gulati 1995.

of benefit?<sup>116</sup> Most pertinent to the dissertation is the part of that question which regards the ability of humans to make interpersonal comparisons of utility.<sup>117</sup> The principal difficulty with scrutinizing psychological satisfaction (subjective utility) is that the scrutinizer remains at least one degree away from the fundamental mechanism of decision-making.<sup>118</sup> The mental functions of other people are not readily accessible—humans lack telepathy.<sup>119</sup> So what enables someone to offer ‘better’ advice?

It takes certain types of knowledge to enhance the intuition required to offer good advice. Present welfare and other personal insights, for example, would facilitate Seneca in gauging how Nero might feel about his proposed action *S*.<sup>120</sup> If decision-maker Nero is careful, he will also assess the degree of personal desirability or altruism of action *S* (its subjective utility) with respect to Seneca’s consistent or probable preferences. Especially when decision-making circumstances are distinguished by the interconnection and mutual dependence of two or more agents (strategic situations), a higher understanding of others’ personal characteristics, social profile, and cultural interests lowers the margin of error in assumptions of what their preferences may be.<sup>121</sup> Commonalities and crossovers in interest and experience with Nero thus come to Seneca’s advantage as an advisor and Nero’s own advantage as an informed decision-maker. In other words: the better two people are acquainted, the more predictable they become to each other.

Although that is somewhat obvious, the important point is that this principle holds true with either private knowledge about another person, or insight into what is taken for granted (viz. cognitive values) and the cultural normativity that regulate their social order. The latter is significant because it affords recourse against the poverty of information on Nero as a person and his individual preferences. It allows the historian to see his relationship with Seneca as dependent on their environment because it recognizes that the environment was not subject to their relationship. Personal preferences do not change the *status quo*. Nero would therefore take note of such

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<sup>116</sup> On these difficulties, and practical (not idealized) solutions: P.J. Hammond 1991.

<sup>117</sup> An example of which from Plutarch: καὶ Παρμενίωνος εἰπόντος “ἐγὼ μὲν εἰ Ἀλέξανδρος ἦμην, ἔλαβον ἂν ταῦτα,” “κἀγὼ νῆ Δία” εἶπεν ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος, “εἰ Παρμενίων” (*Alex.* 29.8).

<sup>118</sup> J.M. Buchanan & G. Tullock 1965, 9.

<sup>119</sup> On this inherent difficulty: R.B. Brandt 1979, 88–109. And generally: A. Sen 1987.

<sup>120</sup> J.C. Harsanyi 1962.

<sup>121</sup> J.C. Harsanyi 1955, 317–21; 1975a, 331 n. 9; 1975b, 600 f.

things as Seneca's oratorical reputation due to the importance of public speaking to his social class. His own personal disinterest in oratory cannot void or exclude this aspect of Seneca in their relationship: the aristocratic culture at Rome, to which Nero belonged, valued oratory regardless of Nero's opinions. Life in mid first century Rome imposed its own constraints on how Nero viewed Seneca.

At this point some might aver that Nero was a maverick, a nonconformist, and an emperor to boot—someone to whom the standard rules do not apply. How can he be gauged according to a normal rubric? Some of this is true; and the question is valid. Yet culture is not a wholly subjective experience. It acts as an organizational structure with its own internal unity, and so exerts a paradigmatic effect on behavior and belief.<sup>122</sup> Such things as etiquette and personal virtues do indeed find value in a degree of subjectivity, but their very notion contributes to the dependence of an individual's identity to his society.<sup>123</sup> Neither etiquette nor social virtues are culture itself. Each is a byproduct representative of a culture, much in the same way as the institutions of society, social structure, and personal codes of behavior are. It is within these cultural epiphenomena that the subjective experience of an individual is contained.<sup>124</sup> Thus the lack of knowledge about Nero's personal preferences does not spell a dead end for the inquiry. Information about his experience exists in what is known about his environment. Naturally it is recognized that engagement in the same culture or the mutual participation in a single cultural identity does not cause people to agree on the particulars. But it does lead them to conceive of and understand how the world operates in a similar manner.<sup>125</sup>

The relationship between Seneca and Nero can therefore be conceived as a combination of both the actual capacity in which the two engaged, and the forces of sociocultural expectation placed on Nero, his family, and his class. Consequently, it matters that Seneca taught Nero the valued skill of rhetoric, as does the curriculum in which it was taught. It matters that Seneca had the authority of a teacher with Nero, and it matters that Seneca did so while an active member of the Senate. Whether or

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<sup>122</sup> B.M. Berger 1995; P. Chabal & J.-P. Daloz 2006.

<sup>123</sup> As first set forth by E. Durkheim 1893: that the rational human is a creation of social relations is the very heart of sociology. Compare the point from K. Löwith 1991, 10.

<sup>124</sup> See further: M.E. Spiro 1984.

<sup>125</sup> Thus M.J. Aronoff 2001, 11640; M.I. Lichbach 2003, 73–98; E.H. Schein 2010.

not Nero valued certain aspects of Seneca as much as any other given Roman, he had to recognize Seneca's culturally sanctioned value—what 'everyone' thought about Seneca's merits and virtues; and what he, Nero, 'should' think and value.<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, from Seneca's vantage, similar points of commonality and personal intersections facilitate insight into Nero's value judgments, which enables him to offer advice that is 'better' (with a higher utility function) for his pupil.<sup>127</sup> Their relationship is an interaction no less than it is an environment where things—emotions, thoughts, further interactions—come into being. Knowledge of what variables existed in that environment pose to illuminate Seneca's options and actions under Nero.

The premise of Part I can be restated thus, and briefly. First, to approach the question of Seneca's influence with Nero and its nature, an exposition of their pre-accession relationship is necessary. Given, however, the limited amount of data available for this period (and generally for Nero himself), ideas from social choice theory have influenced how the relationship between Seneca and Nero will be approached and scrutinized. Social choice expands the remit of what information is relevant to the assessment of interpersonal interactions and relations, and offers to structure the Seneca-Nero relationship on grounds that are both empirically defensible and exist independently of the Tacitean monopoly on the period. The framework offers to compensate for the lack of personal information known about Nero with the more abundant knowledge about Roman cultural normativity and the mores regulating the social order. That, in turn, allows the Seneca-Nero relationship to be assessed both in terms of how they are known to have interacted, and the sociocultural forces acting on their individual dynamic. These details will help to narrow down the topics or values concerning which Seneca might send viable signals.

Briefly now a note on the structure. Part I is tripartite. Chapter I expounds the childhood experience and home life of Nero up to 49 in order to contextualize Seneca's introduction. What factors might single out Seneca in a favorable light? Chapter II concerns developmental issues in Nero's life and education. What can be said about the normativity of Nero's childhood? Moving from domesticity, education comes to

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<sup>126</sup> On 'ought' and other imperatives: R.M. Hare 1952, 163–79.

<sup>127</sup> J.C. Harsanyi 1977, 48–86 (esp. 57–60).

the fore with Seneca's influence as a speechwriter. What is to be made of Nero's dependency on Seneca for so basic and integral a skill? Chapter III continues the topic of education. It covers the imperial tutors, the formulation of the curriculum, and the implications for Nero's educational regimen as a whole. Two questions prevail: where does Nero's educational experience find common ground with Seneca's knowledge base? and did the curriculum enhance or mar Seneca's usefulness and empathy? Of further interest is the mentality and values suggested by Nero's secondary education in relation to Seneca.

The cumulative result of these three chapters should present Nero differently, uncovering things about him that had yet to be unearthed, and thereby begin to reveal the contours of his friendly relationship with Seneca. Nero did not have to trust or treat his tutor with anything more than the common civility required of their lessons, and yet he did.<sup>128</sup> Seneca had no responsibility to Nero beyond the educational service he originally served, and yet he remained engaged with the young prince well beyond the tutorial days. Part I endeavors to find those factors which may have contributed to their fruitful relationship.

As for the sources of information, most all are already known to scholars and used in various proportions. Suetonius needs no introduction, nor Tacitus. But the focus of preexisting scholarship differs greatly from the present, and therefore it has generally skimmed over the passages relevant to Nero's upbringing. Little has been written about the childhood of Nero: even Miriam Griffin's biography of Nero presents his pre-accession life in an annalistic recapitulation rather than anything investigative.<sup>129</sup> Perhaps this is due to interest, although additional personal details seem highly pertinent in a biography. Yet it might have to do with the *Suda*, which has been seemingly ignored despite being a reservoir of information highly relevant to the early education of the young prince—handled in Chapter III.<sup>130</sup> There is also little scholarly interest in the stylistics of Nero's surviving speeches or in the practical side of Tacitus'

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<sup>128</sup> Distinguish between reliability and trustworthiness: A.C. Baier 1986; R. Holton 1994.

<sup>129</sup> 1984, 18–33. E.J. Champlin 2003b only deals with the emperor, not the noble or prince.

<sup>130</sup> It has been recognized that Alexander of Aegae and Chaeremon were Nero's tutors, but it does not appear that anyone has tried to explore the significance of their presence, e.g. M.T. Griffin 1976, 64 n.10; 1984, 246 n. 21; A.A. Barrett 1996, 106.

charge of *aliena facundia*, as relevant to Chapter II. Nevertheless, topics so tangential to the scholarly vogue do not entail any dearth of raw data to utilize.

## I. THE PERIOD OF SILENCE

If what happened is to be known, both sides need to be heard as evenly as possible. If a man is to be understood, both his detractors and proponents must be given an ear.<sup>131</sup> For people change, particularly after they have died. These rules hold true for Nero as with anyone else. Neronian history, however, lacks primary sources both extant and unprejudiced against the Emperor; and it is even hard to come by hints as to Romans who published non-negative opinions. Almost all material recorded about Nero originates in or derives from works biased against him.<sup>132</sup>

An active sense of hatred and shame lingered at Rome for decades after Nero's deposition and suicide. The elder Pliny wrote with disapprobation in *Naturalis Historia* when appropriate;<sup>133</sup> and the genre of history, which he ventured into with *A fine Aufidi Bassi* and *De vita Pomponii Secundi*, would likely have offered him more opportunities for censure. The pseudo-Senecan *Octavia* may have been written as soon as the year 68.<sup>134</sup> Fabius Rusticus, eloquent protégé of Seneca, had a personal cause to rail against Nero, though it is uncertain whether he wrote history or a biography of his mentor.<sup>135</sup> Arulenus Rusticus wrote a work on one of Nero's victims, Thrasea Paetus, whose memory persisted well after his death.<sup>136</sup> Gaius Fannius, a relative to Thrasea by marriage, composed a work on the casualties of the Neronian principate.<sup>137</sup> Flavian-era historians were united in their moral consensus, but authorial hostility was commoner than narrative consistency—so much so that Josephus felt compelled to alert future readers to the strong partisanship that overwhelmed most contemporary accounts.<sup>138</sup> Time has silenced these voices in their own right, obscuring Nero's historical tradition with a dense foliage of monotonous grimness. Even so, the mysterious

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<sup>131</sup> cf. Sen. *Med.* 199 f.: “qui statuit aliquid parte inaudita altera, | aequum licet statuerit, haud aequum fuit.”

<sup>132</sup> For the issue across the various ancient sources: J. Elsner & J. Masters 1994; O. Devillers 2009.

<sup>133</sup> VII.45 f. (enemy of mankind); XVI.236 (even bad for the trees in Rome); XXII.92 (poison to the world).

<sup>134</sup> Thus F. Giancotti 1954a, 23; T.D. Barnes 1982.

<sup>135</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.20.2 (Fabius and Seneca); XIV.2.2 (Fabius on Nero); *Ag.* 10.3, Quint. *Inst.* X.1.104 (eloquence).

<sup>136</sup> Rusticus' work: Tac. *Ag.* 2.1; Suet. *Dom.* 10.3; Dio LXVII.13.2. Remembered by Marcus: M. Ant. I.14.2.

<sup>137</sup> Plin. *Ep.* V.5, cf. I.17 (statue to L. Torquatus in Forum). Perhaps a cause for Tacitus' remarks at *Ann.* XVI.16.1.

<sup>138</sup> *Ag.* XX.154–6. Tacitus may well have written that he was going to be impartial (*Ann.* I.1.2), but the lens of truth cannot read what is not recorded—and omission is the easiest way to bias an account.

inhabitants stirring within can be heard, indistinguishable yet clear, echoing through Suetonius Tranquillus. Unsurprisingly, then, Suetonius' *Vita Neronis* includes little content that is positive. His Nero was born posthumously.

Chapter I begins with a consideration of Suetonius. As the source for the majority of Nero's personal details, his method and tendencies require scrutiny to identify bias and bypass implausibility. His work on the twelve Caesars falls somewhere between history and biography, and is all the less protected from the pitfalls of the two genres.<sup>139</sup> Both historian and biographer are susceptible to exaggeration on private grounds; professional aspirations and other hopes of advancement make flattery a notorious expedient; and neither concealment nor invention to evade a personal lack of perceptiveness is unbelievable. The first section of this chapter accordingly addresses issues of bias and equity in Suetonius. Toward this end an effort is made to identify his authorial preferences in treating Nero, for the *Lives* lack a preliminary exposition from the author.<sup>140</sup>

Following the discussion of areas most susceptible to rumor and fantasy, the aim is to outline the areas most susceptible to Seneca's personal agency. What, if anything, would have been personally exceptional about Seneca given Nero's upbringing? The second and third sections approach this question through scrutiny of Nero's childhood and the people involved therein as compared to Seneca and the tutorial environment at the Palace. How did Seneca look against the domestic backdrop? Section two therefore examines the domestics, pedagogues, and servantry in Nero's life.

There is, however, a distinct difficulty in the lack of information about Nero's childhood environment and personal situation during the 40s. That time is inseparable from the formation of his relationship with Seneca, as Agrippina only stipulated their connection as teacher and student—though Tacitus suggests more.<sup>141</sup> Yet Agrippina herself offers a possible recourse. She excelled in activity during this span; and given Nero's state of dependence on her, her social standing offers insight into the circumstances of his rearing. Did this progression of events give Nero any reason to be drawn toward Seneca as social figure? And if so, what might this allow Seneca to

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<sup>139</sup> On generic distinction: V. Valcárcel Martínez 2009; T. Hägg 2012, 67 f.

<sup>140</sup> On authorial preference versus intention: B. Tatar 1998.

<sup>141</sup> *Ann.* XII.8.2: "utque Domitii pueritia tali magistro adolesceret et consiliis eiusdem ad spem dominationis uterentur."

signal about himself? The household ecology, it is conceded, cannot produce evidence of Nero's personal disposition or emotional bearing. But what is available nonetheless manages to reveal a state of affairs that accommodates Seneca's positive, extra-pedagogical valence.

So unfolds the outline, and the questions to be wrapped up. The focus now turns to Suetonius and his Nero.

### 1. Suetonian opinions

The received idea of a person finds different corollaries in history and biography. To make an over-generalization: historians develop a narrative that favors details of participants and individual deeds, which are then used to recount an event formative of a larger story; biographers seek to make sense of the personal makeup of a subject, to analyze and understand his conduct across a set of events.<sup>142</sup> With Suetonius' mixed approach to his subjects, a pertinent question is the degree to which intuitive modes of thought are antithetic to scientific ones. Should fact-based reporting exclude aesthetic considerations or one's own opinions? Suetonius tacitly assents.<sup>143</sup> He refrains from forthright personal comments, omits reminders of disinterest, and delivers details impartially. All contribute to the clarity (or incapacity) of his style;<sup>144</sup> and to some, that affirms his neutrality.<sup>145</sup> But agendas need not be explicit, nor biases self-recognized.

Two impressions of Suetonius emerge. The younger Pliny exalts him to Emperor Trajan as "probissimum honestissimum eruditissimum virum," admiring his *mores* and *studia*.<sup>146</sup> Pliny's friend Suetonius is a conscientious scholar, one whose diligence retards his rate of publication—not a man who would fabricate for dramatic effect.<sup>147</sup> And although superlatives might be in order when commending one's friend to the Emperor, the points chosen for commendation are significant, for Suetonius is

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<sup>142</sup> cf. A. Dihle 1956, 94: "Dieses Ziel der sog. peripatetischen Geschichtsschreibung berührt sich mit dem des Biographen, der das Wesen Menschen mit Hilfe der *πάθη* und *πράξεις* darstellen will...Biographen primär um die *ἦθη* des Helden geht."

<sup>143</sup> As one ancient author recognized: SHA *Prob.* 2.6 f.

<sup>144</sup> cf. C. Damon 2014 on his doctoring of and tendency to use others' use words.

<sup>145</sup> J. Ektor 1980, 326; A. Wallace-Hadrill 1983, 19; J. Gascou 1984, 677 f.

<sup>146</sup> *Ep.* X.94.

<sup>147</sup> *Ep.* V.10.2: "sum et ipse in edendo haesitator; tu tamen meam quoque cunctationem tarditatemque vicisti." On Pliny's patronage letters: E.W. Leach 2014

patently less than impartial. He lets the pall of Nero's enormities overshadow all other aspects of his reign. The shifting tenor of the principate is disregarded;<sup>148</sup> contemporary prophecies of a coming Golden Age, unmentioned;<sup>149</sup> any hope Nero inspired, expunged. Suetonius focuses on the heinous Emperor of the 60s, and almost exclusively accepts the more risqué, sensational, and condemnatory stories about Nero.<sup>150</sup> Coincidentally, the impropriety of this practice is only noticeable through another friend of Pliny, namely Tacitus. The biographer and historian never refer to each other in their extant writings, leading some to deny Suetonius' use of Tacitean material.<sup>151</sup> Nor does Pliny hint at an acquaintance. They do, however, share a high incidence of topical overlap, which yields the evidence of Suetonius' preference for the grotesque and rumor-oriented side of Neronian history.<sup>152</sup>

Although it was common during most of the past century to deride Suetonius for not being Tacitus and to dismiss his accounts as pulp or tabloid biography,<sup>153</sup> it is more productive for this investigation to follow those scholars who take Suetonius' decisions seriously and build on their observations.<sup>154</sup> Thus, one may ask in earnest: why do the *Lives* include hearsay and information redolent of popular rumor? While some have questioned Suetonius' presumed access to imperial records,<sup>155</sup> nothing suggests that he had any less research material than Tacitus. The historian, for instance, suggests Nero's poems were the products of others, whereas the biographer dissents with claims to have seen the Emperor's manuscripts. Suetonius also includes specific details omitted by Tacitus, such as the time (twelve days) between Octavia's death and

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<sup>148</sup> As Suetonius does for others when relevant, e.g. *Cal.* 13; *Tit.* 6.2.

<sup>149</sup> *CIL* X, 1401 (56 AD); *Sen. Apoc.* 4.1, cf. *Ep.* 90; *Calp. Ecl.* 1.42 ff., 4.5 f., 82 ff.; *Luc.* 1.33–8; *Dio* LXI.4.1.

<sup>150</sup> For Suetonius' comparative salacity: T.E. Duff 1999, 94–7.

<sup>151</sup> Thus T. Power 2014.

<sup>152</sup> Catalog 1. The erotica may derive from contemporary invective, cf. R. Verdière 1975a; W.A. Krenkel 1980; C. Vout 2007, 136–66

<sup>153</sup> R. Syme 1958, 463 n. 5: "Reid states that Suetonius 'has a feeling for great imperial interests such as we can rarely trace in his more famous contemporary' (o.c. 194). That scholar cannot have been reading the *Nero*... Much of the matter is trivial, and the author is vague and careless about points of historical detail." R.M. Ogilvie 1980, 264: "Suetonius is compiling a series of portraits based upon anecdote, scandal and fact, which are meant to diver, amuse and, on occasion, shock."

<sup>154</sup> A trend that began in earnest with B. Baldwin 1983 and A. Wallace-Hadrill 1983.

<sup>155</sup> e.g. B. Baldwin 1983; L. de Coninck 1983.

Nero's marriage to Poppaea.<sup>156</sup> The fault Suetonius nonetheless manifests more obviously than Tacitus is that of one-sidedness and omission—not malice or disinformation, but rather squaring his sources with a consilient idea about Nero. A notable omission in this vein is Nero's privileged education as a child.

Suetonius dispenses with a rationalized consideration of the circumstances and utility of his subjects' actions: he never claims to know why Nero did anything. Caution, it may be granted, is not a trait to revile in a historiographer. Yet silence is not always innocent. The omission of situational details renders Suetonius' record deaf to the cadence of his subject's strengths, faults, and quality of life across time. There is no real sense of the passage of time or the changes that comes with it. But why gloss over Nero's boyhood? His life before reaching majority constituted the greater half of his time alive; and popular views on nature and nurture acceded great importance to child-rearing and education for the development of character.<sup>157</sup> Some suggest that Suetonius' *Lives* focuses on the Roman emperorship, and therefore it does not need to dwell on emperors' lives before accession.<sup>158</sup> That, however, fails to explain why Suetonius regularly includes a substantial pre-accession background when possible. Nor does it change that Nero's prepubescence and youth were highly topical to his development as a person and the emperor he would become. Nevertheless, Suetonius abridges Nero's education as "liberalis disciplinas omnis fere" (52)—a peculiar choice, for Suetonius otherwise shows himself to be completely open to mainstream views and popular sentiments regarding childhood and rearing.

Cultural tropes appear from the outset. The first emerges when Suetonius takes a step into the first person—"pluris e familia cognosci referre arbitror, quo facilius appareat ita degenerasse a suorum virtutibus Nero, ut tamen vitia cuiusque quasi tradita et ingenita rettulerit" (1.2). The idea is familiar. Personal traits descended through bloodlines and could be endemic to a community. Tiberius, for example, displayed the "insita Claudiae familiae superbia."<sup>159</sup> Equally conventional is the concept

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<sup>156</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIV.16.1; Suet. *Nero* 52 (poems), 35.3 (marriage). Cf. 10.2 (Jupiter Capitolinus), 50 (family tomb).

<sup>157</sup> Catalog 11. For a modern perspective: G. Watson 1990.

<sup>158</sup> K.R. Bradley 1991, 3729. Compare the opinion of J.-M. Hulls 2014, 193: "Instead of the insight into a Cartesian ego...Suetonius focuses on external manifestations of character."

<sup>159</sup> Tac. *Ann.* I.4.3 (Tiberius) Cf. Suet. *Nero* 7.1; Σ Juv. 5.109.

of decline in successive generations, which had existed since Hesiod wrote of the five ages of mankind;<sup>160</sup> and authors of silver Latin literature also took to pessimism, producing no shortage of complaints about degradation in one form or another.<sup>161</sup> But opening the *Vita* with such fatalistic overtones is particularly fitting from a literary standpoint. It primes the reader to suspect that there is something bad lurking underneath the good, and something even worse concealed underneath the bad.

Why the quality of the Ahenobarbi deteriorated goes unexplained. As said, Suetonius does not like to speculate. Still, as genealogy was commonly referenced in ancient character assessments, it is telling the Suetonius should present Nero's patri-lineage in a way that enables the reader to think that the Ahenobarbi descended into dissipation as they gained more prominence—that they had an inverse relationship between power and personal rectitude. Thus the “os ferreum, cor plumbeum” of the thrice-great grandfather (*cos.* 96 BC) correspond to *immanitas* and *languor*;<sup>162</sup> the great-great-grandfather (*cos.* 54 BC) was *trux* and *inconstans*; the great-grandfather (*cos.* 32 BC), benefitting from the circulation of complimentary literature,<sup>163</sup> is deemed the best of them all, though not explicitly for his activity in the final wars of the Republic, and his single *infamia* is attributed to the Triumvir M. Antonius (Nero's great-great-grandfather); the grandfather (*cos.* 16 BC), as if making up for his own father's comparative integrity, was *immitis*, *adrogans*, and *profusus*; the father (*cos.* 32 AD) was a paragon of *crudelitas*, *adrogantia*, and (implied in his edema) *avaritia*.<sup>164</sup> The probity of the Ahenobarbi diminished with each passing generation.<sup>165</sup> Whence a parallel appears. Within the biography Nero is both the moral nadir and last member of his family: within the *Lives* his reign represents the same for the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Given that Suetonius' biography taps into the established idea and literary topos of decline on two levels, he may well have skimmed over Nero's childhood because the ancient

<sup>160</sup> *Op.* 106–201, cf. *Daniel* 2:31–49. Xenophanes (D-K 2 I B 18) is arguably the earliest to suggest progress: J.H. Leshner 1991; A. Tulin 1993. Book V of Lucretius is the earliest surviving example in Latin: G. Campbell 2003; cf. J.P. Borle 1962.

<sup>161</sup> cf. B. Boissier 1904, 131: “mais le pessimisme n'est pas toujours un danger pour un historien. S'il peut quelquefois l'égarer, il peut aussi le servir.”

<sup>162</sup> Catalog 5.

<sup>163</sup> viz. *Domitius* and *Cato, praetextae* by Curatius Maternus. See further: H.I. Flower 1995.

<sup>164</sup> Catalog 6.

<sup>165</sup> cf. Plut. *Mor.* 147C: Περίανδρος δ' ἔοικεν ὥσπερ ἐν νοσήματι πατρώῳ τῇ τυραννίδι κατελημμένος οὐ φάυλως ἐξαναφέρειν, χρώμενος ὁμιλίαις ὑγιειναῖς ἄχρι γε νῦν καὶ συνουσίας ἀνδρῶν νοῦν ἐπαγόμενος. The same idea is evoked in the *quinquennium Neonis*.

reader would have had the impression that Nero never really stood a chance of turning out well.

This impression is reinforced elsewhere. Suetonius draws on the widespread adage ‘what you reap is what you sow’ with the opportune placement of Domitius’ comment that nothing “ex se et Agrippina nisi detestabile et malo publico nasci potuisse.”<sup>166</sup> He is also mindful of developmental psychology when writing of Nero’s vices that “sensim quidem primo et occulte et velut iuvenili errore exercuit, sed ut tunc quoque dubium nemini foret naturae illa vitia, non aetatis esse.”<sup>167</sup> And if the point were not clear enough, physiognomy reinforces the rot at Nero’s core.

Although scholars are divided on how exactly to interpret Suetonius’ physical descriptions, it is widely agreed that his readers were indeed supposed to understand that there was a relationship between appearance and character.<sup>168</sup> Suetonius records that Nero had an average looking face, a thick neck, spindly legs, a protruding gut, powerful body odor, and was covered in moles.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, the description almost becomes laugh-worthy when Suetonius ends on the counterintuitive note that Nero took great care of his hair. But aside from the physically unappealing impression yielded by this description, Nero’s moles evoke the spots of a leopard (a spiteful, immoral, treacherous, and cowardly animal);<sup>170</sup> and it is also possible to see Suetonius implying that Nero was slow-witted—“statura fuit prope iusta...ventre proiecto.”<sup>171</sup> Such an interpretation builds on the arguments of Jean Couissin and Elizabeth Evans, who both argue that the surviving literature on physiognomy can be used to decode Suetonius’ descriptions.<sup>172</sup> This is not, however, to ignore Jacques Gascou’s idea that the physiognomic texts are too open ended for modern readers to apply them to

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<sup>166</sup> *Nero* 6.1, cf. Dio LXI.2.3. Catalog 12.

<sup>167</sup> *Nero* 26.1. Childhood, youth, maturity, and seniority were held as distinct in physiology and appetites; and the process of transition from one to the next differed at each stage. See Catalog 10.

<sup>168</sup> For a review: D. Rohrbacher 2010, 94–103. Note his conclusion: “Suetonius chose to engage with this debate [i.e. between physical appearance and character] in a way appropriate for a scholar whose philosophy was eclectic, not rigid. The varied elements of his descriptions reflect an awareness of the different schools and approaches to physiognomy while allowing (or forcing) the readers to apply their personal hermeneutic to their interpretation” (pg. 112).

<sup>169</sup> *Nero* 51: “statura fuit prope iusta, corpore maculoso et fetido, subflavo capillo, vultu pulchro magis quam venusto, oculis caesis et hebetioribus, cervice obesa, ventre proiecto, gracillimis cruribus...”

<sup>170</sup> For the ancient sources on which: S. Swain 2007, 189. I also believe that a previous scholar noted the moles-leopard connection, though I cannot remember who or whence.

<sup>171</sup> *Nero* 51; cf. W.J. Tatum 2014, 167. Catalog 7.

<sup>172</sup> J. Couissin 1953; E.C. Evans 1969. More recently: T.S. Barton 1994; F. Stok 1995.

Suetonius accurately, or in the way Suetonius intended—for they certainly are.<sup>173</sup> Still, it seems worth noting that a negative comment is readily available should his readers chose to see it.

Suetonius thus fails to exhibit any significant distance from conventional wisdom. It is no less uncertain, however, whether he believed that Nero was a lost cause from the outset. His contemporaries Plutarch and Tacitus adhered to the view that nature was not the greatest determinant for personality.<sup>174</sup> Hence the *Parallel Lives* details childhood experiences and education where possible.<sup>175</sup> In contrast, the omission of Nero's outstanding education enhances the impression of inevitability. The supple mind of a young boy could be readily shaped, warped, or perverted; but for someone inherently disposed toward wickedness, his immorality would only need to be enabled or activated. Given, then, Suetonius' general agreement with popular wisdom, it stands to reason that Nero should have been corrupted before his encounter with Seneca and unlimited power. This should inspire a certain level skepticism when analyzing his account of Nero's early life, which is the next focus of the chapter now that it has accounted for Suetonius' bias.

## 2. *Custodians and caretakers*

Born at Antium on 15 December 37 AD, Nero was the only child of Cn. Domitius Ahenobarbus (*ord.* 32) and the younger Agrippina. Nero's paternal grandmother, the elder Antonia, was the sister of his maternal great-grandmother, the younger Antonia—meaning that Nero was connected to the blood (in two senses) of Antonius the Triumvir.<sup>176</sup> His maternal great-grandmother was Augustus' daughter Julia, the paternal being Augustus' sister Octavia; and at the time of his birth, Nero was the only dynastic member able to vaunt a connection to the Julian bloodline from both Augustus and Octavia.<sup>177</sup> He was also the last.

The time of Nero's conception coincides with the accession of Agrippina's brother to Princeps. The pregnancy appears planned. She and Domitius had been

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<sup>173</sup> J. Gasco 1984, 598–606.

<sup>174</sup> C. Gill 1983; 2006, 412–21; T.E. Duff 2008.

<sup>175</sup> See further: C.B.R. Pelling 1988; K.R. Bradley 1999.

<sup>176</sup> cf. Plut. *Ant.* 4.4; Dio LXI.5.4 (a similar example of liberality).

<sup>177</sup> On male legitimacy through women: M. Corbier 1995.

married for near a decade by that point, whatever the geniality of their relationship; and now the children of Germanicus were free of an emperor memorably hostile to their mother. The couple had reason to believe the future would hold prosperity. They were incorrect: Nero's birth preceded a singularly unhappy interval for the new family. In 39 the Emperor Gaius banished Agrippina for involvement with M. Aemilius Lepidus' conspiracy; Domitius died at his villa in Pyrgi sometime between October 39 and June 40; and Gaius confiscated the estate of his deceased brother-in-law.<sup>178</sup> Agrippina returned to Rome after the assassination of her brother on 22 January 41. There she would collect her son, wealth, and several husbands.

Suetonius' description of this period embraces the abovementioned, but strays from a consecutive order of events as Paul Gallivan has noted.<sup>179</sup> Although the episodes occurred within a short enough timespan that a strict chronology might be overlooked, their presentation has a distinct effect on the reader. Suetonius' particular order of episodes impresses a swift oscillation between extremes of fortune on Nero's prepubescence. Domitius dies; their property is confiscated; Agrippina is banished; Nero lives in poverty; Claudius restores Nero's inheritance; Nero is enriched by his stepfather Passienus Crispus; Agrippina is recalled and additional escalation (6.3 f.). The rags-to-riches presentation evokes a number of commonplace warnings on the rapid accrual of wealth.

Of worldly forces, money was accorded a near insuperable power over man. Sententious warnings suggest that one's pockets became a personally definitive quality—*χρήματα, χρηματ' ἄνηρ*.<sup>180</sup> Suetonius has already elucidated the genetic (if the term is permitted) predisposition of the Ahenobarbi towards *avaritia*; and whereas Tacitus emphasizes Nero's cowardice and fear, the biographer notably presents him as obsessed with exercising the power of money.<sup>181</sup> Economic maladies had undeniably savaged the Neronian principate. The boundary between the imperial *fiscus* and state finances became so perforated that—whatever the reality of their separation—

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<sup>178</sup> Conspiracy: *CFA* 13; Suet. *Cal.* 24.3; Dio LIX.22.8. Domitius in the Arval Brethren: *CFA* 13 (alive); 14 (dead).

<sup>179</sup> P.A. Gallivan 1974a. Also on the chronology of the period: K.R. Bradley 1978; G.V. Sumner 1981, 379

<sup>180</sup> *Pi. I.* 2.11. See further Catalog 13.

<sup>181</sup> Suet. *Nero* 30–2; 44.2. See further: G. Bodei Giglioli 1974, 164–70. Such expenditures were seldom mentioned, e.g. Sen. *Dial.* XII.10.4; Plin. *NH* XXXV.70, XXXVII.20.

Nero had to invest HS 40–60 million in the *aerarium* per year to maintain at least some semblance of a divide.<sup>182</sup> But the Emperor’s sense of fiscal responsibility was no help either. Nero supposedly gave out HS 2.2 billion in gifts within a span short enough that Galba could still attempt to reclaim them. Nor can it be denied that Nero actively pursued and confiscated others’ wealth toward the end of his reign. He acquired wills and estates by force, despoiled temples in Rome, Italy, and Greece, and following the Great Fire he killed six *domini* whose holdings in Africa comprised half the province—only a treasure hunting expedition failed to return anything.<sup>183</sup> The importance of money in Nero’s life and principate is not an improper point of emphasis, but a valid theme can include dubious examples all the same. One such instance is Suetonius’ assertion that Nero was destitute or disadvantaged while in the care of his father’s sister.

With his mother in exile and his father dead, Nero transferred to the house of his aunt Lepida. Certain constraints obliged Lepida to take the child. Her sister Domitia had a combative history with their brother; and Julia Livilla, Agrippina’s last living sister, was consigned to exile in conjunction with the Lepidus affair.<sup>184</sup> The choice also had its merits: Lepida was a mother herself, having already raised two children.<sup>185</sup> Furthermore, Lepida had valuable investments and private assets at her disposal. She possessed land and scores of slaves in Calabria, a house in Fundi, an unknown number of holdings in Rome, and she had inherited a granary in Puteoli from her first husband, Messalla Barbatulus.<sup>186</sup> Nothing suggests the loss of such effects. For although Claudius arranged her marriage to Appius Junius Silanus (*ord.* 28) shortly into his reign, this seems less a means to indemnify her than engage a man whose mother came from the patrician Claudii—a man whose relatives on the other branch of the Junii Silani carried the blood of Augustus. But even if she were no longer

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<sup>182</sup> Gifts: Tac. *Hist.* I.20.1; Suet. *Gal.* 15.1. Treasury: Tac. *Ann.* XIII.31.1, XV.18.3; Dio LXI.5.5. For the development of the financial responsibilities of the *fiscus* and the increasing ambiguity between property belonging to the emperor and the state: P.A. Brunt 1966. F. Millar (1963 and 1964) offers a different interpretation, which emphasizes the role of the *fiscus* in the administration of imperial properties. M. Alpers 1995 more recently argues that the *fiscus* refers exclusive to the private property of the emperor.

<sup>183</sup> Estates and wills: Dio LXI.5.3–6; LXII.18.5; LXIII.11 f. Temples: D. Chr. XXXI.148; Tac. *Ann.* XV.45; Suet. 32.4; Paus. V.25.8, 26.3, IX.27.3, X.7.1, 19.2. Treasure debacle: Plin. *NH* XVIII.35; Tac. *Ann.* XVI.1–3. G. Chalon (1964, ll. 35–45) suggests agents provocateurs harassed the Alexandrian rich.

<sup>184</sup> Quint. *Inst.* VI.1.50 (sibling suing); Suet. *Cal.* 24.3, Dio LIX.22.6 (Julia Livilla).

<sup>185</sup> viz. Messalina and Faustus Sulla (*ord.* 52). Perhaps also a daughter, Fausta (*CIL* VI, 16470).

<sup>186</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XII.65.1 (Calabria); *AE* 1914, 219 (Fundi); 1973, 167; 1978, 139. (Puteoli).

in possession of these aforementioned goods, her sister and brother-in-law had considerable resources and no known dislike of Lepida. Domitia had copious wealth, property extending from Baiae to Ravenna, and gardens at Rome.<sup>187</sup> Hence a sense of wariness is justified when one reads that Nero “*paene inops atque egens apud amitam Lepidam nutritus est*” (6.3).

How should *inops* and *egens* be interpreted? Gaius’ confiscations had, to be sure, impoverished Nero—just not to any convincing effect. At three years of age Nero was too young to be independent, both legally and practically. Suetonius could be implying that Lepida skimmed on childcare, which might explain Nero’s willingness (beyond gratifying his mother) to testify against Lepida in 54. But this interpretation conflicts with information from Tacitus. His account fails to suggest that she ever disliked Nero or was withholding. Quite the opposite: Lepida’s treatment of Nero was reportedly liberal and easygoing.<sup>188</sup> Which account comes closer to the truth? Both authors could be correct if Tacitus’ statement merely refers to the period when Agrippina was Claudius’ wife and Nero held the prospects of empire. Yet that would not explain why Nero lived poorly under Lepida.

Although Suetonius was not immune from generalized, flimsy, false, or unsourced statements,<sup>189</sup> the want of truly contradictory evidence prohibits an outright claim that he fabricated Nero’s brief encounter with poverty. Two other interpretations might then be offered. First, Suetonius might have included *paene* because he questioned the believability of his own research: for as mentioned, there is no reason to believe that Lepida lacked personal wealth. Alternatively, *paene* could imply a relative degree of deprivation. That is to say, life with Lepida could have been such a downgrade that Nero might have considered it akin to poverty. But whatever the reality and extent of Nero’s precipitous run of pauperism, it becomes clear *inops* and *egens* are supposed to evoke an image of actual neediness. Those circumstances are needed to explain Nero’s supposed tutelage “*sub duobus paedagogis, saltatore atque tonsore*” (6.3).

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<sup>187</sup> Quint. *Inst.* VI.3.74; Tac. *Ann.* XIII.21.6, Dio LXI.17.2; SHA *Ant.* 5.1, *Aur.* 49.1.

<sup>188</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XII.64.3: “*enimvero certamen acerrimum, amita potius an mater apud Neronem praevaleret: nam Lepida blandimentis ac largitionibus iuvenilem animum devinciebat, tolerare imperitantem nequiebat.*”

<sup>189</sup> For examples: G.B. Townend 1959, 288–93.

Unnamed and soon forgotten, Nero's two pedagogues are plausible individuals for a woman of status and substance to own or employ.<sup>190</sup> They were not, however, appropriate companions for a young nobleman—or anyone with a chance of developing a moral compass. Their occupations connote an inherent insensitivity to tenets of Roman decorum. Dance was held to propagate base desires and open Romans to moral declivity; barbers endorsed vanity as hairstylists and gossipmongers; and both would compromise the ethical integrity expected of an aristocrat. With external influences on children perceived as they were, this pair might well arouse the hereditary tendencies ascribed to the Ahenobarbi.<sup>191</sup> But this may just as well be a literary trope. The idea that living in poverty or debt engenders something destructive in men is seen in the description of Catiline from Sallust and Cicero and in Plutarch's Sulla, who is furthermore was said to have grown up poor and *μετὰ μίμων καὶ γελωτοποιῶν διαιτᾶσθαι καὶ συνακολασταίνειν*.<sup>192</sup> Again, there is perhaps some validity to Suetonius' claim, but the truth of the matter was unlikely the first thing that the ancient reader would have thought of.

Overall, this story raises questions about the location of other known persons such as the *nutrices* Egloge and Alexandria.<sup>193</sup> Whose presence can be assumed? One certain omission is the *tutor* Asconius Labeo, honored by Nero with triumphal insignia at the outset of his reign.<sup>194</sup> In the absence of *patria potestas*, a *tutor* was bound to oversee both the property and general wellbeing of the *pupillus* until majority. A testator normally specified a warden to endow with *tutela impuberis*, but failing that, the urban praetor appointed the closest *agnatus* under the Lex Atilia.<sup>195</sup> Nero was the only son of his parents, as his father was, and so had no *agnati*—a pattern that continued backwards for generations in his family. A *tutor* must have come from outside the bloodline. Further, as Domitius died (likely from protracted illness) after acknowledging Nero as his son, it seems a matter of reason to assume he would have adjusted his will to

<sup>190</sup> cf. Ummidia Quadratilla (*FOS* 829). On whom: D.H. Sick 1999.

<sup>191</sup> See further Catalogs 14 and 16.

<sup>192</sup> Plut. *Sulla* 2.2. J.M.C. Morón 2000 argues that Plutarch taps into a literary trope, though it could just as easily have been part of Sulla's attempt to cultivate the image of a self-made man—there was M. Aemilius Scaurus' autobiography to use as a model. See further S. Müller 2009, esp. 200.

<sup>193</sup> Suet. *Nero* 50. Still required at his age: P. Garnsey 1991, 56–9.

<sup>194</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.10.1. Tacitus uses *tutor* only in the legal sense (*Dial.* 37.6; *Ann.* II.67.2, III.38.3).

<sup>195</sup> For a fuller account see, s.v. *tutor*: M. Kaser 1971; A. Borokowski & P.J. du Plessis 2015.

appoint a guardian of his own choice.<sup>196</sup> The choice would not have been easy. Early on the primary concern of *tutores* was the financial management of their ward's estate, but over time they became responsible for the moral development in addition to the physical and financial security of the child.<sup>197</sup> Given the indeterminate length of Agrippina's exile, this was someone that Domitius would have had great confidence and trust in. Who, then, was Asconius?

The Asconii hailed from Patavium, where the family was prominent in the local politics and religious officiation. Yet neither Asconius Labeo nor any of his relatives entered Roman political life. With what claims or credit did he come to Nero? His extraction presents a personal characteristic familiar to Nero's more notable associates—a localized sense of severity, *Patavinitas*. Patavines had a reputation for a stern and steely demeanor, far more in tune with the ways of older-school Romans. Thrasea Paetus, for instance, is noted for his willfulness, *firmitudo animi*, and active advocacy of action “*dignum fide constantiaque Romana*.”<sup>198</sup> Those engaged with the young Nero were none too dissimilar. Agrippina placed such straight-laced men as Burrus and Seneca in positions of importance with her son, and was resolute in her own maternal authority—“*truci ac minaci Agrippina quae filio dare imperium, tolerare imperitantem nequibat*.”<sup>199</sup> And one of Nero's pedagogues, Anicetus, was sober enough to execute a senior military commission. The prominence of a stringent if not unsmiling individual with Nero is therefore consistent with Nero's environment. Moreover, Agrippina could distance Asconius from Nero should he disappoint her standards—and such was not the case. Asconius' successful fulfillment of his duties to Nero as *tutor* might then suggest consonance with Agrippina's own disposition toward her son; and Nero's estimation of Asconius is not outwardly less than Agrippina's, for Asconius was still in his thoughts five years after the *tutela* had expired. It was with equal haste that Nero sought from the Senate a statue of Domitius and honors for Asconius.

Demographic austerity presents some rationale for the duration of Asconius' association with Nero. It does not source his ties to Domitius or Agrippina. No connection to either line of Nero's family is registered, though it has been suggested that

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<sup>196</sup> Suet. *Nero* 5.2. Compare on the recognition (*tollere*) B. D. Shaw 2001.

<sup>197</sup> J.A. Crook 1967, 113–24; B. Rawson 2003, 71–3.

<sup>198</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIV.49, XV.20.4; cf. Suet. *Nero* 37.1. For *Patavinitas* and Patavines: Catalog group D.

<sup>199</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XII.64.3. On the proper role of the Roman mother: S. Dixon 1988, esp. Chs. 5 and 7.

Asconius had influence with Agrippina.<sup>200</sup> On this question the weight of positive evidence falls back into the Republic, toward the Ahenobarbi. As a local landholding family the Asconii would have been an interest to aspiring magistrates of the *tribus Fabia*, which encompassed Patavium. The Asconii of Patavium were also related by marriage to one M. Valerius Celadus, whose relatives held status in Brixia—another town canvassed by the Fabian tribe.<sup>201</sup> An apposite era for vigorous recruitment of local families is the decades leading to the 50s BC, when the Domitii Ahenobarbi, Julii Caesares, and Metelli all produced consuls—each subsumed under the Fabian tribe. The Ahenobarbi thus had ample cause to establish a presence in Patavium, and a purpose that the ancestors of Nero’s *tutor* might have aided as *clientes*.<sup>202</sup>

Apart from Asconius, two other individuals had a strong relationship with Nero during his childhood. These were his pedagogues Beryllus and Anicetus. Primarily the pedagogue, not the parents, reinforced the earliest notions of propriety and decorum in a child during the Principate.<sup>203</sup> Tasked with the various responsibilities of childcare, this domestic servant acted as a chaperone, valet, and etiquette instructor, remaining attached until the child assumed the *toga virilis*. But these two pedagogues far surpassed the usual roles. Nero had a good relationship with his caretakers, kept them as friends, and disclosed his confidential plans to them. That they were the *sal-tator* and *tonsor* from Nero’s earlier childhood has been suggested; and the acquisition of Paris, Domitia’s *histrion*, fits that dynamic.<sup>204</sup> Yet it is incongruous with their later responsibilities. Each was appointed to an administrative opening of consequence—Beryllus to the *ab epistulis Graecis*, Anicetus to the fleet at Misenum.<sup>205</sup> And backgrounds aside, both literacy and organizational competence seem necessary to execute these stations with success. Neither is required of barbers or dancers.

Throughout the 40s the abovementioned individuals met the basic prerequisites to attend and mentor the child Nero. That changed when Agrippina became the imperial consort. It was not a matter of their competence or enterprise: circumstances eclipsed

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<sup>200</sup> M.T. Griffin 1976, 85 n. 2.

<sup>201</sup> *CIL* V, 2899; 4653.

<sup>202</sup> Whatever the link between *nobiles*, *clientes*, elections. Cf. P.A. Brunt 1988, 382–442; A. Wallace-Hadrill 1989; L.A. Burckhardt 1990, 80–4.

<sup>203</sup> A weak bond to children has been the norm for most of history: M. Segalen 1986, 159–95.

<sup>204</sup> P.A. Gallivan 1974b, 392.

<sup>205</sup> J. *A7* XX.183; Tac. *Ann.* XIV.3.3.

their relevance. The new environment at the Palace outclassed the domestic staff. They lacked the cultural stature and social experience to remain relevant outside Nero's personal needs, which disbarred them from being appropriate company to usher Nero in to high aristocratic, let alone imperial, life. None is demonstrably a man of politics, oratory, warfare, or the other aristocratic arts. Quite the contrary appears true. Asconius comes off as disinterested, having triumphal insignia bestowed instead of the further employment that was granted to the pedagogues (though perhaps he was of an age to retire); and despite the progression of his Patavine relatives into Roman politics, Asconii Labeones are absent from Rome. Agrippina would have to find others to prepare her son for the male world of politics. To whom could she turn? She needed someone informed and able, apolitical or indisposed to the Claudian half of the house. A senator on Corsica met her requirements.

With regard to the quotidian figures in Nero's life from 49 to Claudius' death, Seneca possessed the most experience relevant to Nero's new life at the Palace. In him Nero would find the skills both useful and necessary for his inevitable career in politics. Seneca also held near a monopoly in present utility over the domestics, and (as shown in Chapter III) a majority in relation to Nero's other teachers. Such aspects of Nero's life may be seen as micro foundations for Seneca's later influence, or passive elements in the environment that would unlikely be perceived as an operative part of Seneca's impact on Nero.<sup>206</sup> It would be supposed that Seneca was capable of something Nero's *grammaticus* was not, just as *grammatici* surpass pedagogues. But less expected is the fluidity of barriers between rhetoric, politics, and elite society that Seneca brought to his tenure as *rhetor*. Seneca was not a household declaimer: his experience was real and public. He could act as a conduit for all the subjects that would now fill Nero's world and mind. Moreover, unless lessons come straight from a textbook, a teacher invariably teaches himself in addition to the material.<sup>207</sup> In this sense, the events of Nero's childhood enabled Seneca to know more about his pupil—not because they shared similar experiences independent of each other, but because the

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<sup>206</sup> On the micro-foundations of macro-outcomes: J.C. Alexander 1987; J.S. Coleman 1987. But also: R. Nozick 1974, 10–25.

<sup>207</sup> A sentiment common to Quintilian (*Inst.* I pr. 7), Dionysius of Miletus (Philostr. *VS* 523), Libanius (*Or.* 3.17).

formative lessons of Nero's aristocratic adolescence came from (or were experienced through) Seneca himself.

Seneca was a fixture in Nero's imperial life from the beginning until nearly the end. He arrived at a time of momentous change, and as a key figure of professional authority; and for that, Seneca would expectedly signal his positive traits that made him successful. No such evidence for this kind of signaling exists, most likely because much of it would come in the form of personal anecdotes. Yet he would not have been the only senatorial or otherwise prosperous male to encounter Nero. Men of signal prominence figure in the prequel to his arrival—Agrippina's husbands. Who were they? How would they have changed Nero's home environment? And what was Agrippina's doing at that time? It also remains to be seen how this all could affect Seneca's ability to capitalize on the moral authority acceded to older men in patriarchal societies such as Rome.

### 3. *Family matters*

In 41 the Emperor Claudius returned Agrippina from exile and restored her inheritance from the late Domitius. Gaius had conceivably exhausted much or all their funds, for Agrippina straightaway sought a new husband.<sup>208</sup> Those petitioned were Crispus Passienus (*suff.* 27, *II ord.* 44), Sulpicius Galba (*ord.* 33), and Sulla Felix (*ord.* 33).<sup>209</sup> Common features unite them. Each had connections to the Domus Caesaris, and all could expect the African or Asian proconsulship in the near future. The marital campaign also seems to be Agrippina's own initiative (unlike Lepida's remarriage), as she appears to have trod familial harmony and social discretion underfoot in pursuit of a new husband. Reportedly she made advances on Galba, who was still married to (sickly and dying) Aemilia Lepida; and the incidental divorce and remarriage of Crispus Passienus is thought to be the source of her "infensa aemulatio" with Nero's aunt Domitia.<sup>210</sup> But the seriousness of these charges, and so their implications for Nero's home life, merits scrutiny.

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<sup>208</sup> He sold the property of his sisters in Gaul (Suet. *Cal.* 39.1).

<sup>209</sup> On Greco-Roman remarriage practices and stepfathers: S.R. Hübner 2009.

<sup>210</sup> Suet. *Gal.* 5.1; Tac. *Ann.* XIII.19.4. On familial conflict: S. Dixon 1992, 135–149.

Judith Ginsburg's posthumous monograph has done much to reveal the pervasion of rhetorical stereotypes affecting Agrippina's historical afterlife.<sup>211</sup> Thus, more than anything else, the former anecdote of coquetry evokes her literary characterization, which is replete with sexual offenses and marked by bullish domineering.<sup>212</sup> The truth of the matter also raises suspicion because it recalls aspects of Livia's negative tradition. There are natural parallels between the two women, such as their effort to have a son from a previous marriage inherit the throne. Moreover, their relationship with their emperor sons is highly analogous in the ancient literature.<sup>213</sup> Perhaps, then, it is unsurprising that they are cast unfavorably in the same essential way. Livia and Agrippina both subvert domestic solidarity.<sup>214</sup> Livia poisoned Marcellus, Lucius, and even Augustus; and her conduct alienated Tiberius: Agrippina interfered with Galba's marriage, and poisoned Claudius (perhaps also Crispus Passienus); and her attitude toward Nero drove him to remove her presence at the Palace, and later remove her altogether. Yet they are far from identical.

Agrippina's personality notably differs from Livia's. In contrast to her great-grandmother's *comitas*, Agrippina is uniformly recorded as an aggressive and basically unpleasant person to deal with. Although the invariability of her literary character undoubtedly results from a tradition that either had no reason to be sympathetic or was outright hostile, it is worth remembering that Agrippina wrote an semi-biographical history of her family—a source that likely provided the context and rationale for her actions during this period in her own words.<sup>215</sup> Nevertheless, what seems important for the present inquiry is not so much the action itself as the type of behavior reported. The anecdote about Galba appears to offer an early example, or the rumor of an example (for a rumor must be plausible to catch on), of the offensively self-assertive deportment that would ruin her relationship with Nero. This is not to conclude that Agrippina was always overbearing or even predominantly so in her interpersonal exchanges, but it is worth noting that (at least in popular memory) this

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<sup>211</sup> J. Ginsburg 2006.

<sup>212</sup> Catalog 2.

<sup>213</sup> cf. A.A. Barrett 1996, 207: "striking to a degree that raises suspicions."

<sup>214</sup> Thus, for Livia, N. Purcell 1986, 94 f.

<sup>215</sup> Most scholars believe her memoirs were written after 55, when she was ostracized from political life: R. Raffay 1884; P. Fabia 1893, 331; R. Syme 1958, 277; J.P.V.D. Balsdon 1962, 121; G.W. Clarke 1965, 50; J. Wilkes 1972, 181. Only W. Eck (1993, 22) argues that it was composed during her exile.

manner of conduct did not emerge specifically with Nero during her marriage to Claudius.

The second notable aspect of Agrippina's life from this time, her *aemulatio* with Nero's aunt Domitia, is more complicated from a socio-familial vantage. The enmity reported by Tacitus first manifests in 55, a year after Lepida was executed on various charges brought by Agrippina. Not much information about their relationship before that point exists. No indication of amity between the Ahenobarbi sisters and Agrippina survives in any capacity, though neither is there any indication of acrimony before 54. Nor does Passienus' marriage to Domitia furnish anything useful. The extent of current knowledge is that he married Domitia and represented her in litigation against her brother.<sup>216</sup> From this brief anecdote some proclaim that assertive and officious behavior from Agrippina aggravated preexisting marital problems, and so led to divorce.<sup>217</sup> There is, however, no evidence that Passienus and Domitia were still married when Agrippina had returned from exile. Moreover, even if Passienus were able to divorce Domitia after Agrippina's return and remarry before he commenced the consulship of Asia in 42, the affinal ties between Agrippina and Domitia would still have been severed. Notions behind terms as *domus* and *familia* were flexible: the former sisters-in-law doubtfully considered each other close or current relatives.<sup>218</sup> Yet there were personal factors in Passienus' decision that might have left Domitia resentful.<sup>219</sup>

Great political benefits to the remarriage are dubious. Emperor Claudius was Agrippina's uncle, it is true, but Passienus had been connected to the Palace through his sister-in-law and his own efforts. He was already the friend of emperors, distinguished by wit, oratorical fame, wealth, and perhaps slight eccentricity.<sup>220</sup> What could this marriage offer him? The empirical difference between Agrippina and Domitia is age, and physiology. Domitia's father was consul in 16 BC, therefore born around the

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<sup>216</sup> Quint. *Inst.* VI.1.50.

<sup>217</sup> R. Syme 1986, 159.

<sup>218</sup> R.P. Saller 1984; R.P. Saller & B.D. Shaw 1984. Cf. J.E. Grubbs 2005.

<sup>219</sup> Domitia would remain associated with her ex-husband. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* XII.22.2 (of Lollia Paulina): "Claudius inaudita rea multa de claritudine eius apud senatum praefatus, sorore L. Volusii genitam, maiorem ei patrum Cottam Messalinum esse, Memmio quondam Regulo nuptam (nam de C. Caesaris nuptiis consulto reticebat), addidit perniciose in rem publicam consilia et materiam sceleri detrahendam." On this point: S. Dixon 1997, 155.

<sup>220</sup> Wit: Σ Juv. 4.81. Eloquence: Sen. *Con.* II.5.1; Quint. *Inst.* X.1.24; Tac. *Ann.* VI.20.1. Eccentricity: Plin. *NH* XVI.242.

year 49: her mother, the elder Antonia, was born in 39 and so likely married Domitius around 25.<sup>221</sup> No children are registered from Passienus and Domitia, neither of whom is known to have had another spouse;<sup>222</sup> and Agrippina, in the prime of youth, could fulfill the Roman purpose of matrimony. Yet fertility and beauty were not unique commodities at Rome. It thus remains for the imagination to speculate on the motives behind the marriage of Agrippina and Passienus, and how Domitia came to bear such great animus toward her former sister-in-law.

Agrippina's aversion to aunt Lepida is more straightforward. Lepida's daughter, Messalina, precipitated the exile and death of Agrippina's sister Julia Livilla in 41. Livilla's husband, M. Vinicius, had been a key agent in the assassination of Gaius; and despite the charge of adultery against Livilla from 39, their marriage could have been reinstated. Consequently, this union may have constituted a threat in being to Messalina, exacerbating any pressure she felt on Britannicus—such logic suits her alleged bid to kill Nero.<sup>223</sup> Indeed, some believe that Messalina's harassment was so great that Agrippina wrote her *comentarii* during the 40s to evoke sympathy.<sup>224</sup> But perhaps most memorable, and notorious, are the events involving C. Silius, the husband of Agrippina's friend Junia Silana. Although that incident may not have personally incensed Agrippina as much as any attempt to murder her son, one imagines that her friends would have been quite dear since she lacked any immediate family.

Where among these events did the animus between Lepida and Agrippina arise? Agrippina found Lepida objectionable for the *largitio* and *blandimenta* she showed toward Nero.<sup>225</sup> Nothing else is reported. If, however, this truly was the source of conflict between the two ladies, then one might surmise that it arose during Agrippina's marriage to Claudius.

For Agrippina the 40s were a period of prodigious growth. The abovementioned circumstances offer some explanation for the speed and dexterity (or impertinent verve) with which she maneuvered herself into disparate sources of power. Luck had made

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<sup>221</sup> Plut. *Ant.* 33.3. Cf. R. Syme, *Roman Papers* IV.23; J. Pollini 1986.

<sup>222</sup> Conjectures are made: R. Syme, *Roman Papers* II, 666; III, 1432; IV, 122; M. Cébeillac 1972, 21.

<sup>223</sup> Suet. *Nero* 6.3; *AE* 1994, 191 (dedication to the snake of his salvation?).

<sup>224</sup> e.g. B.R. Motzo 1927, 52; H. Bardon 1956, 172; A. Michel 1966, 124; M.T. Griffin 1984, 23; L. Duret 1986, 3286. The more usual date is (*supra*) after 55.

<sup>225</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XI.12.1; XII.64.3.

her the daughter of Germanicus, a darling of the Praetorian Guard by proxy. Yet such protection could only go so far. Thus she married senators, socialized with women of status in the City, and gained friends at the Palace. Multiple inheritances restored her assets and her son's. Equestrian partisans, keen to move up in the bureaucracy, were corralled.<sup>226</sup> Social integration and a complicated web of patronage engender some kind of security, be it real or merely perceived—a tribal sense of safety in friends and numbers—and all could provide advantages for Nero. But Agrippina's daily business, her dreams, hopes, and anxieties for the future were her own preserve. Maternal concerns of this sort played no immediate role in the life of a Roman child.

It is not evident that Nero's stepfathers had much presence in his life. Foremost, they were not the individuals with immediate power over Nero at this age. By the time Passienus finished his second consulship Nero would be in school, thereby diluting the concentration of family Nero's social sphere. Children in the topmost echelon of Roman society furthered their Latin and pursued Greek concurrently; and to assist his progress, Nero's pedagogues plausibly assumed some teaching or reinforcement responsibilities—hence a firmer foundation in his life.<sup>227</sup> Beryllus looks able to perform such a task: his name is carved in Greek on a wall inside the Villa of Poppaea at Oplontis, and later he became the *ab epistulis Graecis*.<sup>228</sup> Nero could also spend significant time outside the house and presence of his stepfathers. Agrippina would move in with her new husband, Nero coming in tow, but he would have been removed from adult social events. Moreover, for Nero's sense of self and pride, he may well have reviewed school material in Domitius' house on the Sacra Via, surrounded by the *imagines* of his forefathers and ancestral embellishments. Summer break from school could be spent along the coast at Antium, Pyrgi, or perhaps Cosa, the maintenance of which properties fell to Asconius.<sup>229</sup>

Time was also an obstacle to the formation of a meaningful relationship with Nero. Passienus removed to Asia for his proconsulship in 42 and, when returned, he

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<sup>226</sup> e.g. Alledius Severus, Antonius Felix, P. Celerius, Claudius Balbillus, Creperius Gallus, Faenius Rufus, Julius Spartiacus.

<sup>227</sup> Quintilian suggests colloquial practice was to some extent expected (*Inst.* I.1.12–4; 4.72).

<sup>228</sup> *SEG* XXIX, 971. Thus resolving the old misconception that Beryllus at *J. A7.* XX.183 was in fact Burrus, as in E. Katterfeld 1913, 59; H.W. Kamp 1943, 151.

<sup>229</sup> For Cosa: *ILLRP* 915. Domitius' house on the Sacra Via: *CFA* 24; 27; 28.

took a second consulship.<sup>230</sup> Then Passienus died, and before long—whence speculation that “perit per fraudem Agrippinae.”<sup>231</sup> If his death took place in 46, the assassination of Vinicius during that year could be seen as a preventative measure to deny the widowed Agrippina another twice-consul husband—especially since Vinicius and Livilla appear to have been a concern without any children. Nothing, however, is certain about his time of death. The only qualifications are that the marriage was long enough for Passienus to want to bequeath his estate to Agrippina and Nero, yet short enough to disregard adopting Nero and short enough for Agrippina fit in another marriage before her engagement to Claudius in the latter half 48.

Agrippina next wed Galba’s partner in the consulship, L. Cornelius Sulla Felix. An inscription from Pisidian Antioch registers the connection: “Corne[li Sullae] / Felicis gene[ri Germa]/[n]ici Caesar[is].”<sup>232</sup> The daughter in question could not be Drusilla. Livilla is only possible if she married straightaway after her return, but she looks to have remarried M. Vinicius.<sup>233</sup> Claudius should not be equated with the Germanicus mentioned, as Faustus Sulla (*ord.* 52) would become the *gener*—and his nomenclature did not include ‘Felix’ without ‘Faustus’. As for the chronology, the few to notice this connection label it Agrippina’s second marriage.<sup>234</sup> That is unlikely. The year 41 was busy for Agrippina. She returned from exile sometime after January, reestablished her presence at Rome, resumed control of her accounts, reclaimed Domitius’ estates and her own, sought a new husband (starting with Galba if the sources are to be believed), dealt with Livilla’s accusation of adultery with Seneca, possibly waited for Passienus’ divorce proceedings to finish, and finally married Passienus—perhaps with enough time to organize for departure to Asia. It seems doubtful that she had the time to engage, marry, bury, and mourn Sulla before starting up again with Passienus.

But who was L. Cornelius Sulla Felix? He was the shadow of a great name, aware of his lineage, and irreverent in his youth.<sup>235</sup> An ordinary man rather than a

<sup>230</sup> G. Camodeca 1995, 696. Two months, as Vinicius: C. Pietrangeli 1940, 201 no. 6.

<sup>231</sup> Suet. *Vita Crispi*; Σ *Juv.* 4.81. Death in consulship: P.R.C. Weaver 1976, 215 f. In 44: M. Heil 2013, 186. Before 47: *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, P 146. In 47: R. Syme 1958, 328 n. 12. In 48: *RE* XVIII, 2097.

<sup>232</sup> *AE* 1927, 172. The *praenomen* ‘P.’ is incorrect—only ‘L.’, ‘M.’, ‘Cn.’ for this family. See *TAPhA* LVII (1926) 225.

<sup>233</sup> *AE* 1994, 243. A questionable restoration. But Dio does call Livilla his wife at her time of death (LX.27.4).

<sup>234</sup> E. Groag in *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, C 1465. Unemphatically echoed by R. Syme 1986, 172 n. 19

<sup>235</sup> Tac. *Ann.* III.31.3. On Corbulo in the incident: B.J. Kavanagh 2004.

courtier, neither associated with sources of trouble to emperors nor memorable for talent. Perhaps he took note of his *propinquus* L. Arruntius (*ord.* 6), who had been a fear to Tiberius, an enemy to Sejanus, and no friend of Macro—for even his father’s pseudo-hereditary position as an *Arvalis* passed over him, resuming in 57 with his nephew Faustus (*ord.* 52). Sulla was a man of minimal activity who, much like his kinsmen, found an easy life in Rome acceptable. In the year 17 a relative of his was expelled from the Senate; death reached his father before a consulship could; and Mamercus Aemilius Scaurus, *patruus ac vitricus* to Sulla, did nothing after his obligatory consulship.<sup>236</sup> As for his impact on Nero, perhaps it is telling that no mention of him exists in Suetonius or any other ancient source. It would therefore appear that none of Nero’s stepfathers therefore had an appreciable influence on him, least of all Sulla.

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With the present set of knowledge it would seem that Seneca, upon first meeting Nero, possessed qualities which would be familiar to the youth. Foremost, he was not dissimilar to the stepfathers, as he was also a senator and a household name at Rome. Seneca’s prominence had not benefitted from obsequious pandering, as Passienus had from Emperor Gaius; and his birth did not entitle him to encomium and honors, like Faustus Sulla and other descendants of Republican notables. Success supervened upon work, reversals upon injustice—experiences Nero might have come to understand watching his mother. Societal values and normative behavior propound other reasons for Nero to take a personal liking to Seneca: the *rhetor* had his virtues, and so did the man. Seneca also kept his name in the ears of the Roman people during his exile—a long-distance hawker of semi-Stoics goods. A youth having just completed primary education, so full of *sententiae* and other pithy utterances of Roman morality, might relate.<sup>237</sup> This may have been at the heart of Seneca’s popularity among the urban youth, as is suggested in Section 7.

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<sup>236</sup> Resp.: Tac. *Ann.* II.48.3; *CIL* VI, 2023, 32339; Dio LVIII.24.3. Cf. M. Silanus, the *pecus aurea* (*PIR*<sup>2</sup>, I 833).

<sup>237</sup> On Seneca’s familiarity with gnomic utterances: F. Giancotti 1992. Elder was familiar with Publilius’ work (*Con.* VII.3.8). His philosophical standing: C.M. Lucarini 2003. And on the gnomological selection process: R. Cribiore 2001, 246 ff.; T.J. Morgan 2007, 222–5.

That said, the psychological force of a personal ideal is distinguishable from the normativity or moral authority so acceded to the ideal. Society sets a baseline for the valuation of certain cultural abstractions, which one's own situation and experience can then affect positively or negatively. Roman high culture prized various aspects of Seneca, including his learnedness (not necessarily the interests themselves) and his general success, for neither of which Nero's domestic relations could meet the bare minimum. Nero's stepfathers conformed more to the aristocratic standard, but they were out of Nero's life by the time that their acculturation and career would be relevant either to Nero's personal experiences, or to what Nero would then consider the forward path of his life. Stepfathers also lacked any moral or legal obligation to their stepchildren because they did not under their *patria potestas*;<sup>238</sup> and men who assumed the role of a surrogate father, while not always childless themselves, generally took an interest in fatherless adolescents who had already donned the *toga virilis*.<sup>239</sup> Other than Seneca, there is no evidence of such a figure at the relevant period in Nero's life. This is not to imply that Seneca, because he was childless, took a paternal interest in Nero—though Roman society was familiar with the idea of role switching or substitution.<sup>240</sup> But Seneca would have been aware of the tradition of fatherless aristocrats watching a respected older man to learn the arts of war and peace;<sup>241</sup> and given Nero's family history, together with the preponderance of pro-parental figures in Roman society,<sup>242</sup> Nero should have been looking to Seneca for information about his life ahead. That, at the very least, is what Agrippina expected her son to do.<sup>243</sup>

By having Nero delegated to Seneca under these circumstances, Seneca was *de facto* accountable for Nero's moral development. This responsibility would not have merely come from the lack of other individuals available or qualified to do so: it would also have been Seneca's civic duty to help calibrate Nero's moral compass due to who

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<sup>238</sup> Gai. *Inst.* I.64; S.R. Hübner 2009, 76. This was the domain of the *tutor*: R.P. Saller 1994, 181–203.

<sup>239</sup> One immediately thinks of Cicero and Caelius. See further, specifically during the early Empire: N.W. Bernstein 2009.

<sup>240</sup> For Roman role behavior: M. Fuhrmann 1979; J. Martin 1997, 12 f. Specifically within the family: C.J. Bannon 1997; A.-C. Harders 2008.

<sup>241</sup> Described at Plin. *Ep.* VIII.14.4–6.

<sup>242</sup> Thus M. Golden 2009, 59. That article refers to

<sup>243</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XII.8.3: “utque Domitii pueritia tali magistro adolesceret et consiliis eiusdem ad spem dominationis uterentur.”

his student was—no simple student or senator’s son, but the future emperor.<sup>244</sup> Seneca’s own social positions, as a Roman citizen and senator, would have reinforced this sense of responsibility.<sup>245</sup> He owed it to the common good, the *res publica*.<sup>246</sup> That imperative would have validated numerous topics for signaling, ranging from administrative knowledge to diplomatic experience to any number of other areas of technical expertise. But as a Stoic, Seneca would have seen the skills for success in simpler terms. It was all a matter of virtue. *De clementia* most clearly instantiates this attitude towards Nero and his education; however, it should not be the only example. As Seneca should have felt responsible for providing Nero with a proper set of ethics (presumably Stoic given his own beliefs), one can expect to find elements of philosophy elsewhere in their relationship—most of all in Seneca’s signals to Nero.

Thus, at a minimum, Seneca instantiates a default source for both the cultural norms of the governing class, and the baseline values that Nero would be expected to have. Nero could most readily look at Seneca for what he should appreciate according to socially defined rather than personal terms, though the success of their relationship suggests that there was some crossover into Nero’s own personal values. But where respect turns into admiration, esteem into veneration, or goodwill into favoritism is a shadowy path—and ultimately hidden.

Seneca’s status and popular celebrity at Rome classed him above others with domestic and pedagogical contact with Nero, but he associated with Nero in the same capacity as them. Unlike the stepfathers, Seneca was a figure whose immediate purpose and power was in relation to Nero. Seneca ‘worked’ for Nero; and employees do well to listen to their bosses. Furthermore, a potential point of characteristic continuity exists between Seneca and Asconius Labeo, should the latter have conformed to the local stereotype. Spaniards rank among the harshest critics of the noble Roman youth in the first century AD. No great surprise: provincial schools of rhetoric onwards from the last century BC were not to be despised.<sup>247</sup> As Rome yielded to the bounty of

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<sup>244</sup> Undertaking this task would be a display of *fides* to the State. Cicero commonly evoked such and similar role expectations in his speeches, on which see S. Treggiari 2005.

<sup>245</sup> On the ‘dispositive’ nature of role expectations in Roman society: J. Martin 2002, 158. Compare with Greek society: J. Martin 1997, 6–12.

<sup>246</sup> Also note that, as discussed in Section 28, Seneca’s personal philosophy is at times distinctly utilitarian. Tutoring the emperor-to-be would be an obvious opportunity to affect the good in the world.

<sup>247</sup> cf. Tac. *Hist.* IV.73.1, *Ann.* III.43.1; Juv. 7.148, 15.111; Plut. *Sert.* 14.2 f.; Suet. *Gram.* 3.5

her empire and succumbed to torpor, the *mores antiqui* were held fast in the provinces and pockets around Italy.<sup>248</sup> Spain furnished the leading innovators, the authors who dominate poetry and oratory from Nero through Hadrian—the two Senecas, Lucan, Fabius Rusticus, Columella, Quintilian, Martial, and perhaps Silius Italicus. The western provinces were bastions for the old ways; and that traditional energy (and opportunism) found them mastery of the Empire in the end.

As for Nero, he was very much an elitist in later life. He disliked freedmen in the Senate, foreign cults, and reveled in studies too liberal for the tastes of the governing class. If his household and family encouraged such a mentality and sense of purpose, Seneca would manage no worse than anyone else mentioned heretofore. Indeed, as Nero was exposed to the wider social and cultural world around him, Seneca would gain steadily in substance—meteorically so in respect to Nero’s other existing acquaintances from the pre-accession era. Certainly features of Seneca’s public career were far from usual. He ventured into politics relatively late in life, had a spectacular rise to rhetorical fame, was suddenly exiled for a lengthy time, and achieved a stunning comeback. But Seneca’s normalcy as a senator, or the deviations in his experience, arguably matters little in his mentorship of Nero: the young prince was never going to be an ordinary senator. Moreover, even if Seneca’s personal beliefs and habits conflicted with the normative values of the Roman aristocracy, he was still the selfsame individual teaching Nero what was normative.<sup>249</sup> Thus, when Nero became emperor, Seneca was not merely a fashionable associate and teacher (for attainments intellectual, political, and artistic). He was the possessor of the longest standing and most publically consequential relationship with Nero since the youth arrived at the Palace. And although that is a source of interpersonal understanding not to be underestimated, it has invited ideas that have been questionably seen as a boon to Seneca. The next chapter addresses them.

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<sup>248</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XVI.5.1. Cicero concedes *humanitas* to provincials, not the Roman spirit (*Q. fr.* I.1.16, 27 f.).

<sup>249</sup> For the role of oratory in maintenance of the social order: A. Richlin 1997; T.N. Habinek 2005a, 60–78.

## II. VULNERABLE POINTS

Of experiences accrued during life, is it possible to predetermine their effect on a person? This is not to ask how the behavior of an agent may elicit action in the Weberian sense, which may call on sociocultural imperatives related to the behavior in question and so supply the rational course of action.<sup>250</sup> Instead, the initial question intends to invoke the effect of external stimuli on the mental constitution in its capacity as a determinant for behavior.<sup>251</sup> Causality, conduct, and action are all relevant to Chapter II, as subjectivity begins an inward creep amid contextual factors relating to the basis of Seneca's influence with Nero. And the subjective must be kept in check.

Chapter II interrupts the narrative of Nero's youth to deal with two issues, both problematic—one to the usual sketch of Nero, the other to the present account. The first is Nero's mental makeup. Heretofore the examination of Nero's emotional development has been absent. That is on purpose: "est quadam prodire tenus, si non datur ultra."<sup>252</sup> The psychology of the young Emperor certainly constituted an aspect of Seneca's influence, be it related to Seneca the man, teacher, philosopher, or elsehow. Yet insufficient facts invite danger. Psychological disciplines may seem appealing in such instances, but they can struggle to furnish more than attributive generalizations. For although the truth remains when the impossible is discarded, those truths are not separated from falsehood.<sup>253</sup> Earnest investigation with the given body of evidence would attempt to see the light without knowing darkness, which cannot be. Moreover, the uniform negativity of Nero's historiographical tradition effectively renders his intellect inaccessible. In order to justify this decision further, Section 4 briefly considers some of the concomitant difficulties with such a review of Nero.

Sections 5 and 6 handle the second issue, which is the impressionistic inclusion of decontextualized factors. Suetonius has already received that treatment. Now Tacitus is the author under scrutiny. The historian perceives in the Emperor a deviation from the oratorical ideal of higher education: Nero needed Seneca to write his speeches. What is the nature of this decision to use Seneca as a logographer? How

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<sup>250</sup> On the roots of human action in inter-subjective contexts: R.J. Bernstein 1979; A. Giddens 1984.

<sup>251</sup> D. Bannister & F. Fransella 1986; G.A. Kelly 1991.

<sup>252</sup> Hor. *Ep.* 1.1.32.

<sup>253</sup> E. Nagel 1961, 4: "It is the desire for explanations which are at once systematic and controllable by factual evidence that generates science."

potent a source of influence could it have been for Seneca? The few examples of Nero's speeches, together with some logical assumptions about Roman society, suggest that this historically attested source of influence for Seneca was actually a rather limited area for him to derive his stature from.

#### 4. *Emotional experiences*

Social sciences can help when the disciplines of philology and law, or the technique of archeology, are dead ends. Like anthropology and economics, psychology offers a series of narrow and specialized theories for prudent application. For this dissertation, however, the psychological statements that could be made would address Nero *qua* human, and are therefore ineffectually general for the present interest in his personal experience. As such, the protean pageantry of Freud and Lacan becomes most seductive as a means to approach the 'real' Nero. Psychoanalysis is a grand theory of the mind that encompasses everything of possible importance—daily life, child development, war, religion, love.<sup>254</sup> Psychology, in comparison, is history focused on the scale of a single lifetime. Yet by no means is this to deny the profound and lasting effect of Freud's ideas. His presence is still regularly invoked, albeit more among university departments of history and literature than psychology.<sup>255</sup> But psychoanalysis has a fundamental principle that is incompatible with good historiography.

The signal issue with Freudian theory and its derivatives is that their inherent vagueness transcends incorrectness. They have no empirical defense due to their basis in the human subconscious. Hence they are unable to be falsified.<sup>256</sup> Psychoanalytic claims in a biographical narrative about Nero's childhood development can (at their best) be rendered innocuous by suppressing their prominence in the analysis.<sup>257</sup> Nevertheless, the dearth of historical information makes such comments find an uneasy repose on causal oversimplification and *post hoc* logic. And more to the point, history

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<sup>254</sup> Freud first notably influenced O. Kiefer 1933. Two arguments in favor of applying psychoanalysis: N.O. Brown 1957 and 1974. Neither addresses nor overcomes the issue of un-falsifiability.

<sup>255</sup> Recently: E. Gunderson 2000, 16–22; C.A. Barton 2001, *pasism*; E. Oliensis 2009; M.G. Bonanno 2013; V. Zajko & E. O'Gorman 2013.

<sup>256</sup> Thus K. Popper 1963, 43–8.

<sup>257</sup> e.g. M.T. Griffin 1984, 30: "His mother's immense ambition, and her ruthless methods must have made him associate political power with malice, intrigue and distrust."

demands theories or interpretations based on positive, substantial evidence. There is nothing concrete about the subconscious.

As to which life events could have conditioned Seneca's influence with Nero, a most illuminating aspect would be the resolution of cause into effect. That is to ask: either, how Nero dealt with occurrences, thereby revealing an aspect of his personality; or, how those around him handled certain events that either shaped Nero or otherwise came into his field of view. Again, there is scant evidence for that question in general, let alone for Nero's childhood. But an altogether less demanding piece of knowledge is which experiences most likely affected Nero—which experiences diverged from the mean and median experiences of Roman life enough to impact him. Miriam Griffin thus opines:<sup>258</sup>

The effect on the young Nero of the tense and sinister atmosphere in which he grew up can only be divined in part. Though the period of separation from his mother was short in the event, the circumstances of her absence and uncertainty about its duration must have contributed to that need for constant reassurance and demonstrated affection that he displayed in adulthood.

Such statements rest on an untenable level of familiarity with the essential core of Nero's personality, or on *a priori* suppositions about human nature and nurturing.<sup>259</sup> It is also an opinion borne out of a single example rather than a set; and within these confines, psychoanalytical thoughts and psychology, particularly behaviorism, fail to offer believable answers. For there is nothing readily exceptional about Nero's experience. Instead, the outline of his childhood is highly analogous to those of other Romans.

Death, self-interest, or service to the State (if not connected) frequently deprived the Julio-Claudian children of their fathers. Augustus' father died when he was four, but was replaced by an admirable stepfather;<sup>260</sup> Tiberius was three when his parents divorced, and his father's life ended six years later; Gaius and Lucius were bereaved of Agrippa at age eight and five respectively; Germanicus was six when the elder Drusus died of complications after falling from a horse; Gaius was seven when

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<sup>258</sup> M.T. Griffin 1984, 30.

<sup>259</sup> In classical scholarship on children and childhood, there is a notable dearth of reference to modern research on the nature/nurture debate. The insights might prove useful, e.g. R. Plomin *et al.* 1988; E. Sober 2001; D. Goldhaber 2012.

<sup>260</sup> viz. L. Marcius Philippus. On whom: M.J.C. Gray-Fow 1988.

Germanicus met his end in Asia. Roman politics had its hazards, to be sure, but danger could as be found elsewhere—the father of Caesar the Dictator died one morning while putting on his sandals.<sup>261</sup> If the unfortunate events of Nero’s youth are blamed for his later eccentricities, then a sizeable portion of the Roman male population should also have been somewhat disturbed.

A fair number works on the family and children in Greco-Roman antiquity have been published since the turn of the millennium.<sup>262</sup> These works have been instructive to the conclusions made in the previous chapter, and helpful in framing the present look at Nero’s childhood; and it might seem like the question of what went ‘wrong’ in Nero’s childhood should be poised to be answered. But the research and insights can only confirm what is found in imperial Roman sources. Namely, Nero’s first four years embraced events tragic and undesirable but common, and the handling of such events adhered to expectation. It was all par for the course.

Following the death of a parent, the commonest reaction was to transfer the child to (or move in with) another family member, generally older. Thus the younger Cato, orphaned at an early age, relocated into the family of his maternal uncle with his sister and stepsiblings. Pliny’s wife Calpurnia lost her mother and later her father, thereafter moving in with her paternal aunt. Emperor Gaius remained with his mother until her expulsion, then moving to his father’s grandmother up to her death, whereafter he stayed with his paternal grandmother until adulthood. Quintilian’s mother-in-law helped raise his two children (his wife was young); and after the successive deaths of spouse and son, Quintilian took responsibility for his last child.<sup>263</sup> The choice to send Nero to live with one of his aunts would be uncontroversial.

As for Agrippina’s life choices and their effect on Nero, women of rank and breeding remarried, often promptly. Household maintenance, estate management, civic and other public obligations left childrearing a task not regularly done alone—and widows were an expedient seldom overlooked. Nevertheless, the single mother was not a novel concept or a stigmatized status at Rome. Julia Procilla earned warm words from Tacitus for singularly raising Agricola. Pliny’s *tutela* was entrusted to

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<sup>261</sup> Plin. *NH* VIII.181, cf. Suet. *Jul.* 1.1. On other broken households: K.R. Bradley 1987.

<sup>262</sup> B. Rawson 2003; M. George 2005; S.R. Hübner & D.M. Ratzan 2009; B. Rawson 2011; R. Laurence & A. Strömberg 2012.

<sup>263</sup> V. Max. III.1.2, Plut. *Cat. Mi.* 1.1; Plin. *Ep.* IV.19; Suet. *Cal.* 10.1. Quint. *Inst.* VI pr.

Verginius Rufus, their neighbor in Comum; and he stayed with his mother, who perhaps moved in with her brother. Vespasia Polla shunned remarriage, and left Vespasian in the care of his grandmother at Cosa while she tended to his older brother.<sup>264</sup> The *univira* continued to merit respect. For the young widow Agrippina, however, to remain single would have been anomalous and unlikely to last. If she herself had not taken the initiative to remarry, Claudius could well have arranged a marriage for her as he did with Lepida.

Little of palpable worth therefore surfaces from Nero's childhood when emphasis is placed on commonality. The same goes for variance. One observation is that Nero was a younger firstborn than other Julio-Claudians when his father died. Others such as Claudius were still younger, but they had siblings. Nero's parents also exhibit a disparity in age for couples within the Julio-Claudian clan. Domitius was at least twenty-five years senior to Agrippina who, at twenty-one or twenty-two (in the year 37), was the more age-appropriate to start having children.<sup>265</sup> Their marriage may not have been happy, as Domitius' lone assessment of Agrippina does not bode well.<sup>266</sup> Of potential significance, then, is the delay of Nero's *professio* until his third year. The liaisons of the Julio-Claudians were notorious and complex: letting the child mature would allow a better evaluation of resemblance.<sup>267</sup> Husbands, however, differed from fathers in responsibilities and expectations. The father was to be a figure removed, not cold; warm, not yielding; firm, not cruel. And although the anecdotes about Domitius suggest no such qualities, his literary tradition likely became even more unsavory in his son's wake.<sup>268</sup> Domitius' contemporaries paid him lip service with labels of *clarissimus* and *nobilissimus*, and a genteel reference to his inactivity as *nobilissima simplicitas vitae*.<sup>269</sup> But this does little to help the general impression of him or Nero's childhood environment.

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<sup>264</sup> Tac. *Ag.* 4.2; Plin. *Ep.* VI.16.4, 20 (younger was at elder's villa in Misenum during 79); Suet. *Ves.* 1.3, 2.1 f.

<sup>265</sup> Typicality for the ages: R. Syme, *Roman Papers* VI.30; R.P. Saller 1987; B.D. Shaw 1987.

<sup>266</sup> *Nero* 6.1. Note F. Nietzsche, *NF* (1876), XXIII.72: "Nicht die Abwesenheit der Liebe, sondern die Abwesenheit der Freundschaft macht die unglücklichen Ehen." A statement no doubt relevant to many Roman marriages.

<sup>267</sup> Catalog 15.

<sup>268</sup> Juvenal is somewhat forgiving, perhaps only indirectly, of the prior Domitii (8.227–30).

<sup>269</sup> Sen. *Con.* IX.4.18; Vell. II.72.3, III.10.2. Cf. J. *AJ* XX.148: ἀνὴρ δὲ γενόμενος Δομέτιος Ἡνόβαρβος ὁ τῶν ἐπισήμων κατὰ τὴν Ῥωμαίων πόλιν. Tacitus records his last public service in 36 (*Ann.* VI.45.2).

Historical questions about a person’s identity tend to arise from issues of action or policy, which often require the articulation of individual or collective identities. That is especially true when an act offers disagreement or negativity. The ancient literature adheres to this general observation and allows Nero’s actions to substitute for his personality—not context or motivations, not words spoken or written. Due caution should therefore precede the ascription of properties, which are suitable for conscious desires, to unconscious impulses. Who is to say that Nero did not know exactly what he was doing when arranging the death of his mother? So, too, is the denial of unconscious motivations equally unfounded despite their enigmatic operation.<sup>270</sup>

Emotions submit another concern. If they are an inherent part of human life that cannot be dismissed or suppressed, then their expression is a moral consideration. Nero’s ancient writers, however, did not reflect on the essentiality of personal character or psychology to the validity of normative ethics. They fail to construe personal identity as something beyond individual desires weighed according to their relative strength. That is not truth. Hence it is otiose to form theories about Nero’s emotional development from the ancient dataset as such speculation leads everywhere and nowhere. Yet if something must be said about Nero’s life and behavior, one might evoke the opinion of Greek intellectuals on the effect that power has on men when combined with impunity—*ἀρχὴν ἄνδρα δείκνυσιν*.<sup>271</sup>

### 5. *Nero’s Greek*

The uniform objectives of Roman education left little room for the experience to go astray. This reality is a key difficulty with authors’ claims that Nero needed Seneca for speechwriting; or, rather, the corollary is—an imputation that Nero foundered on the central element of elite education.<sup>272</sup> How to make sense of the charge? From one vantage appears a cognitive shortcoming in Nero. From another Seneca looks exploitive of the Emperor in order to dictate policy.<sup>273</sup> Neither is demonstrable. Of all the outright allegations made against Nero, nowhere to be found is mental incapacity,

<sup>270</sup> Pi. *P.* 8.135: *τί δέ τις; τί δ’ οὐ τις; σκιᾶς ὄναρ ἄνθρωπος*.

<sup>271</sup> S. *Ant.* 175–7; Arist. *EN* 1130a; D. *Proem.* 48.2; Plut. *Cic.* 52.2, *Mor.* 811B; Paus. χ 16; Diogenian. II.94; D.L. 1.77.

<sup>272</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.3.1 f.

<sup>273</sup> cf. E. O’Gorman 2000, 151–3.

pure and veritable stupidity, or other vacancy of wits—more so than appearance, musical bravura aided the believability of one of the false Neros.<sup>274</sup> Nor is Seneca said to have failed as a teacher, or to have retarded Nero’s progress maliciously in order to sustain a need for his expertise. He tried another method to stay influential with Nero: “avertit...a cognitione veterum oratorum Seneca praeceptor, quo diutius in admiratione sui detineret.”<sup>275</sup> But the state of present evidence hinders full assessment of Nero’s compositional ability. Only his words in Greek survive in any meaningful length.<sup>276</sup> His progression in a non-native tongue may nonetheless (or perhaps all the more) illuminate the truth about Tacitus’ claims.

Learning Greek at Rome began as a fashionable sign of class during the Republic. A survey from Cicero’s *Brutus* shows a surge of *Graecis litteris docti et eruditi* born after the Third Macedonian War. With their growing interest in rhetoric, Romans found a greater sense of urgency to possess themselves of the language—or, in the sequel of the battle of Pydna in 168 BC, the influence of the educated slaves at Rome initiated a loose formalization of education. More conservative Romans abstained from Greek in patriotic conceit: why learn the language of a weaker people?<sup>277</sup> Emperor Tiberius never deigned to use it when dealing in politics.<sup>278</sup> Further, something of the learned polish of bilingualism jarred on elite Roman sensibilities. Proclamations of the Senate periodically exhibit literal translation of Latinate idiom into Greek, as does the Monumentum Ancyranum.<sup>279</sup> Augustus, as one might then expect, was not fluent. He was proficient to read and understand, but unconfident in conversing and unwilling or unable to speak extemporaneously. The conservative mentality persisted from Republic to Principate, while interest in the language did not; and by

<sup>274</sup> Tac. *Hist.* II.8.1, cf. Suet. *Nero* 39.3: “transeuntem eum Isidorus Cynicus in publico clara voce corripuerat, quod Naupli mala bene cantitaret, sua bona male disponeret.”

<sup>275</sup> Suet. *Nero* 52. Seneca’s decision to restrict Nero’s access to older orators is not unique. Cestius Pius, the *rhetor* from Smyrna, did not allow his *iuvenes* and *pueri* to read Cicero before he rewrote them (Sen. *Con.* 3 pr. 15).

<sup>276</sup> Σ *Luc.* III.261 reveals several hexameters on the Tigris: M. Dewar 1991. Even of his epic *Troica*, only a single plot point is known (Serv. *A.* V.370). Similarly described at *Myth. Vat.* II, 197. The Vatican Mythographers certainly consulted Servius. But note the hexameter “mater pastori furtim transmisit alendum.”

<sup>277</sup> Plut. *Mar.* 2.2: γελοῖον γράμματα μαθάνειν ὧν οἱ διδάσκαλοι δουλεύοιεν ἑτέροις. Cf. Sal. *Jug.* 85.31; V. Max. II.2.2. Marius did, however, know Greek: E.S. Gruen 1993, 268 f.

<sup>278</sup> Tac. *Ann.* IV.58.1; Suet. *Ti.* 71; Dio LVII.15.2 f.

<sup>279</sup> e.g. ὦι ἔλασσον θεραπεύει, i.q. *quominus curet* (ID 1510, 29 f.); L. Holford-Strevens 1993, 207; κατάγειν ἀποικίας (3.3; 16.1; 28.2), i.q. *deducere colonias*. Perhaps the result of bad translators: D. Wigtill 1982, 189 ff.

the middle of the first century AD, fluency among the governing classes had diminished. Thus Apollonius begged Vespasian to send men who understood Greek to administer the East, suggesting that the bureaucrats in power at the time were ignorant of the language.<sup>280</sup>

Of the available reasons for Romans' disinclination to learn Greek, one is deceptively simple—it was difficult. Native speakers of Latin had manifold difficulties, with pronunciation posing a particular problem. Differences in vowel length were a common plague to students acquiring both languages.<sup>281</sup> The improper aspiration of vowels was also a common problem (and readily mocked); and aspirates themselves were troublesome, supposing that the Roman ear could register them.<sup>282</sup> Vocalic length in Greek words was another element to throw off the Roman tongue, which tended to elongate their quantity.<sup>283</sup> Even Quinctius Flaminius, so proclaimed *φωνήν τε καὶ διάλεκτον Ἑλλην*, was no less liable to such errors.<sup>284</sup> Other talented men such as Augustine simply found the language too difficult.<sup>285</sup> Nero, however, spoke Greek in public from the age of fourteen.

In 53 Nero gave speeches at Bononia, Ilium, and on Rhodes. The first in Latin, the latter two in Greek. Tacitus commends the quality of his oration to the Ilienses — “*facunde exsecutus perpetrat*”—but says nothing of its composer.<sup>286</sup> The earliest extant sample of Nero's prose comes from a letter sent in 55 to the Rhodians:

οἱ πρέσβεις ὑμῶν οὓς ἐπὶ τῇ ψευδῶς ἐπι[σ]τολῇ πρὸς ὑμᾶς κοιμισθείση τῷ τῶν ὑπάτων ὀνόματι ταραχθέντες πρὸς με ἐπέμψατε, καὶ τὸ ψήφισμα [ἀ]πέδοσαν καὶ περὶ τῶν θυσιῶν ἐδήλωσαν ἃς ἐνετε[ί]λασθε αὐτοῖς ὑπὲρ τῆς πανοικίου μου ὑγείας καὶ τῆς ἐν τῇ ἡγεμ[ο]νία διαμονῆς ἐπιτελέσαι τῷ κατ' ἐξοχὴν παρ' ἡμῶν τεμωμένῳ θεῷ Διὶ Καπετωλίῳ περὶ τ' ὧν ἐπεστάλκετε αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὴν τῆς πόλεως δημοκρατίαν διαφερόντων ἐνεφάνισαν διὰ Κ[λαυ]δίου Τειμοστράτου τοῦ ἀρχιπρεσβευτοῦ, σπουδαίῳ πάθει τοῖς ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐπ' ἐμοῦ

<sup>280</sup> Philostr. *VA* V.36. For other relevant aspects of Romans speaking Greek: Catalog group E.

<sup>281</sup> Quint. *Inst.* XII.10.27, cf. S.E. *M.* I.169 ff. (distinct pronunciation); D.T. 8–11 (syllable length); Cic. *Orat.* 159, cf. Gel. II.17 (vowel length of compound words).

<sup>282</sup> Quint. *Inst.* XII.10.57: “*prudenter enim qui, cum interrogasset rusticum testem an Amphionem nosset, negante eo detraxit adspirationem breviavitque secundam eius nominis syllabam, et ille eum sic optime norat.*” Cf. I.4.14.

Trouble with vocalic aspiration: Catul. 84, cf. Cic. *Brut.* 259; Quint. *Inst.* I.5.19, 6.21, cf. Mart. V.51; Gel. XIII.6.3.

<sup>283</sup> D.H. XIX.5.1. Cf. Quint. *Inst.* IX.4.47 (vowel length and rhythm); Var. *L.* III.272; Quint. *Inst.* I.5.30, IX.4.51; *GL* II, 7; IV, 426, 525; V, 126 (stress accent and calculation).

<sup>284</sup> Plut. *Flam.* 5.5; *IG* IX 2, 338. Cf. D.H. XIX.5.1. See also: D. Armstrong & J. Walsh 1986.

<sup>285</sup> August. *Conf.* I.14.23. Note the difficulties of African Latin speakers: *GL* V, 392; August. *Doc. Chr.* IV.10.24.

<sup>286</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XII.58; Suet. *Nero* 7.2.

ποιησαμένων λόγους, ἀνδρὸς κ[ἀ]μοὶ ἐπὶ τῷ κρατ[ί]στῳ διὰ τ[ῆ]ν ἀνανέωσιν τῶν πρὸς ἡμᾶς αὐτῷ δικαίων ὑπαρχόντων γνωρίμου καὶ παρ' ὑμῶν ἐν τοῖς ἐπιφανεστάτοις καταριθμου[μέ]νου. ἐγὼ οὖν ἀπὸ τῆς πρώτης ἡλικίας εὐνοϊκῶς πρὸς τῆ[ν πό]λιν ὑμῶν δι[α]κεείμενος [–  
MDAI (A), XX (1895) 386,

The syntax plods. Impersonal, conservative language with an insipid absence of particles tempers any originality. Some flair, albeit no great panache, occurs in a suitably Attic use of hyperbaton—ἐπὶ τῆ ψευδῶς ἐπιστολῆ πρὸς ὑμᾶς κομισθείση. The letter befits a novice or one still learning the language.

Two other contemporaneous examples do not evoke his future personality, or any character in particular. One letter dated to 55, addressed to the city of Ptolemais and the 6475 Hellenes in the Arsinoite nome, bears no marked difference in tone and language from the letter to Rhodes. The partial remains of another, directed to a certain Phrygian named Menophilos, are similar enough to place it to this early period.<sup>287</sup> In each example the pen behind the imperial voice eschewed contrivance and pretension, thereby departing (it may be surmised) from the style of his Latin speeches at Rome.<sup>288</sup> But the simplicity does not imply scholastic difficulty. Whether the Emperor wrote the drafts, whole product, or nothing of these letters, they nonetheless typify the expectations for Nero's prose-compositional ability and epistolary etiquette at the time. The letters represent how Nero should have sounded for his age, or how people thought he should sound.

Any eloquence from the imperial novitiate contrasts with a notorious piece of legislation. The last specimen dates to 67, a part of the speech that Nero gave at Corinth to liberate the province of Achaëa—more plausibly from a governor than the Empire.<sup>289</sup> In addition to the format of delivery, both persona and style are dramatically changed:

ἀπροσδόκητον ὑμῶν, ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες, δωρεάν,<sup>b</sup> εἰ καὶ μηδὲν παρὰ τῆς ἐμῆς μεγαλοφροσύνης ἀνέλπιστον,<sup>a</sup> χαρίζομαι, τοσαύτην, ὅσην οὐκ ἐχωρήσατε αἰτεῖσθαι.<sup>a</sup> πάντες οἱ τὴν Ἀχαΐαν καὶ τὴν ἕως νῦν Πελοπόννησον κατοικοῦντες Ἕλληνες,<sup>a</sup> λάβετ' ἐλευθερίαν ἀνισφορίαν,<sup>a</sup> ἣν οἶδ' ἐν τοῖς εὐτυχεστάτοις ὑμῶν πάντες χρόνοις ἔσχετε.<sup>c</sup> ἢ γὰρ ἀλλοτρίος ἢ ἀλλήλοισ ἐδουλεύσατε.<sup>c</sup> εἴθε μὲν οὖν ἀκμαζούσης τῆς Ἑλλάδος παρειχόμεν ταύτην τὴν δωρεάν,<sup>b</sup> ἵνα μου

<sup>287</sup> SB XII, 11012 (Ptolemais); IGRRP IV, 561 (Menphilos). On the former: O. Montevecchi 1970.

<sup>288</sup> Tac. Ann. XIII.3.1: “quamquam oratio a Seneca composita multum cultus praeferret, ut fuit illi viro ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus accommodatum.”

<sup>289</sup> E. Gryzbek & M. Sordi 1998. For criticism and other interpretations: A. Giovannini & M. Hirt 1999; M. Bergman 2002, 281–3. And also note the tone at Dio LXIII.5.2 f.

πλείονες ἀπολαύωσι τῆς χάριτος.<sup>a</sup> διὸ καὶ μέμφομαι τὸν αἰῶνα  
 προδαπνήσαντά μου τὸ μέγεθος τῆς χάριτος.<sup>c</sup> καὶ νῦν δὲ οὐ δι' ἔλεον  
 ὑμᾶς ἀλλὰ δι' εὐνοίαν εὐεργετῶ.<sup>f</sup> ἀμείβομαι δὲ τοὺς θεοὺς ὑμῶν ὧν καὶ  
 διὰ γῆς καὶ διὰ θαλάττης αἰεὶ μου προνοουμένων πεπεύραμαι,<sup>d</sup> ὅτι μοι  
 τηλικαῦτα εὐεργετῶν παρέσχον.<sup>d</sup> πόλεις μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἄλλοι  
 ἠλευθέρωσαν ἡγεμόνες.<sup>a</sup> [Νέρων δὲ ὄλην] ἐπαρχείαν.<sup>a</sup> IG VII, 2713

So spoke the tyrant. Turgid and condescending, Nero's earlier diplomatic subtlety has succumbed to an exultation of his power—presenting his relationship with Greece, as some argue, in the absolute terms of Hellenistic monarch.<sup>290</sup> For the liberation of Greece encompassed an act of magnanimity on a scale open to the emperor alone; and whatever the authenticity of his philhellenism, Nero flourishes personal sentiment as the motive for the liberation—καὶ νῦν δὲ οὐ δι' ἔλεον ὑμᾶς ἀλλὰ δι' εὐνοίαν εὐεργετῶ.<sup>291</sup>

But were these his own words? Only Seneca is attested as an imperial speechwriter, and he was dead by this time. Nicetes of Smyrna had a similar style, and has been suggested as Nero's Greek tutor.<sup>292</sup> Yet that conjecture does not appear necessary. Most of Nero's tutorials were already held in the native tongue of the subjects, Greek; and Nero's style would likely have changed in the near decade that would have elapsed since lessons ended. Nor does the sophist hold any specific claim to the Emperor's manner of speech, which has developed a prominent use of meter. It is possible that Seneca contributed to this element, provided that the cadence in his reported speech is indeed characteristically autophonic—"tu mortís decùs mávìs: non invidébo èxéplò. sit huius tam fortis exitus penes utrosque par, claritudinis plus ín tuò fíne?"<sup>293</sup> The metrical aspect of the speech might otherwise lead one to think the author was Nero because he was then at the height of his artistry.

There are other reasons to suppose that Nero penned it himself. By drawing on the metrical-stylistic method of analysis employed by David Armstrong and Edward Champlin in the debate about Calpurnius Siculus,<sup>294</sup> several telling features become apparent. Most obviously, the rhetorical style employed in the speech is Asian—

<sup>290</sup> Thus E. Cizek 1972, 87 f. This regality is merely a rhetorical feature of Nero's speech, and not something necessarily good or bad for his public perception. Indeed, Nero would be quite popular in the eastern half of the Empire for years to come, even after his death. On Greek and Roman ideas of power and rule: U. Gotter 2008.

<sup>291</sup> cf. E.J. Champlin 2003b, 54 f.

<sup>292</sup> C.P. Jones 2000, 459–62.

<sup>293</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XV.63.2; E. Norden 1898, 332 n. 2.

<sup>294</sup> D. Armstrong 1986; E. Champlin 1986; D. Armstrong & E. Champlin 1986. The debate spans: E. Champlin 1978; R. Mayer 1980; G.B. Townend 1980; T.P. Wiseman 1982; E. Courtney 1987; B. Baldwin 1995; N. Horsfall 1997.

a manner out of fashion by the time of Seneca the elder. The mid first century saw a distinct movement toward Atticism that continued with the writers of the Second Sophistic. Asianism itself was no issue: its ostentation and flamboyance fit younger orators best. Yet here it misfires. The Asian mode of speechwriting preferred a volubility that lent well-crafted sentences a rhythmic quality, something which the Latin ear found to be unpleasant.<sup>295</sup> Conspicuous *clausulae* are expected in moderation, not at the end of each clause. Nero's speech is thus saccharine in its melliflence. A beat of  $- \cup - \cong -$  (a) is commonest, occupying seven of the fifteen endings.<sup>296</sup> Variation on this main rhythm  $- \cup - - \cup \cong$  finds three instances: once as  $- \cup - - \cup -$  (f); twice in succession with  $- \cup - - \cup \cup$  (c). Two sets of trochees (d) also appear back-to-back, while  $- - - \cup -$  (b) similarly occurs twice but inconsecutively. All these rhythms betray a fact about the author: he was a native Latin speaker. These patters obtain with far greater frequency in Latin than in Greek.<sup>297</sup>

Although examples of Nero's speech are limited, a progression can be discerned. The change is dramatic, as should be expected given that ten years separate the examples—a decade of rapid and frequent changes in Nero's life. As stated, it is not so important that Nero authored the letters dating from around the year 55. They represent what Nero should have been capable of writing at that time. The more pressing question is whether the address at Corinth was written by Nero, and can therefore serve as a valid point of comparison to the earlier writings.

None of the examples were scrutinized for their content, and purposefully. The content is unable to help determine Nero's role in their creation: nothing is certain about Nero's personality and thoughts. Style provides a less partial basis for examination; and nothing from a stylistic perspective precludes Nero's personal authorship of the oration from 67. That leaves several questions about the nature of Seneca's role as speechwriter.

<sup>295</sup> Cic. *Or.* I.83, II.85; *Orat.* 25, cf. 56 f.; Plin. *Ep.* IV.9.14, V.20.4.

<sup>296</sup> That being so, μέγεθος τῆς χάριτος (e) can be scanned as  $\cong \cup - \cong \cup$ . In the case of  $-ρήσατε αἰτεῖσθαι$ , elision of the final epsilon to  $-ρήσατ'$  is required to fit the common *clausula*.

<sup>297</sup> Using the data in A.W. de Groot 1919 and 1921.

## 6. *Ghostwriter*

Ronald Syme had a favorite epithet for his preferred historian—careful.<sup>298</sup> And often enough Tacitus may be praised for his comparative accuracy. But sometimes his diligence goes to arranging facts so that they might better communicate his vision of the past. An instance of this comes after Nero's speech to the Senate:

adnotabant seniores, quibus otiosum est vetera et praesentia contendere, primum ex iis, qui rerum potiti essent, Neronem alienae faciundiae eguisse. nam dictator Caesar summis oratoribus aemulus; et Augusto prompta ac profluens quae <que> deceret principem eloquentia fuit. Tiberius artem quoque callebat, qua verba expenderet, tum validus sensibus aut consulto ambiguus. etiam C. Caesaris turbata mens vim dicendi non corrumpit; nec in Claudio, quotiens meditata dissereret, elegantiam requireres. Nero puerilibus statim annis vividum animum in alia detorsit: caelare pingere, cantus aut regimen equorum exercere; et aliquando carminibus pangendis inesse sibi elementa doctrinae ostendebat. (XIII.3.1–3)

No conjunction or other coordinating word intercedes between the oratorical review and Nero's artistic interests. Nero used a speechwriter; Nero was the first emperor to use a speechwriter; Nero was engrossed in the creative arts as a child. The transition is paratactic. In modern translations a contradistinctive relationship between the second and last elements of this sequence is ubiquitous—and understandably so. Tacitus clearly implies that Nero's enthusiasm for art held back his progress in prose composition, though he does concede some small amount of success in versification. The informed reader, however, cannot fail at that moment to see why this would be relevant: Nero's preoccupation with performative arts increased exponentially. What would become of his prose compositional ability? The answer seems obvious, but problematic.

To insist that Nero did not care about rhetoric ends in a cultural paradox that is doubly more peculiar because Nero was so preoccupied with culture. The supportive logic requires him either to reject the importance of oratory in contemporary society, or to ignore its significance in political life. If the former, why have Seneca ghostwrite—laziness? This amounts to indulgence more than any kind inimitable influence with Nero. The latter is untenable for highborn Romans at the time, no less

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<sup>298</sup> e.g. *Roman Papers* I, 271; II, 478, 743, 806; III, 1006, 1019, 1023, 1058, 1152 n. 61; 1370, 1424; IV, 76, 197, 219, 232, 238, 250, 385, 392; VI, 48; VII, 527 n. 37; 568, 652.

one whose secondary education (as detailed in Sections 8 and 9) cultivated the skills for comprehensive excellence in oratory. Tacitus' antecedent scoff at Nero's rhetorical needs reveals the orator within the historian, and the narrative purpose of this tangential note.<sup>299</sup> It is an undisguised contrivance to prompt a review of previous emperors' oratory. That does not mean the emphasis on ghostwriting should be understood merely as Tacitus *orator* breaking through the narratorial persona. Neronian contemporaries identified speechwriting as an aspect of Nero's relationship with Seneca.<sup>300</sup> They are mute, however, on its importance and duration.

The rumor raises several considerations. First, it contrasts to the examples from Section 5. Nero's simple Greek evolved into a more embellished and melodic form over the course of ten plus years. The early examples lack any hint of the voguish gusto that revealed the Senecan authorship of his Latin speeches—they are boring pieces of prose, plain and simple. Certainly the Senate was the more august and important body, but the privileged class of the 6475 Hellenes and the island of Rhodes were not trifling recipients either. Inhabitants of places with history and pride, people of wealth or antiquity merited respect. Why was it acceptable for them to receive a lower standard of language? Perhaps the simplicity conveyed humility from a young person rather than lack of ability or respect toward elders; or, perhaps this is the wrong way to see things. Rome was where Nero's principate would be made or lost. Senators had been instrumental in the downfall of Nero's uncle, and to the new regime they represented a beneficial force to gain. They had to be assured, won over, satisfied. Impressive language and presentation were one way of catering to their best expectations. But that being so, it seems imprudent to attempt to deceive a caucus of professional orators.

The Senate was going to be a difficult body for Nero to impress. His education would assure the expected verbal refinement, and it was put to the test in the early 50s. Nero also continued to declaim into the first year of his rule, which would have been the

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<sup>299</sup> id. 3.2: "primum ex iis, qui rerum potiti essent, Neronem alienae facundiae eguisse."

<sup>300</sup> Thus for Seneca: E. O'Gorman 2000, 151–3.

last year of his secondary education.<sup>301</sup> Suetonius mentions this during a wider acknowledgment of how historical individuals had time to declaim, even during intervals of great responsibility and personal preoccupation. Two thoughts accrue. First, the passage suggests that Nero did indeed put effort into his oratory. If there were the possibility that Seneca could take some credit, then it seems unlikely that Suetonius would give Nero the benefit of the rhetorical doubt. Second, as declamations were improvisatory, Nero would speak for himself and as himself. Although an impromptu speech cannot easily retain the refinements incorporated into one prepared, there should be similarities. If Seneca's ghostwriting was something worth keeping secret, then having the young Emperor declaim in public seems a generous giveaway. Conversely, that Nero engaged in declamatory competitions suggests confidence in his acumen and capability. The essential question nonetheless remains. Why have the unmistakable Seneca write Nero's public orations?

Brief reversion to an earlier time, before Seneca arrived, elucidates matters. The general studies with a *grammaticus* were mostly memorization. The material neither taught students to innovate nor did it evolve.<sup>302</sup> A student commented on grammaticality and contravention in poetry; he would see the correct use in prose authors; he learned about the subtleties in vocabulary; he understood literature as language, not as the art of writing. Such an insufficiency of analytical skill, critical thinking, and prose composition contrasts to a second stage that focused on the substance of the written word. The lack of synergy between the two phases did not escape unnoticed. Over time greater quantities of material relating to composition went to *grammatici*, thereby allowing *rhetores* to become specialists in declamation.<sup>303</sup>

Declamation was a practiced form of verbalized exhibitionism, not preparation for legal discussions or to draft legislation. Classrooms and private lessons did not replicate the courtroom; and declamatory prompts need not be grounded in actual law or civics. Declamations practiced a student's rhetoric through argumentation based on the socio-ideological principles of the elite.<sup>304</sup> They versed one in making an

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<sup>301</sup> Suet. *Rhet.* 1. A prudent plan if executed well—"in forum descendit natalibus nobilis, de foro rediit eloquentia quam genere nobilior" (Fro. *Amic.* II, pg. 246).

<sup>302</sup> R.A. Kaster 1988, 12.

<sup>303</sup> J. Cousin 1967, 127–9; H. Caplan 1970; E. Berti 2007, 219 ff.; W.M. Bloomer 2011, 118.

<sup>304</sup> M. Beard 1993, 55. Cf. J. Connolly 1998.

argument that capitalized on its entertainment value—an exciting and arresting speech, not necessarily correct.<sup>305</sup> Artistry could awe the audience, imagination transport them with empathy, and so a declaimer might carry the day. Thus the most famous declaimer in the reign of Augustus broke under the pressure of his first real trial.<sup>306</sup> Those realities offer a practical justification for some assistance with the content of Nero's speeches.

Of the essential trio of aristocratic skills, therefore, oratory was the only available criterion to assess Nero. Prowess as an orator redounded to one's suitability as an authority to enforce obedience to the law, which is an important quality to possess as a sovereign. The capacity to persuade a Roman audience was also influenced by the speaker's *auctoritas*—the confidence that one's successes in the arts of war and peace inspired in others to defer their own opinion. Nero had yet to earn real approbation from Romans, let alone the distinction of a *gravis auctor*; and it would be some time before projects in war or legislation could pay their dividends. Until those returns arrived, the political team around the Emperor could compensate for his inexperience in charm and style—and without a handicap.<sup>307</sup> It was long held that detailed command of the law was unnecessary for a successful orator. Eloquence alone was needed; a general grasp of legal principles sufficed; practice furthered the goal of concinnity rather than knowledge of facts.<sup>308</sup> Nero could have a real impact on his reputation if his outward display impressed. But how much exactly would he have to impress? Was it reasonable to expect a youth to sound like Julius Africanus or Messalla Corvinus? Perhaps not as a teenager, though the surprise of so fluent a boy might add to a favorable assessment. Was it better to risk exposure as a plagiarizer? Apparently, yes. Nor was he unique in thinking so.

A similar situation induced speculation of an imperial ghostwriter with the Emperor Otho. Near two months into his reign, Otho arranged to meet the incoming armies of Aulus Caecina and Fabius Valens. To the Senate he commended maintenance of the State, and to the people he exalted the majesty of Rome. The mob met

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<sup>305</sup> Sen. *Con.* IX pr. 1, cf. Plin. *Ep.* IX.2.3. Whether it prepared one for actual public speaking or not, cf. S.F. Bonner 1949, 71–83; H. MacL. Currie 1966, 77.

<sup>306</sup> Sen. *Con.* IX pr. 3; Quint. *Inst.* X.5.18 (Porcius Latro). On declamatory factuality: W. Stroth 2003.

<sup>307</sup> K.-J. Hölkeskamp, 2004, 229 ff.; M. Stahl 2008.

<sup>308</sup> Cic. *Or.* I.234–9; 240–50; 251–62. Cf. Quint. *Inst.* XII.3.

his speech with the insincere approval endemic to that year. Others opined that he did not compose the speech.<sup>309</sup> Copious and insistent, the style evoked a man esteemed among the oratorical crowds, one known to take advantage of his own sonority.<sup>310</sup> The need may have been practical. Otho's achievement or maintenance of the requisite faculty in speechwriting is impugnable. He was not the man his father was, supposedly preferring delectation and decadence to hard work and the amenities of a career. He had also been absent from the City for a decade.<sup>311</sup>

Other similarities that Otho shared with Nero as an individual are superficial. More illuminating is the difference in their attitude toward ghostwriting. As William T. Avery noted some time ago, Otho tried to conceal that his speech was ghosted, whereas Nero ostensibly made no effort or had no objection to Seneca's clear hand in writing the *laudatio* of Claudius.<sup>312</sup> Both were at a critical juncture in their public career and needed to appear robust and capable as Princeps, but each suffered in the flair (or confidence) to write their own speech. Yet that appears to have been unproblematic for Nero. Most would know the emperor by eye, less by voice, and the least by intellect—a ruler is to be seen by all, yet few to meet him. Everyone would see what Nero appears to be, but not many would know who he really was; and those select individuals cannot meaningfully oppose the opinion of the many, who have the majesty of the State to defend their belief. Furthermore, it should not have mattered if Nero was writing his own speeches because style is not substance. Rhetoric does not dictate policy; and it is the positive reception or success of the ideas espoused in a speech, not the style or delivery of said ideas, that yield political victories. Any influence Seneca gained with Nero through speechwriting should have been limited to the sphere of rhetoric.

However the nature of this notorious defect is interpreted, it should be conceded that this was a resolvable issue. No honest reason exists for Seneca to neglect the weaknesses of his student. Other pursuits might have distracted Nero from swift progress in public speaking, it is true; and testimony suggests that they did. Yet those were

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<sup>309</sup> Tac. *Hist.* I.90, cf. Plut. *Otho* 1.2.

<sup>310</sup> viz. Galerius Trachalus. Quint. *Inst.* VIII.5.19 (speech against Spatale); X.1.119 (characteristics), cf. XII.5.4 f.

<sup>311</sup> Tac. *Hist.* I.13.3; Suet. *Otho* 2.1.

<sup>312</sup> W.T. Avery 1959.

issues Agrippina could address. Claudius' sudden death, on the other hand, presented scholastic challenges that were unable to be fixed by a stern word. The tutorial regimen could not have planned for the sudden series of events that led to the change of emperors: Seneca would have expected more time to train Nero. At the least Nero would have required one more year to finish his studies on a normal schedule. The other plausible terminus entails significantly more time—the consulship designated to him in 58, for his twentieth birthday. Whichever the case, progress is something that (judging from his Greek) would come in due course, and something that the untroubled years of 55–58 might accommodate. The progress itself, however, may have found a peculiar conclusion.

Anthony Woodman has argued that Tacitus' Nero developed a semi-Senecan manner of speech, while Seneca ceased to speak publically in a Senecan manner.<sup>313</sup> The incorporation of attributes characteristic of a longtime teacher is not surprising. More curious is the notion that Seneca, in order to conceal his ghostwriting, had ceased to speak as he naturally would.<sup>314</sup> If Nero spoke like Seneca, and people thought Nero's speeches were ghostwritten because they sounded like Seneca, then (firstly) Seneca's role in speechwriting is hardly so clean-cut as Tacitus makes it out to be, and (secondly) Seneca's stylistic dissimulation is ineffectual—Nero still sounds like Seneca at the end of the day, only now he sounds like Seneca in but one of two available voices. Rather than a faithful recreation of idiolect, the dialog in Seneca's resignation scene would seem to reinforce Tacitus' opinion that “mors Burri infregit Senecae potentiam.”<sup>315</sup> Seneca is no longer who he was: he has lost his voice at the Palace.

Other interpretations and the accuracy of Tacitus' speeches notwithstanding, Nero would grow out of the pedagogical aspect of his relationship with Seneca. He might well continue to value Seneca's advice and opinions on rhetoric and speechmaking, but this area does not contain a source of personal influence unique to Seneca. Six hundred other senators might have something to say about oratory.

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<sup>313</sup> A.J. Woodman 2010.

<sup>314</sup> cf. *Clem.* 1.2.1: “egone ex omnibus mortalibus placui electusque sum, qui in terris deorum vice fungerer?” *Ann.* XIV.53.5: “egone, equestri et provinciali loco ortus, proceribus civitatis adnumeror?”

<sup>315</sup> *Ann.* XIV.52.1.

The points made in this chapter have been short but necessary for the whole picture of Seneca's influence and relationship with Nero. First, it was imperative to note that Nero's childhood was essentially normal, both among Roman aristocrats and the Julio-Claudians. This observation, if nothing else, should make it even more likely that the socio-cultural reasons for Seneca's influence, which were adduced at the end of the Chapter I, were indeed in effect. There is no palpable reason for them not to be.

Second, there is a perceptible gap between historical reality and how one might imagine that Nero would turn out. But that is not a gap for the historian to fill. Nor should psychology be sought to supplement the relative dearth of information about Nero's life. Too much is not known, and too much is generalized or stereotypical. Moreover, a reading of Nero's life through a lens of sympathetic magic (where effects resemble causes) is redundant: that is already how the ancient sources present matters. Nothing historically meaningful can be said about Nero's individual personality, therefore nothing should be said.

Third, there is the issue of Seneca's ghostwriting and Nero's oratorical faculty. Although the case cannot be closed, the existing evidence does not suggest that Nero was somehow inept or otherwise lacking in the central focus of Roman education. That Nero would have Seneca pen his speeches, or that Seneca offered to write them for Nero, does not equate to a deficiency in Nero. Besides, Nero was demonstrably adept with words. He was a poet and a songwriter; and his compositions were good enough for Tacitus to believe that they had been plagiarized or written by someone else—and why copy something second-rate? Poetry and song do not, admittedly, equate to rhetoric and oratory, but each requires a degree of wordsmithing that Nero seemed to pursue actively. Furthermore, it seems incongruent to suggest that Nero—a man with a clear concern for high elite culture—would be insensitive to the cultural importance of oratory. Tacitus' claim that Nero was distracted from his rhetorical studies thus remains plausible. Its corollary, however, that Nero's prose-compositional ability never reached the required level for a Roman politician, seems highly unlikely.

With certain fantasies about Nero's personality and intellect either precluded or dismissed, this dissertation may now approach the most informative block of information regarding Nero's relationship with Seneca—namely, the tutorial period of

Nero's education. The observations from Chapter I about the social, cultural, and political place of Seneca in Nero's life combine with the present confidence that Nero did not simply paint and sculpt his days away, and so together form a picture of Nero's intellectual environment.

### III. EDUCATION

In the years before Claudius' death Nero was too young to begin defining his public character with great effect. Attempts were nonetheless made by having him deliver speeches, act as Prefect of the City, participate in military pageantry, receive the title *princeps iuventutis*, and engage himself with the communities in old Ahenobarbi strongholds such as Cosa.<sup>316</sup> Such excursions into the activities of public life were introductions done for the sake of experience, as chances to cosmopolitanize; and whatever the practical gains, they more immediately shaped the public perception of Nero and the promise he held. Yet the purpose of cultivating positive publicity could hardly have been divorced from the internal affairs at the Palace, especially given the expected (or inevitable) challenge posed by Britannicus to unilateral power. At this time Claudius' son was learning to read and write (and would be for several more years), which presented Nero with an unopposed opening to foreground himself in the popular consciousness—an opportunity that was clearly taken advantage of. But education was Nero's primary responsibility during this period, and not something he could neglect. If he could study a curriculum that was designed to flex his intellect, to impress others with the strength of his *ingenium*, then this mandatory downtime could be turned into an asset. And that is what appears to have been arranged.

Who designed the curriculum of Nero's tutorials is not mentioned. Agrippina is said by Tacitus to have held hopes of Seneca that “*consiliis eiusdem ad spem dominationis uterentur.*”<sup>317</sup> They might have concerted on any number of topics (including Nero's education), but little was inherently advantageous to Seneca's relationship with the young prince. Neither the structure nor the goals of a rhetorical education would benefit Seneca more than any other teacher. A *rhetor* was important in the context of secondary education, as he was the main educator of that stage; oratory was important for its communicative role in Roman politics; and Nero's academic progress, as suggested in Sections 5 and 6, did not bind him to Seneca by force of intellectual necessity. Nor was Seneca the only person involved in Nero's education. The presence of several other tutors should have diluted the exclusivity of his pedagogical authority. Each

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<sup>316</sup> *AE* 1994, 616; J. Collins-Clinton 2000, 102–4; R. Taylor 2002, 60. On the *iuventutes* of the Principate and the *princeps iuventutis*: M.I. Rostovtzeff 1905, 60 ff.; A.v. Premerstein 1937, 104 f.

<sup>317</sup> *Ann.* XII.8.2. The plural referring to Agrippina and Nero.

teacher, as well as the cumulation of their efforts, would affect Nero's self-construal as a thinker and person of learning. Seneca was ultimately replaceable as a teacher, but should he have had a hand in the syllabus, he might try to strengthen his own position in and integrality to Nero's educational success. Hardly a coincidence, then, that Nero's curriculum—the means chosen to meet the cultural expectations and educational necessities for a future senator—call on Seneca's strengths to find intellectual cohesion with the world of the Roman orator.

Chapter III focuses on the scholastic content and context of Nero's life, roughly from the period 50–55.<sup>318</sup> Prior to this time Nero would have had classes under a *grammaticus*, which should have been an arrangement that conformed to the general Roman experience—perhaps aside from the addition of art lessons. Only the teacher, classroom, and location of the lessons could change following Agrippina's marriage to Claudius. Substance would have been much the same: the goal of primary education was merely to become literate in Latin, and also Greek for Nero. The tutorial period, in contrast, finds specific details on who taught Nero, who these tutors were, and what they would have taught. Such a pleasant availability of information simplifies the approach needed to address the basis of Seneca's influence with Nero.

It is already notable that this period, when Seneca became an important fixture in Nero's life, was different from what other children of the governing class would have experienced. Most did not become attached to their rhetoric teacher, but neither did most have a senator as their teacher. Further, the capacity in which Seneca and Nero interacted is certain and simple. Seneca is only attested as a teacher, and can be expected to have acted as one. That allows Chapter III to focus on the following questions. What does the shape of this program suggest about its pedagogical intentions and values? What signals would it prepare Nero to receive? Does it stress or overlap with Seneca's own abilities and interests? And if so, how could these emphases strengthen his importance in Nero's life?

Three sections are devoted to the pursuit of these questions. Section 8 sets out the different profiles and specialties of Nero's known tutors, and thereby builds a pro-

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<sup>318</sup> Tacitus does not have Seneca say that he began teaching Nero in 49: "quartus decimus annus est, Caesar, ex quo spei tuae admotus sum" (*Ann.* XIV.53.2). Cf. F. Giancotti 1953.

file for the tutorial environment, its accents, and its contemporaneity. Section 9 synthesizes the available information about Nero's tutors to view them as a united scholastic enterprise, and subsequently what this communicates about the teaching philosophy that went into crafting the curriculum. At the end, Section 10 addresses the narrower issue of Seneca's status as a philosopher in the context of Roman education. Specifically of interest is the disconnection between the prominence of Seneca *philosophus* at the Palace and Agrippina's enjoiner that Nero must not pursue philosophical subjects. It is the only instance to suggest that Agrippina tried to curb the influence which Seneca might acquire with her son. But this is counterintuitive because Seneca's involvement with philosophy never appears as an admired aspect of his person. Instead, Seneca was notoriously popular among young males at Rome for his rhetoric—the very essence of his pedagogical relationship with Nero, as arranged by Agrippina. This aspect of his intellectual charm, and whether it would have all been applicable to Nero, merits investigation first, before vetting the less personal and more systemic elements of Nero's education. Section 7 thus begins with a view into Seneca *rhbetor*, and what could have perhaps been so appealing about his style.

#### 7. *A rhetorical menace*

Quintilian offers the longest description of Seneca's oratorical style, and the closest contemporary account of him as an author. The imperial rhetorician begins his analysis after a summary report of Latin philosophical writers (none impress him save Cicero), noting that he had to postpone any treatment of Seneca because there is the issue of his allegedly wholesale condemnation of the man.<sup>319</sup> Simply not true, he avers. These claims of personal malice arose from his own attempts to buttress the pedagogical dominion of *severiora iudicia*.<sup>320</sup> Seneca's acuity and wide breadth of learning are acknowledged, albeit compulsorily for his own self-assessment to carry, while Seneca's writing is also admitted to contain many good sentiments. Nothing, however, mitigates the faults; and so the deep professional disagreement proceeds without demur—

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<sup>319</sup> *Inst.* X.1.125–31, cf. *Sen. Ep.* 114. One perhaps an *imitatio* on the other: Y. Taoka 2011.

<sup>320</sup> That Quintilian was trying to dissemble is conceivable, cf. T. Gelzer 1970. His alleged hostility might have previously come across in *De causis corruptae eloquentiae*. On which: C.O. Brink 1986.

if anything, Quintilian covers the faultiness of Senecan stylistics with a renewed sense of energy. Peculiarly, then, Seneca's rhetorical *vitia* are never articulated.<sup>321</sup>

This lack of specificity has not eluded scholars, who have variously interpreted Quintilian's critique and its validity.<sup>322</sup> Most conclude that the heart of the issue is Quintilian's preference for an older, Atticizing manner of speech,<sup>323</sup> and this, given the language Quintilian uses to denounce Asian rhetoric and Seneca, seems entirely plausible.<sup>324</sup> It is undeniable that Seneca practiced a contemporary style of Roman rhetoric—"ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus accommodatum."<sup>325</sup> Originally developed in Augustan Rome, the style was an offshoot of Asian rhetoric that, much like Seneca's popularity, obtained primarily among younger members of the oratorical circuit at Rome. Seneca's literary style exhibits the characteristic traits: unhesitating sentences, grammatically simple and self-contained, sustained through rhythmic cadences, and brevity. He is colloquial yet vivid, periodic but conceptually coherent, and none too different from Cicero in diction.<sup>326</sup> Both the paragon of the classical style and the modern preferred the same *clausulae*, and most notably differed (it may be conjectured) in their respective preference for long periods or short *cola* during speeches.

Whether there is justice in Quintilian's stylistic criticisms or hypocrisy,<sup>327</sup> he raises a legitimate complaint against Seneca's denigratory rants on classical orators. The propagations of those opinions, or the wider acceptance of Senecan stylistics, was plainly a business liability for Quintilian's school of rhetoric. It was no good if his students also echoed Seneca's thoughts in the classroom as they replicated elements of his style—the *dulcia vitia* lamented by Quintilian as so popular among his pupils. Yet what exactly were they? And why were they specifically appealing to young students? Quintilian clearly has something in mind more specific than Asian rhetoric, but

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<sup>321</sup> Newer takes on Seneca's critics mostly repeat the ideas of A. Gercke 1895, 136–51.

<sup>322</sup> cf. S. Rocheblave 1890; E. Wölfflin 1890, 326 f.; W.H. Alexander 1935; W. Trillitzsch 1971, 61–8; M. Laureys 1991; H. MacL. Currie 1998; J. Ker 2006, 21–5.

<sup>323</sup> e.g. W.J. Greer 1925, 28; J.F. Leddy 1953, 49; E. Fantham 1978, 114.

<sup>324</sup> cf. Quint. II.5.22–4 and X.1.125–31.

<sup>325</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.3.1.

<sup>326</sup> E. Norden 1898, 306–14.

<sup>327</sup> Quintilian, though he clearly regards himself an Atticist, leans more toward Asianism. His discussion of the corruption of Asian rhetoric (VIII pr. 16 f.) likely refers to those who paid more attention to embellishment than himself.

answers are not forthcoming. Seneca's oratory does not survive and Quintilian assumes his readers know what he is talking about. Still, other clues offer possible insight into these 'defects'.

Quintilian first generalizes the Senecan *genus dicendi* as "omnibus vitiis fractum." Later he registers the four changes that would have improved Seneca's reception among mature crowds.<sup>328</sup> His assessment suggests an issue with the editing stage—certainly a deficiency in the ability to self-edit, and perhaps even a complete lack of secondary readers. Seneca was enamored with his own ideas, liked what he produced, and was determined to waste nothing—"velles eum suo ingenio dixisse, alieno iudicio." *Sententiae* exemplify this tendency. They are the most egregious offenders of Seneca's *dulcia vitia*, and greatly contribute to the vicious and broken style of speaking. Uncontested is the goodness of their moral content, not so the end they were put to: the unabashed pursuit of intellectual glamour was cheap and tasteless.<sup>329</sup> In the eyes of Quintilian, Seneca undercut his points to awe the crowd with gnomic frippery. The qualification of *dulcia* in this context of epigrammatic *sententiae* potentially offers to explain what about Seneca's maxims Quintilian found so stylistically distasteful.

Of palmary writers Horace states that "omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci | lectorem delectando pariterque monendo."<sup>330</sup> Such was the purpose of *sententiae*, as Cicero illustrates in a discussion of Hortensius' meretricious Asianism.<sup>331</sup> Hortensius' *sententiae* did not gain in depth as he accumulated years; and in the absence of substance, vehemence becomes superficial. The *minutissimae sententiae* rejected by Quintilian's more reserved form of oratory could refer to the same issue, although Emperor Gaius' opinion would seem to suggest the opposite.<sup>332</sup> As an orator who was vigorous in denunciation, Gaius disparaged Seneca's elegant and polished

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<sup>328</sup> X.1.130: "nam si aliqua contempsisset, si prava non concupisset, si non omnia sua amasset, si rerum pondera minutissimis sententiis non fregisset, consensu potius eruditorum quam puerorum amore comprobaretur."

<sup>329</sup> XII.10.73: "falluntur enim plurimum qui vitiosum et corruptum dicendi genus, quod aut verborum licentia exultat aut puerilibus sententiolis lascivit aut inmodico tumore turgescit aut inanibus locis bachatur aut casuris, is leviter excutiantur, flosculis nitet aut praecipitia pro sublimibus habet aut specie libertatis insanit, magis extimant populare atque plausibile."

<sup>330</sup> *Ars* 343 f. Quintilian cites the *Ars poetica* several times: I ep. 2, 5.2; VI.3.20; VIII.3.20, 60.

<sup>331</sup> *Brut.* 326: "in hoc erant quaedam magis venustae dulcesque sententiae quam aut necessariae aut interdum utiles."

<sup>332</sup> cf. Gel. XII.2.2: "oratio eius vulgaria videatur et protrita, res atque sententiae aut inepto inanique impetu sint aut levi et causidicali argutia, eruditio autem vernacula et plebeia nihilque ex veterum scriptis habens neque gratiae neque dignitatis." On Quintilian's Ciceronianism: W.J. Dominik 1997.

style, calling it *harena sine calce*—pith without punch.<sup>333</sup> Other interpretations are possible if lime is taken for a binding agent, as it is in concrete, rather than the ingredient to harden a mixture of water and pulverized rock. Seneca might then have had the right stuff to become a top orator, but had not brought these raw materials together to form anything worthwhile. The flaw with such a reading is that Gaius' comments came at a time when "Senecam tum maxime placentem." Gaius may alternatively be understood to mean that Seneca lacked coherence—though, to judge from the surviving literature, that is erroneous. The point thus gathered from the short-lived emperor is that Seneca communicated his ideas in a piecemeal yet ostentatious manner. That much is supported by Quintilian, who accuses Seneca of debilitating the thrust or authority of his speeches ("rerum pondera") with throwaway maxims. Both sets of criticism reflect Seneca's conviction in the suasive power of a well-turned phrase, and his tendency to build emphasis through repetition.<sup>334</sup> An intellectually grating technique of iteration rather than forceful, singular assertion may well have seemed pedestrian and unskilled. Further, if Quintilian's students concentrated on phraseological novelty more than the substance, he might rightly advise them against what would be a time-consuming practice.<sup>335</sup>

Several aspects of Seneca's writing might be included among the *dulcia vitia*. It is not clear that all the *vitia* were stylistic embellishments. Some certainly were, such as *clausulae* or bold antitheses. Others were likely more ingrained into Seneca's wider mode of persuasion. Students might note his favorite rhetorical question (*quid ergo?*), the tendency to stack *cola*, or imitate his usual progression of ideas—qualitative statement, expansion, repetition, causal clause. But perhaps the aspect of his style most accessible to a student was the use of quotations and elevated language for striking

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<sup>333</sup> Suet. *Cal.* 53.2. Cf. J. Stroux 1931, 349–55; A. Grisart 1961.

<sup>334</sup> Sen. *Dial.* X.2.2; *Ep.* 108.10, 26. Fro. *Aur.* II, pg. 104: "primum illud in isto genere dicendi vitium turpissimum, quod eandem sententiam milliens alio atque alio amictu indutam referunt." This repetitive tendency is also evident in the *Apocolocyntosis*, explored in Part II.

<sup>335</sup> cf. Fro. *Aur.* II, pg. 102: "neque ignoro copiosum sententiis et redundantem hominem esse: verum sententias eius tolutares video nusquam quadripedo concitas cursu tendere, nusquam pugnare, nusquam maiestatem studere; ut Laberius dictabolaria, immo dicteria, potius eum quam dicta confingere." For more on Senecan *sententiae*: R. Mayer 1991.

emphasis, leaping flamboyantly out from a dull and quotidian diction—essentially making himself quotable.<sup>336</sup>

As a student of many genres, the prose language of Seneca can indeed be poetic.<sup>337</sup> Diction and phrases from his dramas repeat in his verse work (or vice versa), and descriptive projections recur. If his prose incorporated his poeticisms, or if he elevated his prose enough to match his tragedies, the point is carried.<sup>338</sup> He also archaizes his language with verbs relegated to poetry—for example, monosyllabic forms of *ire*. These had faded out of prose use by the maturity of classical Latin. Caesar and Sallust, both elder and younger Pliny, and Suetonius avoid them altogether. Senecan prose employs *i* and *it*, often in formulae found in the tragedies, and usually with gnomic overtones.

Other poeticisms read as less deliberate, such as his use of the Greek-derived word *pelagus*. Only a handful of other prose authors use the word. Remmius Palaemon uses it as a notable example of a neuter nouns ending in *-us*, along with *vulgus*. Tacitus uses it to avoid repetition, which is why *pelagus* always appears near *mare*. Variation seems to be the aim for Pliny as well: the majority of instances occur in Book IX, which covers marine life. Columella also uses the word in his section on fish in Book VIII, to refer more specifically to deep waters; and, again, there the majority of instances lie. Among the poets Lucan uses the word with by far the highest frequency—more than double that of Vergil and Statius. Pomponius Mela, however, uses *pelagus* with twice Lucan’s frequency, and so exceeds the bounds of variety that could be tendered to explain his usage. It may be noted that Mela, Columella, Lucan, and Seneca were all *Hispanienses*. Perhaps *pelagus* was just common parlance in Spanish Latin rather than an example of affected idiolect.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> cf. id. pg. 108: “<uti> clipeo te Achillis in orationibus oportet, non parmulam ventilare neque hastulis histrionis ludere.” 106: “quid ego verborum sordes <et> illuvies? quid verba modulate collocata et ef-feminata fluentia....” 102: “itane existimas graviore sententias et eadem de re apud Annaeum istum reperturum te quam apud Sergium? sed non modulatas aequae: fateor; neque ita cordaces: ita est; neque ita tinnulas: non nego.”

<sup>337</sup> Examples in prose: C. Preisendanz 1908. In drama: H.V. Canter 1925. The poeticisms listed by W.C. Summers 1913 and A. Bourgery 1922 are refuted by H.M. Hine 2005. Note also the assessment of P. Paré-Rey 2012. For statistics on Seneca’s quotations of poetry: G. Mazzoli 1970.

<sup>338</sup> cf. F. Leo 1878, 158: “istae vero non sunt tragoediae sed declamationes ad tragoediae amussim compositae et in actus deductae.”

<sup>339</sup> J.N. Adams (2007, 404) also notes that *pelagus* survived in Romance languages from the Iberian Peninsula. For iterations of diction and monosyllabic *ire*: Catalog 21 & 22.

Why would this come to Seneca's advantage? Rome had enduring priorities in her educational system.<sup>340</sup> As Raffaella Cribiore's laborious study of school exercises shows, students reproduced traditional knowledge rather than developing their creativity.<sup>341</sup> They were taught to internalize the trusted words of *viri magni nostri maiores* instead of how to express their own thoughts. *Rhetores* presented a change of pace from the *grammatici*, as the students were now required to complete compositional exercises instead of grammatical analyses. Yet, as Stanley Bonner's survey of the ancient sources emphasizes, models still had to be followed.<sup>342</sup> In his imitation and use of material from other genres, Seneca could have been a model that afforded students the opportunity to employ their poetic and literary-textual knowledge acquired under a *grammaticus*. But they lacked practice in such forms of self-expression and critical reading. Hence students could not manage to replicate a fully Senecan flair.<sup>343</sup> Weaving poetics with rhetoric (the latter still being learned) proved a task demanding more than enthusiasm from the Roman youth.

Quintilian's complaint of inert *sententiae* may hold. The weight of the matter is still one of taste and trends.<sup>344</sup> Precisely so, Seneca's approach to rhetoric may have imparted a fervor for poetry to young Nero or tapped into an existing fancy. Literary culture was clearly enough an early point of interaction for them, as seen in the degree of poetic fluency presumed by the *Apocolocyntosis*; and if the proposed characteristics of Seneca's writing are plausible, he could have been all the better positioned to befriend a poetically-inclined Nero through his oratory. However the two connected over artistic endeavors in writing, nothing suggests that Nero would have been immune to the intellectual facets of Seneca's oratory which young Romans of the day found appealing. Nothing, albeit, suggests that Seneca and Nero particularly bonded over oratory, but that ought not diminish the significance of fact that Seneca was in a

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<sup>340</sup> The standard account of Roman education is still H.-I. Marrou 1965. W. M. Bloomer 2011 offers updates and further details.

<sup>341</sup> R. Cribiore 1996.

<sup>342</sup> S.F. Bonner 1977, 250 ff. Bonner's survey, while still useful, notably ignores the sociology of ancient pedagogy, for which: J.M. David 1979, 1980, 1983, and 1992.

<sup>343</sup> Quint. X.1.130.

<sup>344</sup> cf. Tac. *Ann.* XIII.3.1: "fuit illi viro ingenium amoenum et temporis eius auribus accommodatum." Later poets regarded Seneca well: Juv. 5.108, 8.211-4; Mart. 1.67.7 f., IV.40.1 f., VII.45.1-4, XII.36.8-10; Stat. *Silv.* II.7.29-32.

position to engender or encourage one of Nero's defining aspects. Indeed, of Nero's other known tutors, he was in the strongest position to do so.

### 8. *Forgotten tutors*

Both Suetonius and Tacitus mention Nero's extra-rhetorical studies. The biographer generalizes Nero's curriculum as *liberales disciplinae*, whereas the historian only mentions his pursuits in the fine arts.<sup>345</sup> Nothing challenges the validity of either claim: merely more evidence for the curricular specifics exists, as certain individuals emerge from an often overlooked Byzantine tome. Scholars have long known about these individuals in question, but none of Nero's biographers (ancient or modern) have delved into the significance of their involvement in Nero's education. Miriam Griffin, for instance, ranks Alexander and Chaeremon among the *sapientiae doctores* who entertained Nero in the years after his mother's death.<sup>346</sup> But there is reason to believe that these and other men were Nero's teachers—not the least since two of them are specifically designated as *διδάσκαλοι*.<sup>347</sup> The term does not directly fit in the Romanized educational system, though neither does the curriculum implied for this point in time. The last statement will be qualified in Section 9. The present section describes the men associated with Nero's education, noting their contributions to their respective fields—to wit, what made them outstanding enough to teach the young prince. When put together as a curriculum, their talents assume a familiar form of training for an orator.

#### 8.1 *Alexander of Aegae*

One of the two aforementioned *διδάσκαλοι* in employment was Alexander of Aegae, a man known for his work on Aristotelian predicates.<sup>348</sup> Alexander was one of a growing number of Peripatetic philosophers to produce commentaries on Aristotle. These commentators were not organized formally, but they evince cohesion in the texts that they chose to treat—unclear whether as part of a scholarly vogue or for a greater need

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<sup>345</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.3.3; Suet. *Nero* 52.1.

<sup>346</sup> M.T. Griffin 1976, 64.

<sup>347</sup> cf. E.R. Parker 1946, 45 n. 111.

<sup>348</sup> Simp. *Cael.* 430.21–6; *Cat.* 10.8–18, 13.15–8; *Suda*, α 1128. On the revival of Aristotelian studies at Rome: L. Minio-Paluello 1945.

of exposition. At this time the *Categoriae* received particular attention both in and outside Aristotelian schools, with five commentaries produced in the first century BC alone. Production continued with Sotion and Achaicus in the first century AD, Adrastus of Aphrodisias and Aspasius in the early to mid second century, and Sosigenes the Peripatetic toward the end of the second century.<sup>349</sup> The *Categoriae* is thus duly the subject for one of Alexander's two known works, the other being the cosmological treatise *De caelo*. Although neither work has survived, his impact on other commentators is felt through Alexander of Aphrodisias (the greatest of the Aristotelian exegetes), who used and agreed with the commentaries of his namesake.<sup>350</sup>

As for Alexander's status at the time of his hiring, plausibility suggests that he had published his acclaimed works prior to the tutorials. All the other tutors achieved recognition independent of their interaction with Nero, with none having convincingly benefitted from that relationship; and one of Nero's scholarly acquaintances, who came to prominence under his rule, chanced to produce a work attacking the *Categoriae* in its capacity as a scheme to analyze language.<sup>351</sup> Perhaps that was motivated by Alexander's own capacity with the Emperor, and the desire to offer the poetical Emperor a new way of thinking—a way which other poets, Persius and Lucan, had been taught.

The *Suda* entry holds one other piece of information, a purported quote from Alexander—*οὗτος ἐκάλει τὸν Νέρωνα πηλὸν αἵματι πεφυρμένον*.<sup>352</sup> The progressive or repeated aspect of the imperfect *ἐκάλει* implies frequentation, which befits a position as tutor. Suetonius and Cassius Dio also record the same sentiment, but instead ascribe it to Theodorus of Gadara in reference to Tiberius.<sup>353</sup> From context and placement the Roman authors volunteer (or echo) a comment on Tiberius' connate cruelty. Yet such a quote is not misplaced with the Peripatetic Alexander. Aristotle saw rhetoric as

<sup>349</sup> resp. *Simp. Cat.* 159.24; *Gal. Libr. Propr.* XIX, 43.1; *Dexipp. Cat.* 7.4. Perhaps also Herminus in the second century. The BC commentaries: *Simp. Cat.* 159.32. See further: R. Sorabji 1990.

<sup>350</sup> *Simp. Cael.* 430.32 (Aphrodisias cites); *Cat.* 10.19 f. (Aphrodisias agrees with), 13.16 (collectively *τοῖς Ἀλεξάνδροις*).

<sup>351</sup> viz. Annaeus Cornutus. *Porph. Cat.* 59.10, 86.26; *Simp. Cat.* 18.26. Cf. Alexander's view: id. 10.20, 13.13, 41.28.

<sup>352</sup> A. Stein interprets *οὗτος* in the entry to Alexander's son *Καίλιος* (*PIR*<sup>2</sup>, C 120). Better Caelius, Caelianus, or Caecilius. Knowledge of Alexander's nonentity son perhaps came from a dedication in a work.

<sup>353</sup> *Tib.* 57.1; Dio LXVIII fr. 1 (*Cod. Man.* 1971–4).

the outgrowth of character study and dialectics, the latter of which, being both Alexander's area of expertise and the counterpart of rhetoric, is the subject most suitable for him to teach.<sup>354</sup> The saying may also have been commoner than the ancient sources might lead one to believe. It is unprecedented, however, that the encyclopedist includes his own opinion in a biographical entry—*κακῶν μαθητῶν, ὡς οἶμαι, κακίονες οἱ διδάσκαλοι· διδακτὴ γὰρ ἀρετὴ καὶ κακία ἀσκητή*.<sup>355</sup> Was this informed by knowledge of Nero's tutors? Doubtfully. Seneca is absent from the *Suda* in any form.

### 8.2 Chaeremon the Stoic

Alongside Alexander, it is reported, worked a philosopher named Chaeremon. He can be identified with the homonymous Stoic philosopher and head of a literary school at Alexandria, and possibly also a custodian of the Museum.<sup>356</sup> The renown of his scholarship might have led to his inclusion in the Alexandrians' embassy to Claudius in 41—or, given his anti-Jewish rendition of the Exodus story, direct involvement in the politics of the riots stands within reason. His impact on philosophy or its scene at Rome was no greater than Seneca's, which is to say minimal; and only his allegorical works received any mention.<sup>357</sup> But he was in Rome and at the Palace. Any counter-statement requires a notable coincidence: Chaeremon's pupil and successor at the grammar school, a certain Dionysius, was a companion of the emperors Nero through Trajan.<sup>358</sup>

Chaeremon perhaps became known to Agrippina or Seneca through a connection to Claudius, whose love of Greek and Hellenistic culture requires no comment. He belonged to the Sacred Scribes, a scholarly class of priests responsible for the most innovative work on Egyptian science, scholarship, and magic—an apt companion for the antiquarian Emperor. The appeal of studying under such a man is plain enough. The intellectual cliché of an Egyptian priest was a benefit in itself, but Chaeremon

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<sup>354</sup> Arist. *Rh.* 1356a.

<sup>355</sup> cf. the sentiment at Paus. VII.17.3. See further: A. Daub 1882.

<sup>356</sup> *FGrH* III C, 618; *FHG* III, 495–9; P.W.v.d. Horst 1984, ix. Some identify him with the addressee of Martial XI.56, e.g. N.M. Kay 1985, 192; M. Frede 1989, 2099.

<sup>357</sup> Eus. *HE* VI.19.8. Embassy: *P. Lond.* VI, 1912.17. Exodus: Chaeremon frg. 1; *J. Ap.* 288 ff.

<sup>358</sup> *Suda*, δ 1173. Note that a C. Julius Dionysius is listed among the ambassadorial *viri docti* in *P. Lond.* VI, 1912.

could teach grammar, history, geography, or astronomy.<sup>359</sup> Etymology, linguistic classification, or literary exegesis particularly befits Chaeremon as a teacher and as a Stoic. Thrasea Paetus, for example, also pursued grammatical studies, and maintained a pedagogical correspondence with Pomponius Secundus regarding declension and conjugation.<sup>360</sup> Chaeremon therefore seems likelier to teach a philological topic than anything un-Roman in its supernaturalism.

### 8.3 *Didymus the musician*

Not mentioned as a teacher of Nero, but someone *ὃς διέτριψε παρὰ Νέρωνι καὶ ἐχρηματίσατο* (and the middle voice suggests gainful employment), is Didymus ὁ μουσικός.<sup>361</sup> The *Suda* entry makes plain reference to the Pythagorean philosopher and musicologist of the same name and epithet, said to be the son of a certain notable Heracleides.<sup>362</sup> His father might be the homonymous grammarian active under Claudius and Nero. Otherwise the name might refer to the younger Heracleides Ponticus, who was the headmaster of a school at Rome and a student of Didymus Chalkenteros, the first century BC Alexandrian polymath—thereby making the son a namesake of his father’s teacher.<sup>363</sup> The first paternal scenario provides a link to the higher orders of the educational circuit at Rome: the second overlaps with Stoic Chaeremon’s territory of the grammatical schools at Alexandria. Both cases, however, offer to de-problematize the fact that Didymus is not explicitly called a teacher. His presence within the world of advanced learning was a matter of magnitude, not actuality.

Didymus is known to have authored a general treatise on Pythagorean philosophy and a comparison between the Pythagorean and Aristoxenian schools music theory.<sup>364</sup> The man was a solid mathematician, an industrious scholar, and esteemed by fellow music theorists for his work. He was also an able musician whose studies had practical applications. It is all the less surprising, therefore, that Didymus’ greatest contribution to his field should sit firmly between theory and practice—the syntonic

<sup>359</sup> P.W.v.d. Horst 1984, 61 n. 58.

<sup>360</sup> *GL* I.125.23–126.3; II.538.29–539.3.

<sup>361</sup> *Suda*, δ 875. Cf. A.D. Barker 1989, 230; S. Hagel 2010, 187 n. 139.

<sup>362</sup> Porph. *Harm.* (Düring ed.) 3.13; 25.4; 107.15; Ptol. *Harm.* II.13.

<sup>363</sup> The *Suda* is aware of both individuals: δ 872; η 463.

<sup>364</sup> Clem. Al. *Strom.* I.16.80.4; Porph. *Harm.* 5.11–5.

comma. Also known as the comma of Didymus, this is the interval between four perfect fifths and a seventeenth (two octaves plus a major third), numerically expressed as the quotient of 81:80. To adjust the Pythagorean scale, which is justly tuned in perfect fifths, by the syntonic comma allows for just major and minor thirds. Didymus thus devised a tuning that allowed ancient musicians to play chords on open strings. Moreover, he did so without breaking the Pythagorean principle of superparticular ratios.<sup>365</sup> Whether the pure thirds of Didymus' diatonic scale ever found musical purpose is unknown. One may still imagine the impression that a progression of sounds, so completely taken for granted in the modern era, might leave on an unfamiliar pair of ears.

Didymus' interests in music and musicology do not inform what he would have taught. In the ancient world, melody and rhythm were familiarly enough the pillars of musical studies. These were the topics by which authors divided their entire presentation of the field, such as the later musicologists Alypius and Aristides Quintilianus. But the ancient perspective was mathematical. The curriculum for any tutorial in music (more properly harmonics) would not have been performative. Didymus' noted proficiency with the monochord may be adduced: where it failed utterly as an instrument, it excelled as a tool to demonstrate the mathematical properties behind pitch.<sup>366</sup> Was this enough to spark Nero's interest in music?

Voice exercises were also necessary for oratory, and none too different from those used by singers. Cicero placed great emphasis on the sound of an orator's voice, making frequent note of the vocal quality of public speakers; and the voice was generally a salient point of physiognomic judgment, particularly of one's masculinity.<sup>367</sup> Given that Nero's voice was reportedly *exigua et fusca*, voice training would have been an appropriate provision in his education. Further, a hint at Nero's early involvement with singing appears in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis*—"vincat mortalis tempora vitae | ille

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<sup>365</sup> i.e.  $(x + 1) : x$ . Ptol. *Harm.* II.13–5. Only perfect fourths, fifths, and octaves were deemed concordant: M.L. West 1992, 160 ff. Note how he writes as both a musician and a musicologist: Porph. *Harm.* 26.6–25.

<sup>366</sup> Ptol. *Harm.* I.8; II.12 f. See further: D.E. Creese 2010.

<sup>367</sup> M.W. Gleason 1995, 103 ff. Cic. *Or.* I.251: "quid est oratori tam necessarium quam vox?" III.224: "ad actionis autem usum atque laudem maximam sine dubio partem vox obtinet." On orators' vocal exercises, their similarity to actors': T.N. Habinek 2005b, 94–102.

mihī similis vultu similisque decore | nec cantu nec voce minor.”<sup>368</sup> There is no suggestion that Nero plays an instrument, only song. That accords with Suetonius’ testimony about the musician Terpnus, summoned soon after accession.

The famous citharode initially joined Nero’s court to provide entertainment. He soon inspired the Emperor to begin playing the lyre, and so remained in contact with him late into the reign.<sup>369</sup> The anecdote suggests that Nero had been unable to engage with popular musical instruments, thereby providing a contrast to his involvement with singing during the same period. The genesis of his love for song is not itself of specific note: people like the sound of their voice more than they care to admit. Rhetorical studies, however, placed a special emphasis on the voice that unlikely let Nero’s deficiencies stray too far from his mind. In this respect, and the more so when Nero began to perform, Didymus could have lingered at the court as a voice coach—*ἦν λίαν καὶ πρὸς μέλη ἐπιτήδειος*—though his skill (more an accessory to his own pursuits) might not have stood up to the talents of professional singers.<sup>370</sup> It therefore seems more plausible that Didymus arrived during Nero’s youth and education rather than later, during his performative phase.

#### 8.4 Claudius Balbillus

A final tutor has been suggested in Nero’s astrologer Balbillus.<sup>371</sup> Both Tiberius and Claudius tolerated the pseudoscience of *astrologi*, granting possibility to their presence at the Palace. Germanicus had interest enough to translate Aratus’ cosmological poem *Phaenomena*. Nor do the extant details of the younger Agrippina’s personal life show a disinterest in auspices and prophecy—quite the opposite. Both Nero’s breech birth and her double set of canines on the right side of her mouth were respectively ominous and propitious foretokens. Nero himself shows confidence in *magi* and a prodigious interest in the paranormal, even suffering (so he said) at the hands of eldritch forces.<sup>372</sup> His appetite for the supernatural led him to investigate the subject; and with the wealth of the world at his side, he concluded it was specious mischief. Thereafter he

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<sup>368</sup> Sen. *Apoc.* 4.1.21–3. Nero’s voice: Suet. *Nero* 20.1; Philostr. *VA* IV.39.2; Dio LXII.20.2.

<sup>369</sup> *Nero* 20.1; Philostr. *VA* V.7 f.

<sup>370</sup> Suetonius notes Nero was attached to his vocalists (*Nero* 25.3).

<sup>371</sup> C. Cichorius 1922, 392–5; E. Cizek 1972, 44. On his career: D. Faoro 2016.

<sup>372</sup> Suet. *Nero* 34.4. He similarly feared to enter the Eleusinian mysteries. Agrippina’s omens: Plin. *NH* VII.46; 71.

took measures to curb suspected retailers of nonsense, though it did little to vitiate his personal superstitions.<sup>373</sup> His reaction concurs with contemporary views, which increasingly distinguished magic from religion and equated its practice to impiety or treason.<sup>374</sup>

Nero's initial faith aside, a Tiberius Claudius Balbillus is mentioned first among the constituents of the Alexandrian embassy to Claudius (a certain Chaeremon, son of Leonidas, being third), who is specifically marked out as the Emperor's friend. He may be identified with a homonym registered on an inscription in Ephesus detailing the honors Claudius gave him—perhaps for accompanying him as a companion to Britain. Given the honor Vespasian paid Ephesus on behalf of Balbillus' horoscopic services, Claudius' Alexandrian friend was probably Nero's astrologer.<sup>375</sup> An additional inscription in Smyrna reveals a homonym whose father was named Thrasyllus—an interesting discovery. Emperor Tiberius' teacher in the sciences was a certain Thrasyllus; and his descriptions elsewhere have the markings of an Alexandrian scholar. Further, the son of Thrasyllus (it is said) predicted Nero's rule.<sup>376</sup> Tacitus notes that one of Agrippina's loyal partisans is a C. Balbillus, whose loyalty was rewarded with the prefecture of Egypt in 55, following Nero's inquest of his mother's actions with Rubellius Plautus. The Prefect of Egypt could be the astrologer, who could have been one of Nero's teachers. But if not, Balbillus is relatively obscure when compared to the other tutors.<sup>377</sup>

Such were the tutors and the plausible subjects for their tutorials. One aspect of the above immediately relates to Seneca's influence with Nero. This is the observation that the content of Nero's secondary education, as inferred from its teachers, grants

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<sup>373</sup> Plin. *NH* XXX.14–7 (interest in magic); Philostr. *VA* IV.47 (actions against it), cf. 35; Suet. *Nero* 56 (superstition). He also wrote *De superstitione*: M. Lausberg 1970, 211–25.

<sup>374</sup> F. Marco Simón 2001. Pejorative origins of μάγος: J.N. Bremmer 1999.

<sup>375</sup> Dio LXVI.9.2: τούς τε ἀστρολόγους ἐκ τῆς Ῥώμης ἐξώρισε, καίτοι πᾶσι τοῖς ἀρίστοις αὐτῶν χρώμενος οὕτως, ὥστε καὶ διὰ Βάρβιλλον τινα ἄνδρα τοιοῦτότροπον ἀγῶνα τοῖς Ἐφεσίοις ἱερὸν ἄγειν συγχωρήσαι. ὅπερ οὐδεμιᾶ ἄλλῃ πόλει ἔνευεν. Embassy friend: Βαρβίλλω τῶι ἐμῶι ἐτέρωι (*P. Lond.* 1912, 105). *AE* 1924, 78 (Ephesus).

<sup>376</sup> *Ann.* VI.22.4. Of the prophecy “in tempore memorabitur”, but he fails to deliver at XIV.9.3. *CIL* III, 7107 (Smyrna). Horster hesitates to identify the two (*PIR*<sup>2</sup>, T 190). Thrasyllus' descriptions: Σ *Juv.* 6.576, (Platonist); *Ann.* VI.20.2 (Tiberius' teacher); Suet. *Tib.* 14.4 (astrologer); *Cal.* 19.3 (mathematician); D.L. III.56–61, IX.37 ff. (philosopher).

<sup>377</sup> *Ann.* XIII.22.1. F. Ritter (Leipzig, 1864) expanded C. Balbillus to C<laudio>. Kept by E. Koestermann (Leipzig, 1965). Cf. *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, C 813; R. Merkelbach 1978.

Seneca a greater amount of centrality than would be so accorded to any other teacher. He was a philosopher, orator, politician of praetorian rank, tragedian, poet, and something of a naturalist—and these encompassed the subjects that Nero was learning or had knowledge of. Seneca could thus be seen to concretize the ambitions of the princely curriculum, and to exemplify its potential. Nor would that have been the only source of enhanced relevance within Nero's educational experience. Seneca was an amalgam of popular delights and brainpower, rightly earning his celebrity; and his rhetorical mind, laudable enough for its successes, shows ingenuity in the censure drawn from Establishment orators. Such features empowered his authority as a teacher: the success of his method was proven. Yet influence outside the classroom does not always transfer to within. None of the philosopher tutors palpably impact the personality of their student. But this does not mean that Nero failed to learn anything from them, or that he did not appreciate philosophy. Perhaps it is no coincidence that one of the few surviving fragments from Nero's enormous corpus of poetry has definite philosophical overtones.<sup>378</sup>

The imperial tutors brought with them a smattering of subjects to entice the mind of the young prince. Their success in rearing an elastic mind intrigued by the higher questions of mankind is questionable, but not improbable. Nero's publicly private life was foremost remembered for its preoccupation with acting, music, poetry, and chariot racing. Other interests, however, are reminiscent of his tutors and their own potential influence.

Not unlike other cultural elites at Rome, Nero developed a keen interest in Egypt.<sup>379</sup> His fondness, however, became great enough that he planned an extended visit in Alexandria during the year 64, for which buildings and a special bathhouse were commissioned.<sup>380</sup> This plan finds resonance in the topos of famous individuals concluding their education in Egypt, though clearly that was not Nero's purpose in

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<sup>378</sup> Catalog 3.

<sup>379</sup> For a reassessment of Roman attitudes toward Egypt: M.J. Versluys 2002, 239–60. Also note the imperial household did appropriate certain features of the Isis cult: S.A. Takács 1995.

<sup>380</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XV.36; Suet. *Nero* 35.5; Dio LXIII.18.1.

visiting.<sup>381</sup> It is also entirely possible that, as Maria Cesaretti has argued, Nero's interest and actions in Egypt (both official policy and personal plans) were influenced by his education and the environment of his Egyptian tutors.<sup>382</sup> Some might also find it relevant that Nero covered parts of his house in motifs evocative of the ancient land, even though it was not a particularly unconventional decorative decision.<sup>383</sup>

Aside from Egypt, other personal interests and certain attitudes evoke his teachers. His interest in music, for example, exceeded mere performance: he delved into the instruments themselves and the theory needed to alter them in accordance with musical laws. Nor was he ever hostile to philosophers in the way seen under the Republic or Flavian dynasty. Further, if the special interests of his tutors in superparticularity and logical categories showed Nero anything about the philosophical life, perhaps it resonated with one of Seneca's many strains against the humdrum and tedium of philosophical specificity and abstract theorization. But these were relatively minor pathways to influence that Seneca might embark upon. The intellectual trajectory set by the curriculum opened much wider doors.

### 9. *Benefits and rationale*

Two aspects of Nero's secondary education would differ patently from his fellow *nobiles*. First, his studies were in no great part limited to rhetoric. The individuals mentioned in connection with his education are knowledgeable in several subjects, each with his own forte, none being rhetoric or oratory save Seneca. Second, these tutors were all active in extracurricular fields. The works and opinions they generated were respected enough to merit citation or comparison well after their deaths. Although not all were of equal or equivalent celebrity, the element itself was an important variable in education.

With whom one studied reflected wealth, status, and overall privilege. The aristocracy competed to secure (to the exclusion of others) the most celebrated *rhetor*

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<sup>381</sup> Solon studied under priests at Heliopolis and Saïs (Hdt. II.107; Plut. *Sol.* 26.1). Pythagoras was permitted to read the priests' scientific arcana (Porph. *VP* 6–8). The Magi taught Plato after Socrates' death Solon (D.L. III.7; Str. XVII.29).

<sup>382</sup> M.P. Cesaretti 1989.

<sup>383</sup> For any number of examples of Egyptian and egyptianizing monuments and artifacts in Rome, Italy, and the rest of the Empire (there is no shortage): M.J. Versluys 2002, esp. 58–89, and 323–35 for Rome.

and philosophers for their sons.<sup>384</sup> The eminence of a teacher tallied with the quality of their pedagogy. Prestige justified great expense, or *vice versa*.<sup>385</sup> Thus Augustus paid Verrius Flaccus a handsome HS 100,000 per year for his services, which was the same sum for Vespasian's imperial *rhetores*; Remmius Palaemon extracted an inordinately large sum of wealth from such endeavors; Epaphroditus of Chaeronea prospered from teaching enough to have his own library at Rome.<sup>386</sup> The ultimate benefits of working with any teacher would appear once the student had completed his studies. Until that point, the name and reputation of the teacher enriched the favorable anticipation of the student's *ingenium*.

The nuances of this term change with context and the speaker. For poets it was their immanent genius, the *afflatus* standing in contrast to *ars*, their technical ability. *Ars* could be enhanced, grow stronger, and become a potent tool for expressing one's creative impulses. *Ingenium* was an intangible part of a person. In the case of a student, *ingenium* focused on his inherent aptitude to memorize and recite. When studies terminated and learning was put to practice, the intellectual connotations of *ingenium* approach acumen, while a *summum* or *magnum ingenium* converges on perspicacity—valued qualities in an orator. Hence there was a distinct advantage for those who could afford more education.<sup>387</sup> Moreover, higher education was viewed as a social privilege, a natural consequence of status, and not a privilege of birth. The aristocracy was *ipso facto* possessed of a greater *ingenium*.<sup>388</sup>

Another consideration exists in what the tutors could teach. As Johannes Hahn's work on philosophers suggests, Nero's tutors adhered to the common picture of secondary educators of the Roman elite.<sup>389</sup> They were members of the upper class, professionals esteemed at Rome, and possessed of trans-Mediterranean reputations—eclipsing the norm rather than abandoning it. Knowledge was desired for Nero insofar

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<sup>384</sup> cf. J. Christes 1979, 181 ff.

<sup>385</sup> Quint. *Inst.* II.3.1: "ne illorum quidem persuasio silentio transeunda est, qui, etiam cum idoneos rhetori pueros putaverunt, non tamen continuo tradendos eminentissimo credunt, sed apud minores aliquamdiu detinent."

<sup>386</sup> Suet. *Gram.* 17, 23; *Ves.* 18; *Suda*, ε 2004. Note the prices: Suet. *Gram.* 3.

<sup>387</sup> Catalog 20. And note a rare divergence in Cicero, "P. Murena mediocri ingenio sed magno studio rerum veterum, litterarum et studiosus et non imperitus, multae industriae et magni laboris fuit" (*Brut.* 75)

<sup>388</sup> Explained more fully by A. Corbeill 2001.

<sup>389</sup> J. Hahn 1989, 80.

as it would help his oratory; and the liberal arts provided endless material for an orator's education. Metaphors from astronomy, appeals based on ethics, parallels drawn from history and mythology were all valued recourses. Nevertheless, the substance of what they had to offer Nero still diverges from expectation.<sup>390</sup> Seneca the rhetorician, Alexander the logician, Chaeremon the grammarian, and a Pythagorean musicologist—the combination is anachronistic in its breadth. Adding any of their disciplines to a usual course in rhetoric would not by itself create an expert orator, and neither was it thought to. Extra-rhetorical studies helped form a man who was both adept and adaptable. But the unison of the tutors' specialties caters to a vision more concrete than general excellence. It evokes Cicero's education, his treatises on oratorical training, and his thoughts about the ideal orator. The parallels between their educational tracks not only provide a precedent to interpret the evidence as done above, but it also suggests the next intended stage of Nero's education—philosophy. That would certainly a stronger role for Seneca in the formation of Nero's curriculum.

Cicero opened a speech in 62 BC by affirming his debts to a teacher who knew nothing of public speaking. The master orator had not limited his studies to rhetoric, but absorbed "omnes artes quae ad humanitatem pertinent." These subjects, he continues, are important to study as a youth: they shape the development of one's humanity—and they happen to be completely familiar to Nero's secondary education. Poetry, geometry, music, and dialectics are the specific *studia* by which "puerorum mentes ad humanitatem fingerentur."<sup>391</sup> Few Romans would have been introduced to anything other than poetry during their education, but this particular selection of subjects was not inspired by a purely Roman take on higher learning. The advocacy of a broader curriculum reflects Cicero's own experience. Particularly evoked is his time with Diodotus, the blind Stoic who was no less able to give lessons on geometry than dialectics and "fidibus Pythagoreorum more uteretur."<sup>392</sup>

An unusual inclusion in Cicero's secondary education, and all the more so for Nero, is the Greek course of mathematical arts—astronomy, music theory, geometry,

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<sup>390</sup> cf. M.A. Levi 1949, 93 f.

<sup>391</sup> *Or.* III.58, cf. Quint. *Inst.* I.10.37 f. More general Roman attitudes: I. Hadot 1997.

<sup>392</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* V.113 (geometry, music); *Brut.* 309 (dialectics). Generally: *Luc.* II.115; *ND* I.6.

and arithmetic. A most basic reason for the Roman reluctance to pursue these disciplines is that, in contrast to the word-based concentration of oratorical studies, mathematics trained students in non-verbal manners of thought. Arithmetic investigated the nature and interaction of numbers; geometry, numbers as shapes; astronomy, shapes in motion; harmonics, the relationship between numbers. Geometry and arithmetic offered benefits that were practical enough for even the Romans to study them in special schools, but the other two were too theoretical. Indeed, in grouping these four subjects together Pythagoras was credited with changing their study into a liberal pursuit, moving away from practical applications to the abstract.<sup>393</sup> Mathematics thus came to be viewed as a mental whetstone, something to sharpen the *ingenium* through theoretical problem solving.<sup>394</sup> Yet the range of mathematical subjects failed to interest the Romans. None of the emperors supported mathematics as the Hellenistic kings had; and the language of instruction, like that of philosophy, remained Greek. Even the most basic elements of mathematics were so neglected that Euclid was translated into Latin only by the time of Boethius. Some might nonetheless suppose that, from a purely statistical basis, Rome would manage to produce a noteworthy mathematician. They would be incorrect.

Cicero's educational interest in these subjects is near singular among the rhetorical crowd at Rome. Quintilian is the only other individual to support mathematics in a personal portrait of the master orator. Support, however, is not synonymous with realization; and the Spaniard may have come to the opinion merely because it was a Ciceronian ideal—his reasoning (legal cases involving boundary disputes) rings somewhat specific, if not hollow.<sup>395</sup> Quintilian, Tacitus, and the younger Pliny never show themselves to be mathematically adept, nor claim to be so. The only serious exponents were their practitioners, namely philosophers, as these were areas of study stipulated by Plato.<sup>396</sup> But the authenticity of Cicero's interest should not be doubted. The text

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<sup>393</sup> Nicom. *Ar.* I.3.4; e.g. Hippias and Theodorus of Cyrene (Pl. *Prt.* 318e; *Tht.* 145a); Procl. *Euc.* 65.15–21.

<sup>394</sup> Cic. *Rep.* I.30; Quint. *Inst.* I.10.34.

<sup>395</sup> I.10.35 f. The future Emperor Otho settled a boundary dispute, albeit not with geometry (Suet. *Otho* 4.2).

<sup>396</sup> *R.* 525a–31e.

of Aratus, it may be safely assumed, was in no great need of translation during his youth or later years.<sup>397</sup>

Mathematical pursuits would help to balance out the distinctly verbal accent that was incumbent upon training in public speaking.<sup>398</sup> The three areas most essential for an orator's training were grammar, dialectics, and rhetoric—correspondent to Chaeremon, Alexander, and Seneca.<sup>399</sup> Grammar was the foundation; dialectics trained the student to express reason and proofs in words; rhetoric focused on clear and concise expression. In the classically tripartite division of doxographies, Stoic doctrine classified rhetoric and dialectic under logic.<sup>400</sup> In contrast, Aristotle considered any distinction between theoretical and practical branches of knowledge to be intellectual rather than philosophical.<sup>401</sup> His division of theoretical sciences (*πρώτη φιλοσοφία*, natural philosophy, and mathematics) accordingly excluded logic and placed it in a class of its own.

Cicero knew the logic of those adhering to the Lyceum and the Stoa. Both influenced his attitude on the relationship of dialectic studies to oratory and philosophy. Zeno receives credit for the close association of rhetoric and dialectics, and he first deemed each propaedeutic for the study of philosophy.<sup>402</sup> Cicero concurred: dialectics and rhetoric, as self-contained areas of knowledge, were virtuous pursuits; and proper liberal arts, like grammar and mathematics, served as preparatives—“ad virtutem quasi praeculti.”<sup>403</sup> He saw dialectics as training to simplify and increase the accessibility of complex systems such as the law.<sup>404</sup> But the standpoint of a man who embraced *omnes artes* in his youth diverged from the mainstream. Orators in Cicero's

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<sup>397</sup> E. Gee 2001, 521.

<sup>398</sup> Cic. *Or.* I.128: “in oratore autem acumen dialecticorum, sententiae philosophorum, verba prope poetarum.”

<sup>399</sup> Cic. *Brut.* 153: “‘dialecticam mihi videris dicere’, inquit. ‘recte’, inquam, ‘intellegis; sed adiunxit etiam et litterarum scientiam et loquendi elegantiam, quae ex scriptis eius, similia nulla sunt, facillime perspicere potest.’”

<sup>400</sup> S.E. *M.* VII.16; D.L. III.56, VII.39. Cicero attributes the division to Plato (*Ac.* I.19).

<sup>401</sup> Ar. *Top.* 105b; Alex. *Aphr. Top.* 93.20 ff.

<sup>402</sup> Cic. *Orat.* 113, *Fin.* II.16; Quint. *Inst.* II.20.7; Plut. *Mor.* 1034E; S.E. *Math.* II.7.

<sup>403</sup> *Ac.* I.5; *Fin.* III.72; *Part.* 80. Dialectics are binary in definition, being a virtue and a science (*SVF* III, 112).

<sup>404</sup> *Orat.* 16, 102; *Tusc.* V.72.

age did not venture so widely in their studies, or advance to such depths as he.<sup>405</sup> Dialectics flourished as neither a complement to oratory, nor a well-acknowledged prerequisite to philosophy outside of Stoicism. From the first century BC to the middle of the third, the progress and development in the two schools of logic is obscure, but its estimation among the literati of subsequent generations plainly sank beneath Cicero's own appraisal.<sup>406</sup> Quintilian registers it as a practice of orators from an age removed; Plutarch, Apuleius, and Maximus of Tyre do not consider it imperative to study philosophy; Seneca and Galen do not even rate it a liberal art.<sup>407</sup>

The presence of an Aristotelian dialectician with Nero is therefore suggestive, for Cicero (and certainly Seneca) had issues with Stoic logic.<sup>408</sup> Peripatetics regarded logic as a tool for philosophy, not a coordinate part thereof. In the setting of Nero's education, this attitude complements the Stoic approach to logic, which distinguished rhetoric from dialectics insofar as the latter encompassed the production of non-oratorical literature. Dialectics offered a body of technical information regarding the characteristic, configurational, and constituent parts of language, the psyche, and thence argumentation. And although Stoicism lacked an orthodox pedagogy, formal lessons in dialectics were indispensable for one to grasp the basics of Stoic doctrine.<sup>409</sup> Alexander of Aegae thus taught Nero a subject which he did not consider to be philosophy proper, thereby adhering to Agrippina's ban on teaching her son philosophy, but which Seneca begrudgingly did; and Seneca taught a subject which, when accompanied by dialectics, becomes propaedeutic to the study of Stoic philosophy. The philosophically preparative nature of Nero's curriculum is all the more evident when considering the totality of the teaching arrangement. The subjects taught by his tutors perfectly instantiate the duality of theoretical (mathematics, dialectics) and practical (grammar, rhetoric) knowledge so evocative of Stoic doctrine. It should have only been a matter of time before Seneca began to signal the importance of Stoic principles, not to mention his own moral wisdom.

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<sup>405</sup> *Or.* II.III: "ambiguorum autem cum plura genera sunt, quae mihi videntur ei melius nosse, qui dialectici appellantur, hi autem nostri ignorare, qui non minus nosse debeant."

<sup>406</sup> Compare with Seneca's unenthusiastic relationship with logic: R. Wagoner 2014.

<sup>407</sup> Quint. *Inst.* II.4.41; I. Hadot 1984, 63–99; Sen. *Ep.* 88.3–10, Gal. *Protr.* III.105.15 f.

<sup>408</sup> See further: L. Castagnoli 2010; Catalog 4.

<sup>409</sup> D.L. VII.46–8; J. Annas 2007, 84.

During 85 BC, at the age of twenty-one, Cicero finished studying geometry and logic, and perhaps concluded his time with Roscius.<sup>410</sup> The timescale for Nero to complete Cicero's curriculum then comes into question. Eighteen years was the usual age for elite Romans to end their secondary education, after which they either accepted a commission and shipped out to the provinces or remained in Italy to gain administrative experience in municipal jobs. Nero may, however, have had a more concentrated and intense timetable than Cicero. Yet even so, it would still be a whole year before Nero came to the usual cutoff, and three full years before he could conclude according to a strictly Ciceronian path. To split the difference: Nero was perhaps scheduled to finish the usual amount of education by the time he was eighteen, but considering that he was slated to become consul in 58 and that he would not be leaving Rome to complete any of the usual pre-quaestorian *cursus* fillers, a more infrequent series of tutorials may have been envisioned in the two years leading up to the consulate. The remainder of the 50s, it may also be noted, was not the most politically demanding period for the Emperor.

Whatever the trajectory and progression of Nero's education, it came to completion. He did not embarrass himself in the Senate or while declaiming in public. He improved his ability in Greek composition, poetized in abundance, and generally carried on without incident until deciding to kill his mother. The exigencies of his rule did not curtail the development of his artistic mind, and they unlikely did anything to downplay the necessity of public speaking. His education furthermore exhibits a positive effect: he gathered *sapientiae doctores* to provide his after-dinner entertainment.<sup>411</sup> An appetite for such debates suggests that his liberal training was extensive enough to enjoy (and by implication understand) their discussions and arguments—Suetonius' claim that Nero touched on almost all liberal arts looks to be no exaggeration.<sup>412</sup> As for the topical overlap between Cicero's education and Seneca's pre-philosophy curriculum, coincidence seems unlikely given the number of specific subjects. But if intentional, one might be tempted to view Cicero's educational precedent as a convenient way to camouflage Seneca's own views. For the whole arrangement stands

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<sup>410</sup> Thus E. Fantham 2002, 365; Cic. *Brut.* 308–10 (geometry and logic).

<sup>411</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIV.16.2.

<sup>412</sup> *Nero* 52.1: "liberalis disciplinas omnis fere puer attigit." Cf. Tac. *Ann.* XIII.3.3.

in the face of Agrippina's enjoinder against philosophy. What is more, a plurality of scholars believe that she was versed enough in Cicero's works and life to have imitated him by writing her memoirs after she was removed from the Palace in 55.<sup>413</sup> She would have known that Cicero wrote philosophy, and she should have been able to see how integral his education was to developing that interest.

10. *The politics of philosophers*

Agrippina's desire to keep Nero away from philosophy is hardly extraordinary or surprising. Roman antipathy to philosophy was long-standing. Concerns were voiced at least as far back as Ennius—"philosophari sibi' ait 'necesse esse, sed paucis; nam omnino haud placere."<sup>414</sup> Earliest objections stood on moral grounds: philosophers molested the conservative ethic at Rome. That was a potential danger to politicians. Romans used their *auctoritas* to source confidence in a proposition, whereas Greeks sought to convince an audience through argumentation—and philosophy was a tool for ratiocination. The greatest ally to Roman statesmen was a presence of moral superiority, resting in the concept of *auctoritas*. With both the moral and political connotations of *auctoritas* (none specifically of legal expertise or other manners of erudition), its strongest ties were ideological, to the unwritten *mos maiorum*.<sup>415</sup> The Roman politician of the Republic, as exemplified in the elder Cato's *vir bonus*, drew his skill in speaking from the perception of his public virtues and other commendatory attributes. Experience and perspective may develop an argument—"rem tene, verba sequentur."<sup>416</sup> But personal morality was the most fundamental requirement for the consummate orator.<sup>417</sup> Unsurprisingly, then, Cato's expostulations on Greek eloquence were essentially moral arguments.<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Thus A.A. Barrett 1996, 198 (n. 10 for further references).

<sup>414</sup> Cic. *Or.* II.156; *Rep.* I.30; *Tusc.* II.1. Echoing through to the imperial period: Apul. *Apol.* 13; Gel. v.15.9, 16.5.

<sup>415</sup> Cic. *Amic.* 13; *Caec.* 93; *Fam.* XIII.28a.1; *ND* III.7; *Ver.* 5.85.

<sup>416</sup> *RLM* 374.16 f. The sentiment is Stoic, cf. Cic. *Or.* I.20, III.125 f.; Hor. *Ars* 311. Cicero plays down the importance of familiarity with the law (*Or.* I.234 ff., cf. Quint. *Inst.* XII.3), whereas Tacitus does not (*Dial.* 31.7).

<sup>417</sup> Quint. *Inst.* I pr. 9: "oratorem autem instituimus illum perfectum, qui esse nisi vir bonus non potest, ideoque non dicendi modo eximiam in eo facultatem sed omnis animi virtutes exigimus" (cf. I.2.3; II.15.33, 21.12).

<sup>418</sup> Plin. *NH* XXIX.14; Plut. *Cat. Ma.* 23; *ORF*<sup>2</sup> 8.71, cf. Plb. XXXI.25.45. Cato's distance from Greek rhetoric is questionable. Quintilian speaks of his rhetorical treatise conforming to Greek traditions of such works (III.1.19).

By the first century AD Romans' attitude toward philosophy was not actively negative. Issues were still moral when philosophy does appear, though now obliquely so: philosophy opposed public service—an old idea, but relevant.<sup>419</sup> Was this foremost in Agrippina's mind? She finds a close parallel in Julia Procilla, the mother of Agricola. Tacitus says that his father-in-law was educated “per omnem honestarum artium”; and as Ogilvie and Richmond also note in their commentary, Tacitus elsewhere describes the “omnem omnium artium varietatem” in the familiar terms of geometry, music, grammar, dialectics, and ethics.<sup>420</sup> Furthermore, Procilla entrusted her son to the city of Massilia—a university town of Greek origin that kept true to its roots, known for its high standard of morality, on an equal intellectual wavelength as Rome, and a place the sons of Rome would visit for education. Yet she ordained no philosophy beyond a certain point.<sup>421</sup> To a rhetorical education, philosophy did not show enough signs of practicality, prompting one teacher to arm his students with arguments to rebut suspicious parents.<sup>422</sup> Philosophic contemplation, with its personal benefits to one's mindset and outlook, was indistinguishable to some parents from the indolence of youth;<sup>423</sup> and students took advantage of this indistinction. It would otherwise be peculiar for Tacitus to introduce Helvidius Priscus by marking him out as one of the few to engage earnestly with philosophy in youth.<sup>424</sup>

The idea that philosophers would somehow remove a means of vertical advancement lacks relevance in the case of Procilla. Nor is it likely to have been Agrippina's concern if the parallel is accepted. The more rational concern is that the subjects undertaken should fully pertain to and assist in training a Roman orator, as at least in Nero's case, the curriculum was also broad enough to accommodate a tilt toward the more theoretical—where the subjects become avenues toward increasingly metaphysical concerns. Expunction of all philosophical topics should, however, have been untenable because declamation requires an astute grasp of ethics. *Philosophia* thus appears

<sup>419</sup> Pl. *Grg.* 484c–d: τὸ μὲν οὖν ἀληθὲς οὕτως ἔχει, γνώση δέ, ἂν ἐπὶ τὰ μείζω ἔλθῃς εἰσῆσαι ἤδη φιλοσοφίαν. φιλοσοφία γὰρ τοί ἐστῶν, ὃ Σώκρατες, χαρίεν, ἂν τις αὐτοῦ μετρίως ἀψιηται ἐν τῇ ἡλικίᾳ.

<sup>420</sup> Tac. *Ag.* 4.2; *Dial.* 30.3 f; R.M. Ogilvie & I. Richmond 1967, *ad loc.*

<sup>421</sup> Tac. *Ag.* 4.3: “memoria teneo solitum ipsum narrare se prima in iuventa studium philosophiae acrius, ultra quam concessum Romano ac senatori, hausisse, ni prudentia matris incensum ac flagrantem animum coercuisset.”

<sup>422</sup> viz. Epictetus (*Diss.* 1.26.5–7). Such fears persisted (SHA *Alex.* 14.5).

<sup>423</sup> cf. Sen. *Ep.* 36.2: “nugatorium et inertum vocant.”

<sup>424</sup> *Hist.* IV.5.2, cf. Pl. *R.* 535c: ἡ ἀτιμία φιλοσοφία διὰ ταῦτα προσπέπτωκεν, ὃ καὶ πρότερον εἶπομεν, ὅτι οὐ κατ' ἀξίαν αὐτῆς ἀπτονται· οὐ γὰρ νόθους ἔδει ἀπτεσθαι, ἀλλὰ γνησίους.

to designate a catchall term; and in both cases, the maternal injunction seems to warn against the study of subjects beyond the point of utility to oratory.<sup>425</sup> Such advice was sound. Ethics and epistemology were not the most efficacious way to mobilize the Latin language. Musonius Rufus discovered that during the civil war of 69.<sup>426</sup>

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Seneca was internally involved with Nero's education as a tutor. Is he perceptible elsewhere in the process? Agrippina's ban on philosophy—better understood as a concentration on *studia liberalia*—unlikely troubled Seneca given Nero's young age. To immerse a youthful mind in philosophical inquisitiveness does not require the numerous ablutions with its waters that characterize Seneca's teenage years. A broad base of elementary studies offers its own variety of entryways into higher thought. It therefore seems intentional that the arrangement as a whole versified Nero in areas which would be incumbent upon him to progress into higher philosophical pursuits—giving him, in effect, the rudiments to see the world through the lens of a philosophical school.

It is not clear whether the philosophically inclined trajectory of Nero's education was an acknowledged part of the teaching arrangement, an oversight on Agrippina's part, or something altogether more calculating from Seneca. The years leading up to Claudius' death betray no hint of discord or dissatisfaction arising from Agrippina as to the handling of her son.<sup>427</sup> Much the opposite: the Claudian 50s are a time of prodigious good luck for the Annaei and friends. But once Claudius dies, Seneca's attitude toward Agrippina reverses. His political mind is quickly thrown into high relief.

Such change in the interactions of courtiers and Palace officials is expected with the replacement of the sovereign. Disruptions in the smooth dealing of government are valuable times for political factions to reassess their cards and gamble on where others' chips may fall. Seneca would not fail to notice that over the past several years Nero learned subjects that, in his own experience and the eyes of Stoicism, were

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<sup>425</sup> Suet. *Nero* 52. Note Emperor Gaius' scornful attitude towards philosophy (Ph. *Leg.* 56).

<sup>426</sup> Tac. *Hist.* III.81.1: "id plerisque ludibrio, pluribus taedio: nec deerant qui propellerent proculcarentque."

<sup>427</sup> The military exercises and speeches listed as Nero's introductory activities into public life unsurprisingly correspond to areas relevant to Seneca and Burrus (Suet. *Nero* 7.2).

propaedeutic to the systematic study and general appreciation of philosophy. That would increasingly allow Seneca to fulfill his moral-instructional obligations to Nero as his senatorial mentor in his own ethical terms, as well as approach the ingrained moral aspect of Roman oratory in a Stoic vein should he so choose. And given that their relationship positioned Nero to approach Seneca not merely as a rhetoric instructor, but as a source of general knowledge, Seneca would seem to be in an excellent position to assume the role of a philosophical counsel or moral advisor. Similarly, as Nero became more able to see the world in terms of virtue ethics (as all ancient philosophies were eudemonic), Seneca could begin to signal his own relative virtues; and, incidentally, his entire corpus of philosophical treatises would themselves become signals of, *inter alia*, Seneca's worldly knowledge and practical wisdom. This development was something he could take advantage of and use to keep the new emperor engaged in an uneven personal relationship. Moreover, given the analytical and argumentative style of Seneca's philosophy, being Nero's *rhetor* gave Seneca a unique opportunity to help the young prince understand his own treatises.<sup>428</sup> Little surprise, then, that the first literary salvo of the new regime is Seneca's—and thoroughly philosophical.

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<sup>428</sup> M. Wilson 2007, 428: "The admonitory imperative of Senecan philosophy clearly anticipates a need for the linguistic skills supplied by rhetoric."

PART I  
CONCLUSION

Part I began with the goal of establishing the factors in Nero's youth that could have shaped his relationship with Seneca or contributed directly to Seneca's influence, and from that explore the signals which Nero's life allowed Seneca to make or simply which signals Nero would be able to perceive. Under the influence of social choice theory, Part I framed Seneca's relationship with Nero in terms of Roman culture and societal norms in order to probe what could have allowed Seneca to offer 'better' advice or make sounder interpersonal judgments. Within the game-theoretical framework established in the Introduction, the answer would appear to be Seneca's position as an arbiter of propriety and decorum in Nero's life, the impact of which would have been heightened by Nero's conflict with the other major source of moral guidance in his life, namely Agrippina. But before offering a more encompassing take on Seneca's influence with Nero, a review of the above-made points seems prudent.

Chapter I first sought to recognize the trends and tendencies of Suetonius' bias to separate basic and credible claims from unlikelihood, patent falsity, and the elaborations that appear in his biography of Nero. Thereafter followed a profile of the known individuals in Nero's childhood and the roles they were associated with. Suetonius' claim about the occupational history of Nero's two pedagogues received skepticism: Asconius Labeo was investigated due to the importance of a *tutor* in rearing a fatherless child. The conclusion was that none of the known individuals from Nero's pre-49 domestic life would have remained socially relevant after moving to the Palace. The new environment precluded their usefulness as a source of (what now needed to be elite) knowledge and protocol, which devolved them into friends—albeit of long standing. Additionally, it was argued that Agrippina's husbands after Nero's father, Domitius, were fleeting sources of influence and authority, and ultimately removed from the picture by the time when their elite status would have been relevant to Nero's life. By virtue of these circumstances, Seneca's role as *rhetor* and his status as a senator should have put him in a commanding position of moral authority with Nero.

The picture to develop contains certain nuances. For one, Seneca becomes the first dependable and stable aristocratic male with whom Nero is known to have had frequent contact. Secondly, as also evinced in the profiles of the other tutors from Chapter III, Seneca is the only person with his level of cultural standing and social class, save Claudius, known to have had a relationship with Nero at that time—exactly when such things became important for the sociocultural and intellectual education of an aristocrat. Seneca, it was concluded, had the best-known opportunity to come into a majority of the shares for sociocultural and moral authority in Nero’s life. (That point is further emphasized in Chapter III, where Seneca is shown to have a wide applicability to Nero’s intellectual and moral development.) This suggests that it would have been acceptable for Seneca, if not expected of him, to emphasize the socially normative or ethically admirable aspects of himself, and generally attune Nero to the signals of proper conduct for Roman men.

Chapter II presented something of a digression between the parts buffering it. An argument was made against the suitability of psychoanalysis, despite that Chapter I examines Nero’s personal life experiences for people or events that could have impacted his relationship with Seneca. Emotional conjectures on Nero’s connection to Seneca were shunned in favor of evidence more purely intellectual. The point was also made that Nero’s childhood, although traumatic from a modern Western standpoint, was unexceptional in Roman terms. There was nothing ostensibly ‘wrong’ with Nero’s childhood.

Following that, Nero’s oratory became the focus in Sections 4 and 5. Put under scrutiny is Tacitus’ claim that Nero was a rhetorical invalid, dependent on Seneca for suitable speechwriting. The only evidence to check his claim is several samples of Greek. Three exist from Nero’s youth, but only one from the 60s (the proclamation at Corinth). The change in style is patent and dramatic. So too is the gap in time between the examples. Following examination, no notable weakness manifests when working under the assumption either that Nero composed each specimen, or that each was composed to reflect Nero’s ability and style at their respective times. The writing style of his youth is plain and understated: for that of his adulthood, rhythmic and elaborate. Moreover, the cultural importance of oratory renders Tacitus’ contention about Nero (and Seneca’s ‘secret’ role at the Palace) difficult to believe with absolute

conviction. From this it was concluded that speechwriting unlikely provided Seneca with a real source of influence over Nero; and even if it did, it was not a source that would last indefinitely.

Chapter III covered Nero's secondary education and how Seneca compliments or conflicts with that proposed framework. Attention first went to Seneca himself as a stylistic celebrity and figure of schoolboy admiration. From Quintilian's expostulation with Senecan rhetoric, it was suggested that the distinguishing and disagreeable feature of his style was the jarring appearance of poetical turns of phrase. Seneca's poetry and drama could thus readily connect to Nero's own preferred diversions, and it may have been a mutual interest that drew the young prince to his teacher. It is, however, also possible that Seneca's competence in verse composition engendered Nero's interests in poetry rather than tapping into a preexisting fancy. In either case, Seneca's established style presents a point that brings the two together through mutual interests.

The remainder of Chapter III explored the personalities entrusted with educating Nero at the secondary level, and the apparent approach taken toward the process. The respective talents of the tutors, it was noted, correspond to the subjects that Cicero studied as a youth and subsequently advocated in his own treatises on orators and oratorical training. More importantly, the combination of subjects is propaedeutic to the study of philosophy, both insofar as Cicero prosecuted his education and according to Stoics. The apparent trajectory of Nero's education toward philosophy is potentially complicated by Agrippina's well-known prohibition against such studies. As a ban on studying anything philosophical is both unreasonable and detrimental to training a Roman orator, it was argued that Agrippina likely intended to limit the pursuit of non-rhetorical studies to what was useful and pertinent to an orator. Nor does the ban seem to have anything to do with Seneca and his own philosophical lifestyle, given the number of philosophers surrounding her son.

From this it was suggested that Nero would be able to appreciate Seneca as a philosophically minded individual, and that Seneca would in turn be able to produce signals reflecting his philosophical beliefs and moral knowledge. By giving Nero the background to understand moral philosophy, Seneca could hope to shift the seat of

his socio-moral authority with Nero away from his professional experience and expertise—which would arguably become less impressive as Nero increased his presence in public affairs and politics, and certainly less unique as Nero socialized with other senators—toward the wisdom he has gained by experiencing life through the lens of Stoicism. If Seneca could prepare Nero to understand philosophy, then he could frame issues of importance in Stoic terms. And if he could convince Nero of the personal value in thinking Stoically, then he would have likely secured his next source of influence and authority.

So go the deductions. At this point some may wonder whether there would have been any value in comparing Seneca and Nero to other relationships that shared a similar dynamic. For without a doubt, Seneca was neither the first nor the last tutor to advise a child emperor, philosopher to influence political matters, or teacher to change roles with his student. But there are several reasons for why this kind of a comparison would not produce information that is germane. Foremost is that Part I seeks to establish what signals Nero could reasonably notice and understand, and what signals would be appropriate for Seneca to send in order to frame the textual analysis in Parts II and III. The information provided by other, similar relationships would not yield the agent-specific knowledge needed to orient the search for signals in the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia*, let alone reveal what Seneca signals in those very texts. More generally, comparison conflicts with the present methodology, or rather, produces information inapplicable to the analytical approach taken here. This dissertation has chosen game theory and a game-theoretical breakdown of the historical situation circa 55 to contextualize Seneca's relationship and influence with Nero. As such, the terms and rationale of their interaction, as well as the significance of what Seneca signals in the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia*, depends on the circumstances—the game constructed in the Introduction. Scrutinizing a similar dynamic (say, Fronto and Marcus) would not reveal anything useful about Seneca's influence with Nero because, at the most basic level, they were not playing the same game as Seneca and Nero. Although they may have shared similar values and expectations of one another, they had different preferences (i.e. utility functions), and they were making decisions under different conditions about different things.

Moreover, as Vincent Crawford observes, “behavior in games is notoriously sensitive to the details of the environment, so that strategic models carry a heavy informational burden, which is often compounded in the field by an inability to observe all the relevant variables.”<sup>429</sup> Thus, rather than the relationship between two of the players or their respective occupations, the circumstantial details of the game should foremost point of concern in a comparative account. And for this game the details are quite important (e.g. Agrippina’s *spes dominationis* and Nero’s deep loathing for his mother), as they set it apart from other situations of bargaining and negotiation. But more to the point, this dissertation does not study a particular strategic situation. Paul Plass’ *The game of death in ancient Rome*, for instance, examines a specific strategic interaction between emperors and senators; and accordingly, he compares the various instances of this dynamic to divine the underlying strategic factors. In contrast, the relationship between a tutor-turned-advisor and his student-emperor is not a strategic situation. Seneca’s influence is an underlying component of his strategic interactions with the Nero, and therefore only useful for comparison with other individuals’ sources of influence with Nero—the problem with which, of course, is the dearth of meaningful evidence to support such a comparison. A comparison with other tutor-emperor pairs would simply not illuminate the essential goings-on in the game between Seneca, Nero, and Agrippina, or Seneca’s influence with Nero and his desired role at the Palace.

Returning the focus to the above conclusions, what else can be said? It becomes clear from the evidence that Seneca should have been able to derive a significant amount of sociocultural importance and moral authority with Nero due to the nature of Nero’s childhood and the demands placed on him by Palace life. As the most accessible locus of prestige and practical yet distinguished experience, Seneca was the one known individual whom Nero should, in a normative sense, have thought to consult on matters relating to the social and cultural latticework of the governing class.<sup>430</sup> This dynamic would have been reinforced by the central role that Seneca played in Nero’s education, which was both technical and moral given the nature of Roman oratory—

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<sup>429</sup> V. P. Crawford 2004, 345.

<sup>430</sup> Within social networks, both formal and informal, the institutions and norms surrounding them contribute to building trust: R. Hardin 2002, 46–53. Seneca is the individual with whom Nero intersects the most on the societal lattice.

particularly the declamation.<sup>431</sup> Naturally, though, Nero would not take to Seneca simply because the man was accomplished and his tutor: one presumes that ‘true’ friendship is not validated by expedience or reaffirmed by its applied functionality. But these aspects should have influenced Nero’s behavior toward and assessment of Seneca for the better.<sup>432</sup> On the other hand, it seems unlikely that Nero overlooked Seneca’s culturally sanctioned value, yet kept him at the Palace as an advisor and close associate nonetheless.

The nature of Seneca’s association with Nero would have had other effects on their relationship. As Nero’s mentor, Seneca could voice his ethical and professional opinions in Roman and personal terms. Given the circumstances, however, there should have been an implicitly imperative force behind Seneca’s words—certainly because Seneca was telling Nero these things for his own benefit, but also because Seneca was in part responsible for Nero’s moral upbringing.<sup>433</sup> That would change essential properties of Seneca’s signals to Nero. Qualifying aspects of himself that Seneca might wish to signal could be interpreted by Nero as suggested areas for personal development—areas which Seneca could clearly help with. This feature of their relationship would not have been in immediate jeopardy after Nero became emperor, though its duration was limited. It could end naturally as Nero grew older or forcibly if someone supplanted Seneca’s role as mentor, or it could be gradually diluted by the increasing presence of other individuals and their opinions. But until that point, and as long as Agrippina’s behavior drove Nero to look for authority and validation elsewhere, Seneca could use this facet of their relationship to influence the young prince. Crucially, then, Nero’s education allowed Seneca to wield this leverage in more specific terms.

As already noted, the curriculum of Nero’s secondary education was propaedeutic to the study of philosophy. It gave Nero the tools of logic and the general background in abstract thought needed to understand the arguments behind philosophical

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<sup>431</sup> How trust and influence differ, where they overlap, and how exactly trust enhances matters of cooperation has been argued variously. Cf. N. Luhmann 1979; D. Gambetta 1988; B. Skyrms 2008

<sup>432</sup> H. Kincaid 1996, 150: “individual behavior itself depends on social context...social facts apparently are always involved in explaining individual behavior; the bare traits of human nature do not suffice.”

<sup>433</sup> cf. R.M. Hare 1952, 171: “to guide choices or actions, a moral judgement has to be such that if a person assents to it, he must assent to some imperative sentence derivable from it.”

principles; and together with his training in rhetoric, the other tutors' subjects prepared him to recognize and analyze arguments from morality. Seneca's longstanding interest in philosophy requires no comment, nor is it necessary to wonder if he sought to capitalize on this situation—*De clementia* was written within a year of Nero's accession. Of greater pertinence is how this development might affect the way that Seneca could approach and interact with Nero. Nero's ability to engage with philosophy means that not only was it reasonable for Seneca to try to entice Nero into this subsequent area of study (it not being too esoteric or otherwise inaccessible), but he could also increasingly couch his own language in Stoic terms and present more purely philosophical considerations during their conversations. The philosophical persona known from Seneca's oeuvre could begin to emerge in his interactions with Nero. More to the point, Seneca could try to engage Nero in a new student-teacher relationship by signaling his own philosophical views and considerations, which Nero would receive with the lightly imperative force granted to Seneca's words by his position. And the beauty of such an approach is that it seeks to provide an experience, not a technical skill. Death is the only sure terminus to one's pursuit of the good life.

Thus, based on the available evidence, a pivot toward Stoicism and the philosophical appears to be Seneca's strongest means of retaining influence with Nero post accession. Although this hypothesis might seem like the product of abductive reasoning given the existence of *De clementia*,<sup>434</sup> that text does not explicitly attempt to situate Seneca as Nero's ethics teacher. True to its genre, *De clementia* is far more preoccupied with convincing Nero to use his power in a certain manner and creating a certain image of Nero for the public than it is concerned with explaining or even mentioning the complexities of justice and the ethical nuances involved in clemency. Nevertheless, *De clementia* is scrutinized for signals because it was addressed to Nero.

As for *prima facie* reasons to entertain this hypothesis, the game at the Palace provides strong support for such a strategy. A shift toward philosophy is tactically clever on several levels. For one, it provides Nero with a clear means to demonstrate his independence from his mother precisely because it is something that she did not want him to study. Even if Nero were not initially interested in practicing Stoicism,

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<sup>434</sup> Note also the relationship between actual and potential causes: J. Woodward 2003, 25–93; C.K. Waters 2007.

he might indulge Seneca to assert his self-determination. Another advantage of such a strategy is that it allows Seneca to pursue influence with Nero without engaging Agrippina directly. Influence is not a zero-sum commodity: Seneca would not need to denigrate or otherwise disempower Agrippina in order to gain influence with Nero. That would allow the strategic equilibrium between Nero and Agrippina to remain active, which entails less competition for Seneca to deal with and therefore less risk of immediately losing his 'shares' of influence to another party. Certainly there was the risk that Seneca's actions could upset the balance, by either drawing Agrippina's ire or driving Nero away. But that is where signals come to his advantage. If Seneca signals to Nero that he has helpful knowledge or that is interested in certain types of affairs, the onus is on Nero to engage the source of those signals. Seneca would be pursuing Nero's attention actively but not directly. The catch is that, while Seneca could send signals which Nero was sure to receive, there was no guarantee that Nero would find them important. Seneca would have to figure out a way to send signals in such a way that Nero would both receive them and derive motivation to act from their context. The post-mortem belittling of Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis* could most certainly provide such a context.

Part I has therefore established a basis to interpret Seneca's actions post accession. Without knowledge of the aspects that underlie his relationship with Nero, all commentary on the bearing of the ancient texts, be it on Nero or the Palace at large, would come *a posteriori*. And as extrinsic properties supervene on the intrinsic, the best evidence for any such desires and intuitions is action. In the period following Nero's accession, the most accessible of Seneca's actions are the *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia*.<sup>435</sup> To see if this hypothesis holds up, therefore, the dissertation canvasses these texts for signals from Seneca. That should reveal what authority Seneca wanted with Nero and his plans for their relationship more generally.

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<sup>435</sup> Thus F.P. Ramsey 1931, 156–98.

## PART II

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# SATIRE IN THE *APOCOLOCYNTOSIS*

Mid October saw the end of Emperor Claudius and so the silent turmoil for the throne. Seneca's pen immediately went to work. The first surviving words to emanate from the core of the new regime are his, taking the form of a satire about the deified Emperor Claudius. *Apocolocyntosis* was composed sometime after Nero's accession. For a more specific date of production, only the *terminus post quem* of Narcissus' death is available—perhaps shortly after Claudius', though ultimately unknown. The work itself brought Nero's relative virtues into focus, and gave Seneca the cathartic pleasure of celebrating the exit of a man whom he had reasons to despise. A recitation may have been intended at the Palace during the Saturnalia, or for limited dissemination among likeminded senators.

That is the mainstream narrative.<sup>436</sup> Beyond these basic points, however, consensus dissipates with fair rapidity. Despite its diminutive size, *Apocolocyntosis* is the subject of considerable academic debate—so much so that there is little benefit in reviewing the various and disparate ideas about the text. And yet very basic interpretative questions remain. Nobody has put forth a decisively convincing answer as to what an 'apocolocyntosis' is, or what it means in the context of the satire. Nor is there agreement on the (political) intentions of the author. *Apocolocyntosis* also occupies a peculiar spot in classical scholarship where seemingly the majority of references to and comments about it appear in works not otherwise engaged with the text.<sup>437</sup> This is not to say that Seneca's satire wants for concentrated attention, though the spread of research on the *Apocolocyntosis* does indeed tend to concentrate on a few key topics.<sup>438</sup> But of the *Apocolocyntosis*'s amply discussed aspects, the case for Senecan authorship bears repetition.

If the *Apocolocyntosis* is to pertain to the narrative of Seneca's relationship with Nero, then it must be believed that Seneca authored it. This is not, however, very

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<sup>436</sup> As in: P.T. Eden 1984; J. Adamietz, 1986; S.M. Braund 1993; C.L. Whitton 2013; R. Roncali 2014; K. Freudenberg 2015.

<sup>437</sup> e.g. R.A. Bauman 1992, 267; E. Dench 2005, 136 f.; L. Bablitz 2007, 233 f.

<sup>438</sup> viz. its *Nachleben*, biographical and political implications, intertextuality.

much to ask. The *communis opinio* is that Seneca authored the *Apocolocyntosis*, and it has held firm for over one and a half centuries.<sup>439</sup> It is also unlikely to change. Assertions for Phaedrus, Petronius, an anonymous partisan of Britannicus, and an anonymous late Flavian author have variously but unanimously fallen through.<sup>440</sup> Skeptics have overlooked the characteristically Senecan jingling and modulation of the narratorial voice, which is also an attribute curiously omitted by scholars advocating Seneca as the author.<sup>441</sup> Others cast doubts with the patently un-Stoic elements of the satire, and questions its topical suitability for Seneca.<sup>442</sup> But notably, the narratorial abhorrence of Claudius does not conflict with Stoic ideas of self-sufficiency, and therefore tranquility.<sup>443</sup> Moreover, such concerns are met by Martha Nussbaum's observation that the gist of many jokes and barbs has essentially Stoic qualities;<sup>444</sup> and building on her observations, Part II also identifies several veins of Stoic thought in the work. *Apocolocyntosis* is not philosophically incongruent with Seneca's own expressions of Stoicism. Lastly, there is something to be said about the unanimous ascription of this satire to Seneca in the manuscript tradition.<sup>445</sup>

The issue of authorship raises another important question. Did Nero read the *Apocolocyntosis*? Although no certain answer can be given, the baseline idea is plausible. Seneca and Nero were close associates, if not friends; and the young prince could have come to admire his teacher for any of his various talents. Nero was also no devotee of Claudius, which makes the scathing content of the *Apocolocyntosis* a non-issue or even appealing. Although this does not mean that Nero read the work, it can be suggested that reading and engaging with Seneca's text, particularly *De clementia*, was to Nero's own advantage. For in reading the works of his tutor, Nero signals his interest in Seneca's opinions. If Seneca believes that Nero is open to his advice and curious to know

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<sup>439</sup> Since F. Bücheler 1915, 439–507 (=1864, 31 ff.). Note also that N. Holzberg (2016) suggests that a second century imitator penned the *Apocolocyntosis*. This thesis is more pertinent to the methodological discussion of persona theory, and is thus discussed at the end of Section 17.

<sup>440</sup> Respectively: L. Herrmann 1939, 267; G. Bagnani 1954; B. Baldwin 1993; E. Rodríguez-Almeida 1996.

<sup>441</sup> e.g. “idem Claudium vidisse sè dicit iter facientem” (1.2); “et illi pró tam bònò nùntiò nèmò crèditit quòd víderit” (1.3); “quò decòllare hómines sòlebát, iusseràt illi collum praecidi” (6.2). Note also the similar tendency toward anagrammatism, as in “si quis quaesiverit” (1.1).

<sup>442</sup> J. Sullivan 1966; M.C. Nussbaum 2007, 431–9.

<sup>443</sup> Thus the crux of M. C. Nussbaum 2009b.

<sup>444</sup> M.C. Nussbaum 2009a.

<sup>445</sup> On the incipit: M.D. Reeve 1984.

his opinions, then he is likelier to offer it; and if Nero wants Seneca's assistance in curbing Agrippina's power, then it would behoove him to reinforce Seneca's helpful behavior. At the very least, Nero's tutorial days would have habituated him to receiving reading material from Seneca. Being given something fun like a satire, or anything other than declamations and speeches, may have been a heartily welcome change of pace for the teenage emperor.

So much for basics and preliminaries, now to turn to the task at hand. This dissertation has established a background on which the Seneca-Nero connection can be understood, and currently it seeks to understand how their post-accession relationship evolved and where among those developments Seneca's sustained influence was rooted. As stated at the end of Part I, the history of Nero's domestic life and the structure of his education was such that it granted Seneca the highest degree of sociocultural, political, and intellectual influence in Nero's life. Additionally, the public standing of a senator combined with the socio-moral engagement of Roman rhetorical education primed Seneca to capitalize on the philosophically propaedeutic nature of Nero's education. And that, it will be argued, is exactly what Seneca tried to do.

Part II contends two main points. First, the aspersions cast on Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis* are moral in their essence; and that is because, second, Stoic ethics are the basis for the imagery of and argument against the deceased emperor. Through the ethical focus of his jokes, Seneca signals that he is keenly aware of personal morality in professional contexts, the ethical considerations governing interpersonal relationships and transactions, and the role of moral codes in everyday decisions. Nero, having been trained to analyze and compose arguments from morality, would be able to recognize that these jabs were more than personal potshots as part of Claudius' "Quittung für Korsika."<sup>446</sup> Furthermore, Nero would have been sensitive to Seneca's presentation of these opinions. The tastefulness and overall delivery of Seneca's concerns in the *Apocolocyntosis* should signal his level of comfort in the new regime. A secondary objective of Part II therefore concerns itself with the *Apocolocyntosis* as a self-presentation of Seneca. That is to say, how Seneca might use the themes and preoccupations of the text to rebrand and represent himself—not merely what issues Seneca

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<sup>446</sup> O. Weinreich 1923, 7.

used the text as a platform to discuss or what that signals about his ‘types’, but how he chose to package his message in part and as a whole. From an ideological point of view, this topic is already built into the primary focus of the *Apocolocyntosis*’ philosophy, insofar as Seneca intended the Stoic ethical theory in the text to signal his beliefs and concerns. But the philosophical aspect does not raise an important question that helps to define Seneca in these new circumstances. What did he feel he had the right to satirize?

The above question should not be conflated with the text-external objective of the *Apocolocyntosis*, which scholars still vigorously debate. Nor need it pertain exclusively to the various questions revolving around *libertas* and the redevelopment of what ‘free’ speech constituted under the Principate. Seneca’s topic and target in the *Apocolocyntosis* may be viewed as an occupational decision, a product of his standing at the Palace and his desired persona. Further, the nature of satiric criticism provides that the issues treated in the *Apocolocyntosis* hinge on Seneca’s own perceived areas of authority. The content of the *Apocolocyntosis* speaks to what he thought his intended audience would find agreeable; and although the delivery of that content does not necessarily distinguish this intended group, it does reflect Seneca’s belief that they would find it suitable for him to communicate in such a way. Statements derived from the textual analysis are thus applicable to Seneca in both a literary and non-literary, professional or personal, capacity. *Apocolocyntosis* thereby offers an opportunity to frame Seneca’s rise with Nero in terms of his ideological and political engagements at the time.

It now remains to elucidate the structure of the argument. Chapter IV addresses the target of the *Apocolocyntosis* in its most basic sense, and asserts that Stoic ethical theory is integral to Seneca’s rebuke of Claudius. Previous studies of the *Apocolocyntosis* were predominantly concerned with the question ‘what does Seneca attack *with* the satire?’—which is to ask, essentially, what a Roman reader would believe the communicative purpose of the satire was. That, however, depends on what Seneca is thought to attack *inside* the satire. Presently it is averred that Seneca attacks Claudius’ personal

sense of morality—that Claudius himself, as a human being with a living soul, is accused of willful and unrepentant enslavement to vicious anger.<sup>447</sup> First in support of this contention is that Stoic philosophy readily accounts for the aggressive and derogatory imagery used to describe Claudius' physical shape in the afterlife. But to reach that point cogently, an account of Stoic psychology precedes the explanation proper. The philosophical background explains how nature and habit work to configure the physical shape of the pneumatic soul, and how anger wracks the body and takes a psychic toll. It may then be seen that the configuration of the Stoic soul offers an easy explanation for why Claudius' body (or soul) is depicted as deformed. The section closes with the suggestion that the title of the satire, *Apocolocyntosis*, is a pun made in a similarly Stoic vein about Claudius' deification.

Chapter V diverges from the immediate concentration on Stoic themes in the text to make several assertions about the nature of Menippea, satire, and the *Apocolocyntosis* as satire. This deviation is needed to establish a textual-analytical methodology that can identify aspects of the satire which are relevant to the expression of authorial opinions. To meet this goal, a literary-theoretical assessment of satire and the major devices it employs serves to contextualize the *Apocolocyntosis* within its genre. It is questioned whether the designations 'Menippean' and 'satire' are significant to the way Seneca both presents his ideas as a whole, and delivers them within the text. Several basic behaviors of satire can be suggested from this discussion, along with the discursive mechanics of the literary devices Seneca most effectively employs. Satire, however, is the more consequential of the *Apocolocyntosis*' two classifications. It is understood as a certain manner of discourse, one that communicates its most conscious messages through what are called 'the tools of comedy'. These assertions consequently afford a framework to analyze the hermeneutic relationship between text and author in the two following sections.

The substance of Chapter V provides the basis for what the textual-analytical Chapters VI and VII concentrate on—linguistically complex utterances. Complexity in this case refers to 'non-casual' or 'formal' readings of words and sentences, which require the reader to recognize more than the surface structure of the words. For

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<sup>447</sup> 'Vicious' is henceforth used in a technical sense, as the opposite of 'virtuous', being so derived from its original meaning—"of habits, practices, etc.: of the nature of vice" (*OED*, I.1).

example, ‘vivam’ in “si quid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.” The reader does not merely process it as a string of five consecutive phonemes that the author speaks, but also as the spondee resolving the end of a metrical line. Linguistically complex utterances require the full consciousness of the reader to recognize that there is information beyond the functional meaning of a word within a sentence. They are also instances that bespeak a certain amount of care and consideration from the author precisely because the words have been made to carry information external to their phonological representation. From an examination of the instances in which the tools of comedy are used, it can be shown that Seneca’s focus is specifically Claudius as a moral agent—not as Princeps, but as a human being. Seneca concentrates his satiric wit on the moral issue of personal agency. Public-political issues are ignored in favor of the various ethical concerns in Claudius’ personal habits, which culminate in Augustus’ speech to the *concilium deorum*. That is the focus of Chapter VII, where it is shown how Seneca channels such concerns into ones of personal rectitude and responsibility.

Attention is paid throughout Chapters VI and VII to how Seneca delivers his satire, with a particular interest in whether he esteemed anything above his satiric barbs. But if the expression of Seneca’s opinion is to mean anything, what he rails against must be known—the truth of a text lies in the unity of its subject matter and language. The specific target of derision must be established, and so is turned to first.

## IV. THE FOCUS

To begin grounding the hypothesis that Seneca's remonstrance in the *Apocolocyntosis* is moral, two points must be made. The first is that a moral judgment is to be had in the comments made about Claudius, which overwhelmingly address his propensity for anger in general and violence in matters of justice. The second is that Claudius himself is the focus of the satire. But this seems obvious. The narrator and other figures are unanimously obsessed with the main, albeit mostly silent, character. The question, then, is not so much whether Seneca singles out Claudius for reproof in the satire, but what about him the reader is supposed to consider. Such a question invites sufficient disagreement, and merits review.

### 11. *Object of attack*

What Seneca specifically wanted to condemn in the *Apocolocyntosis* finds loose agreement. Some find that Claudius' character is political, and therefore the main thrust of the satire comes against Claudius as Princeps. From this vantage emerges an understanding of the text as political literature against the old regime and intended for the masses.<sup>448</sup> Others are less ambitious for the *Apocolocyntosis* but nonetheless endorse a political purpose behind the text, which (it is usually argued) the *concilium deorum* communicates with great force.<sup>449</sup> These readings orient the purpose of the *Apocolocyntosis* toward the contemporary and political: Seneca wrote the satire to empower or improve the present regime through the vilification of the previous. Hence some characterize the *Apocolocyntosis* as "overtly political in its theme and censorial in the punishment it metes out."<sup>450</sup> Interpretations differ on the particulars of how the *Apocolocyntosis* accomplishes this, depending on the way one reads the intention and emphasis of the various comments about Claudius. But the essential effect of the satire on the regime remains widely similar.

Another approach to the text centralizes the religious, finding the central protest to be against the apotheosis. This argument has several variations on how Seneca

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<sup>448</sup> H. Haffter 1967, 121–40; P. Grimal 1978, 107–19. H. MacL. Currie 1962b sees a more personal purpose.

<sup>449</sup> cf. K. Kraft 1966; H. Kloft 1972; O. Schönberger 1990, 23–7; N.W. Slater 2009–10.

<sup>450</sup> K. Freudenberg 2013, 309.

uses the *Apocolocyntosis*—to deny the existence of imperial divinities; to contest that Claudius had become a god; to attack the state-sanctioned deification of Claudius; to deconsecrate the deified Claudius; to reject the practice of state deification.<sup>451</sup> Agreement does, however, obtain among the different theories on the point that the *Apocolocyntosis* does nothing to strengthen or support Nero's connection to the late Emperor. Here again it may be noted that most of the ideas are not mutually exclusive—among either the apotheosis-focused theories or the political, or both. It is perhaps because of this that they remain variously susceptible to the same counterargument.

Sundry questions arise from the implication that Seneca would undermine Claudius' deification. One looms large. Why sabotage a source of legitimization for Nero? To address such a question, Ittai Gradel has claimed that the true object of Seneca's derision is (the unverifiable idea of) Claudius' godhood, not his actual godhead relative to the Roman State which "was serious, and not a subject for jokes."<sup>452</sup> Seneca could write on this topic because "absolute divinity did not matter much; it mattered so little that Seneca could, without risk, make it the theme of ribald satire."<sup>453</sup> Insistence on this distinction raises certain issues. Firstly, *Apocolocyntosis* is not ribald, but it is satire—a mode of discourse used to discuss and develop what the author perceives to be social vices. What purpose would the denial of Claudius' absolute divinity have if it were not already a talking point? If Romans generally did not care about absolute divinity, then there needs to be an explanation of its importance to Seneca—his admiration of Socrates, *derisor omnium*, notwithstanding.<sup>454</sup> For if absolute divinity was significant to Seneca, then his intended audience must have been like-minded on the issue. Satire can only be satiric if its consumers are open or already partial to the base message of the satirist. The audience must, then, have been aligned with Seneca on his topic if it was to see the *Apocolocyntosis* as social commentary rather than something more plainly insulting, indignant, or frivolous.

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<sup>451</sup> Respectively: K. Hopkins 1978, 203; S.R.F. Price 1984, 115; R.R. Nauta 1987, 75; S. Cole 2006; A. Bonandini 2007, 349 f.

<sup>452</sup> I. Gradel 2002, 329; 327: "Seneca's piece is not about the relative deification of Claudius, the fact that the late emperor became a god of the Roman state; it is about the *absolute* divinity denied to Claudius at heaven's door." The argument in favor of this distinction (pp. 261–71) is prefigured by A.D. Nock 1928, 30–3.

<sup>453</sup> I. Gradel 2002, 329.

<sup>454</sup> Sen. *Ben.* v.6.6.

Entertainment of this absolute-divinity interpretation also entails that the *Apocolocyntosis* did not have any serious social or political value for the author or his audience. That is incredible. Claudius' divine advocates in the *concilium deorum*, it is granted, tender frivolous reasons in his support. Yet the same cannot be said for what follows them. Most of the counter-evidence adduced in Augustus' testimony (and in the Underworld) is true, serious, and broad in reach. Moreover, it seems erroneous to hold that Seneca's "jokes have few or no implications for Claudius' relative status in the state", since the jokes and comments uniformly degrade Claudius' status as a role model.<sup>455</sup> To this end it may be added that, if deeds on Earth justify a rejection of Claudius' absolute divinity, it would seem to be highly implied that the same critical considerations merit meditation in the Senate—which did not happen. Claudius was deified on the very day his death was revealed.<sup>456</sup> Nor would this implied rebuke of senatorial servility be misplaced among the early rhetoric of the Neronian principate: the days of Augustus had returned, and with that the *auctoritas patrum*.<sup>457</sup> Further, in understating the significance of Nero's appellation *divi filius*, Seneca could bypass the interposed Julio-Claudians to strengthen Nero's link with Augustus—a connection emphasized in *De clementia*.<sup>458</sup>

But this is enough. Roman ritual and religion is not the main concern of the present inquiry.<sup>459</sup> The duality of Claudius' divinity yields more questions than answers, and undermines the text *qua* satire. Even if dual divinity was the politico-religious reality, *Apocolocyntosis* is a text that finds force and vigor in its uncompromised straightforwardness: it lacks the patience to suffer through such tedium. The idea of a bipartite nature to Claudius' divinity in the *Apocolocyntosis* may be safely omitted from the present discussion.

Each of the above interpretations engages with the question of what Seneca wanted to attack *with* the satire, be it the previous regime of some aspect the deification. Such a focus also begets the interpretative discrepancies exhibited, as the analytical interest

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<sup>455</sup> I. Gradel, id.

<sup>456</sup> D. Fishwick 2002.

<sup>457</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.4 f. Emphasized by, among other things, the reuse of Augustan portraiture and coin motifs (*BMC* I, pl. 44 nos. 2–4, 11). See further: D. Boschung 1993.

<sup>458</sup> Thus C.L. Whitton 2013, 159 f.

<sup>459</sup> For a more thorough rejection see D.S. Levene 2012.

is the author's intention for the text—a notoriously difficult aspect to identify. Happily, a more answerable question exists. What is the object of Seneca's attack *in* the satire? This question is tenable since it inheres completely within the text itself. Yet it is also deceptively simple. Seneca obviously directs his ire against Claudius. But in what respect? An intuitive answer is 'Claudius as Princeps' since this was the capacity in which Claudius acted when he ordered the various executions, and only *principes* had been deified in recent memory. *Apocolocyntosis*, however, exhibits a distinct dearth of political commentary. Claudius is never discussed as a living emperor. He is a Gaul, a murderer, a husband, a father-in-law, but never specifically the entity at the head of the Roman political apparatus. Nor does the *Apocolocyntosis* mention Claudius as a god or divine figurehead in the real world, or the proceedings that occurred after his death. The satire only cares about Claudius' actions from his time on Earth. As such, Claudius himself appears as the only positive factor that made his reign or his apotheosis offensive to Seneca. The cause for such feelings is patent: the peremptory deaths of too many men.

Wanton disregard for life is deplorable for any number of moral principles, but Stoic ethics are the authority to which Seneca claims allegiance. His criticism thus takes a personal slant, concentrating on Claudius' notorious temper and the cost of habitual violence to Claudius' character and judgment—the absence of moral reasoning in his mind, and its devastating effects. *Apocolocyntosis* makes the case that Claudius was an abomination, not merely a bad emperor, but a bad person. Chapters VI and VII demonstrate the ethical focus as it appears in narration and dialog, particularly jokes. It may, however, be easier to begin seeing the *Apocolocyntosis* through the vista of Stoic morality if the necessary philosophical lens is applied to a preexisting discussion. The descriptions of Claudius' body and movement offer a suitably recent conversation to use to demonstrate the Stoic elements in the satire.

## 12. Stoic imagery and theory

nuntiatur Iovi venisse quendam bonae staturae, bene canum; nescio quid illum minari, assidue enim caput movere; pedem dextrum trahere. quaesisse se cuius nationis esset; respondisse nescio quid *per-turbato* sono et voce confusa; non intellegere se linguam eius: nec Graecum esse nec Romanum nec ullius gentis notae. tum Iuppiter Herculem, qui totum orbem terrarum pererraverat et nosse videbatur omnes nationes, iubet ire et explorare quorum hominum esset.

tum Hercules primo aspectu sane *perturbatus* est, ut qui etiam non omnia monstra timuerit. ut vidit novi generis faciem, insolitum incessum, vocem nullius terrestris animalis sed qualis esse marinis beluis solet, raucam et implicatam, putavit sibi tertium decimum laborem venisse. diligentius intuenti visus est quasi homo.<sup>460</sup>  
(5.2–4)

The representation of Claudius in the satire divides opinion. Some extenuate the importance of such descriptions, finding nothing more than cheap jabs at a dead man.<sup>461</sup> But this position is based on a simplistic understanding of the comedic elements in satire. Jokes in general, as Freud observes throughout *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*, are often made about things of importance specifically because they are significant. Humor is an ephemeral but ubiquitous part of daily life, which commands and is given attention in the mental lives of man; and jokes, save purely linguistic puns, cannot be wholly superficial. These notions do not seem to obtain in the relevant literature.

More recently, scholars have inclined to read beneath the corporeality in the *ad hominem* insults. Their arguments propose that the negative imagery forwards the idea of Claudius' unsuitability to govern, to be the Princeps.<sup>462</sup> Half of that idea appeals, half does not. The point suitably looks beyond Claudius' physique and his infirmities, as Stoics had scant interest in the physical body itself—*ψυχάριον εἰ βασιτάζον νεκρόν*.<sup>463</sup> But the point itself is moot: Claudius was not returning to rule. Nor is Claudius' reign the significant target of Seneca's satire, which is why the satire omits jabs at political policy. What other opinion could the imagery communicate? The Stoic conception of the soul offers possibilities, "cum omnia ad animum referamus."<sup>464</sup>

An explanation of Stoic psychology presently provides several benefits. Foremost, the operation and nature of the Stoic soul provides the ethical basis on which Seneca could hold Claudius responsible for his actions *qua* actions. It accounts for the

<sup>460</sup> Sibilance is not the linguistic characteristic that most predominantly defines Claudius', albeit limited, speech in the text. But there is some tendency to alliteration or homeoteleuton—"ego te, fortissime deorum Hercule, speravi mihi adfuturum apud alios...ego eram qui tibi ante templum tuum...cum causidicos audirem diem et noctem..." (7.4 f.).

<sup>461</sup> e.g. M.T. Griffin 1976, 132; P.T. Eden 1984, *passim*; A.A. Lund 1996.

<sup>462</sup> S.M. Braund & P. James 1998; J. Osgood 2007. For a more Bakhtinian interpretation: T. Reiser 2007.

<sup>463</sup> M. Ant. IV.41.

<sup>464</sup> Sen. *Ben.* II.31.1.

moral effects of decision-making on a person and his mind, which allows one to rationalize Seneca's descriptions of Claudius' body in a way that is more consistent with his politico-philosophical focus at the time. In terms of the *Apocolocyntosis* as satire, the ethical lens through which Seneca views Claudius is needed in Sections 14 and 15 to make full sense of the jokes and other witty comments directed toward Claudius—whence the satirical message of the *Apocolocyntosis*. Finally, an appreciation of how Seneca weaves Stoic thought into the satire allows the enigmatic title of the satire to be interpreted in a way that is logically consistent with its mood and message. The remainder of the present chapter thus has two objectives: explain the Stoic rationale for holding Claudius at moral fault for his actions, and begin to show that the *Apocolocyntosis* concerns itself with Claudius' ethical faultiness. The Stoic concept of the soul therefore commands the first point of attention.

### 12.1 Stoic psychology and Claudius' guilt

Given the fragmentary state of Early Stoic texts, it is generally difficult to state Stoic beliefs with absolute authority. As such, it should be noted that what follows is essentially a synthesis of modern accounts of Stoic psychology, which should be consulted for a fuller picture.<sup>465</sup> It does little justice to the complexities of the Stoics' theory of emotions and mental content, and the resulting ontological implications that they had to grapple with. Fortunately, however, only the basics are needed to appreciate Seneca's descriptions of Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis*.

Stoic philosophy holds that the soul (*ψυχή*) is corporeal, with its substance made of *pneuma*.<sup>466</sup> The soul itself is a uniform entity with eight working parts. Physiological senses account for five; and the remaining three are the procreative part, the language part, and that which rules (*ἡγεμονικόν*). The ruling part encompasses four powers (*δυνάμεις*) of its own, being impression (*φαντασία*), assent (*συγκατάθεσις*), impulse (*ὄρμηξ*), and intellect (*λόγος*). Each represents a different capacity of the coherent mind—not constituent parts of a larger whole, but inherent features of the ruling part.

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<sup>465</sup> Especially from: S. Sambursky 1959; F.H. Sandbach 1989, 28–68; J. Brennan 2005, 49–114; J. Sellars 2006 81–134; M.R. Graver 2007, 15–60.

<sup>466</sup> The physicality is evident in “*ille quidem animam ebullit*” (*Apoc.* 4.2). For this and the other elements of Stoic psychology reviewed here: J. Annas 1992, 61–70; *CHHP*, 560–84.

Stoic ontology ascribes the production of mental events and states of mind (*διαθέσεις*) to the activation (or movement, they being physical) of these powers. As a result of their function, they enjoin on a person the innate and enduring characteristics that shape attitudes, thoughts, and behavioral responses. They are the psychic elements responsible for decision-making.

In the course of conceiving and executing an action, impression is the first capacity of the ruling part to be activated. Impression is described as an affection (*πάθη*) that occurs within the soul—which is to say, an unconscious alteration within the mind.<sup>467</sup> Impressions are exempt from moral judgment because they are not consciously controllable.<sup>468</sup> They are, in practical terms, responsible for the experience where individuals come away from a single utterance with different feelings, or with different emotions from a single work of art. For example, when Febris does not apprehend that *Ἰλιόθεν με φέρων ἄνεμος* was a quotation, she lectures Hercules on Claudius' birthplace in Gaul, thereby angering Claudius. Febris' statement was received by Claudius' sensory parts and analyzed by his soul, which was configured so that this resultant psychic movement effected an impression that her statement was something worth being angry about. The step from potential outrage to angry outburst, however, required Claudius' conscious assent to confirm the emotional response raised by the impression.<sup>469</sup> Assent is the mental process of agreeing with the impression, and the only faculty to which something as rationality or personal responsibility can be attached.<sup>470</sup> Liability for actions exists with those who give assent.

Thus far the issue of Claudius' anger seems to be familiar.<sup>471</sup> People may instinctively become angry at something, but it is their moral responsibility to refrain from acting on impulse, from acting without logical consideration. Yet here Stoicism

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<sup>467</sup> D.L. VII.50; *SVF* II, 54: *φαντασία μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ πάθος ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γιγνόμενον*. See further: B. Inwood 1985, 9–17; *CHHP*, 300–11.

<sup>468</sup> Sen. *Dial.* III.16.7: “in sapientis quoque animo, etiam cum vulnus sanatum est, cicatrix manet.” *Ep.* 57.4: “quaedam enim, mi Lucili, nulla effugere virtus potest: admonet illam natura mortalitatis suae.” *CHHP*, 699–705.

<sup>469</sup> Sen. *Dial.* IV.3.4: “numquam autem impetus sine adsensu mentis est, neque enim fieri potest ut de ultione et poena agatur animo nesciente.”

<sup>470</sup> Sen. *Dial.* IV.4.1: “primum illum animi ictum effugere ratione non possumus, sicut ne illa quidem quae diximus accidere corporibus, ne nos oscitatio aliena sollicitet, ne oculi ad intimationem subitam digitorum comprimantur.” S. Bobzien 1998, 239–42; *CHHP*, 313–16.

<sup>471</sup> Ancient views on anger and self-control: W.V. Harris 2001, esp. Chs. 4–6.

diverges from ordinary morality. Emotions, feelings, or otherwise confirming intuitional impressions were deemed by the Stoics to be judgments; and the only correct judgment in Stoicism is that vice is bad and virtue is good.<sup>472</sup> Hence the recognition of good or bad outside of virtue and vice is actually misrecognition. But the only way to recognize virtue and vice properly is to learn to identify them through experience. Moral wisdom was therefore equated with empirical knowledge—specifically, that which let one understand how to flourish and live well under any circumstances.<sup>473</sup> An example may help to clarify what this entails.

Suppose that something pops out in front of Seneca in a dark alley. In all probability this would give him an impression of fear, something analogous to ‘this is a threat’; and he would proceed to undergo the bodily reactions that come with being startled. Seneca cannot prevent his body from flinching, his pupils from dilating, and so forth. Say, then, it was an alley cat that surprised him. Seneca would deny the impression that this is a threat, dismiss the impression of fear, and continue with whatever virtuous pursuit presently occupied him. But say that it was Cerberus. Seneca might be tempted to assent to the impression that this is a threat. He would err, however, because only the vices can cause personal harm. Seneca would need to have thoroughly internalized the belief that only vices are bad, and therefore a tricephalous dog is not truly a threat to himself because pain, bodily injury, and death are not absolute evils—they are not usually preferred in the normal course of life, but they are not unconditionally bad things, vices. Similarly, anger begins with an impression that ‘this injured me’, to which the proper response will always be negatory because only vices can cause injury.<sup>474</sup>

Vices such as *terror* and *ira* are, to be more specific, passions. These are double misjudgments that sit in opposition to reason and Nature.<sup>475</sup> During instances of passion one’s values are intellectually mistaken. Passions occur when the mind allows a

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<sup>472</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 446F–447A: ἔνιοι δέ φασι οὐχ ἔτερον εἶναι τοῦ λόγου τὸ πάθος οὐδὲ δυεῖν διαφορὰν καὶ στάσιω, ἀλλ’ ἐνὸς λόγου τροπήν ἐπ’ ἀμφοτέρα...

<sup>473</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 440E–441D; *SVF* III, 112, 473.

<sup>474</sup> Regarding something self-inflicted: if someone commits an act with vice, he cannot reasonably become angry at himself because either (a) he is back on the virtuous path and therefore the vicious act did not actually change his ability to be virtuous, or (b) he was never virtuous in the first place and therefore there can be no injury because there was no deviation from the virtuous path.

<sup>475</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* IV.11; D.L. VII.10; Stob. II.90.19 f. Anger, a subdivision of lust, is desire for someone to be punished.

misjudgment to gather momentum and compound itself—when the mind not merely assents to the initial impression, but also to a secondary impression that it is appropriate to feel a certain way about it.<sup>476</sup> This is why Seneca asserts that anger is never involuntary.<sup>477</sup> Thus, in the case of Febris’ misunderstanding, Claudius assents to an impression that her misstatement was a personal slight, after which he assents to another impression that Febris deserves punishment for her misinterpretation. Consequently, he becomes angry and “illo gestu solutae manus...quo decollare homines solebat, iusserat illi collum praecidi” (6.2). Claudius is morally wrong to assent to the impression of a non-vicious bad, and doubly so for believing that it merits another vice, anger.

The moral nature of a person, what he believes and knows, is therefore the factor responsible for assent. But is a person responsible for the nature of his mind? Can people help believing what they do and will believe? Seneca is mute on the heredity of moral qualities, and so conforms to the Stoics’ general lack of discussion on whether inherited features could be decisively changed.<sup>478</sup> Chrysippus used resemblance in habits (*τρόπος*) and character (*ἦθος*) between parents and children as a means to argue that the soul comes into existence after the body; Panaetius suggested that dispositions could be strengthened or developed to some degree; Seneca maintained that the complexion of the soul limits the change open to one’s inborn nature.<sup>479</sup> Nevertheless, Stoics did not assume that a person was born with certain moral predilections. Humans are not born as rational beings, so they cannot have moral qualities at birth. Nature bestows predispositions untainted by vice.<sup>480</sup>

Such reasoning allows Claudius to be held morally accountable for both his short-tempered personality and its fallout. *Apocolocyntosis*, however, does not clearly evince a belief in the principle Stoic parts leading up to this ethical conclusion. Yet why should it? Abhorrence of Claudius’ capricious brutality requires nothing more

<sup>476</sup> *SVF* III, 391, 462, 466; D.L. VII.110.

<sup>477</sup> *Dial.* IV.1.3: “nobis placet nihil illam per se audere sed animo adprobante; nam speciem capere acceptae iniuriae et ultionem eius concupiscere et utrumque coniungere, nec laedi se debuisse et vindicari debere, non est eius impetus qui sine voluntate nostra concitatur.”

<sup>478</sup> Together with J.-B. Gourinat 2008, cf. D.L. VII.158 f.; Nemesius *Nat. hom.* II.20.14–17; Tert. *De anima* 5.4.

<sup>479</sup> Cic. *Off.* I.107, 112, 115, 119 f.; Sen. *Dial.* IV.20.2; Plut. *Mor.* 1053D. On such changes (*τροπή*): J. Mansfeld 1992, 116 n. 17.

<sup>480</sup> *SVF* II, 83; Hierocl. 1.5–33, 4.38–53; D.L. VII.85 f., 89. On the human instinct toward virtue: *CHHP*, 678–82.

than an ordinary sense of Roman morality; and in the philosophical community, every eudemonic tradition of ethics would recommend against such violent volatility because the soul is a living thing. Perhaps, then, the ubiquity of such an opinion accounts for why Seneca only writes about the vitality of the soul much later. If so, then his somewhat confused account is all the more in need of an explanation.

Like the Early Stoa, Seneca viewed personal development and character (*φύσις*) through the lens of psychological monism.<sup>481</sup> Natural traits in impression, impulse, assent, and rationality manifest in the mind, where each represents a different aspect of the ruling part. Seneca never makes a distinction between psychic rationality and irrationality, which harmonizes with the Early Stoa.<sup>482</sup> Yet he disagrees with the monistic indistinction between theory and practice: thinking about the *vita beata* will not actualize its benefits in the soul.<sup>483</sup> Exactly so, Seneca's abhorrence of dialectical verbiage and preference for practical facts leads him to an odd misconstrual.<sup>484</sup> Early Stoic tenets, he claims, require emotions, opinions, and all other manners of cogitation to be actual living things, not just virtues and vices. But this cannot be, as it would result in infinite beings able to exist in a single soul. He then offers Lucilius, in apparent refutation of Stoic orthodoxy, the orthodox Stoic belief itself—a man is not simply whatever it is that he does.<sup>485</sup> Every Stoic would agree: the only measure of a man is his psychic disposition. Impulses, assents, thoughts, and the actions of a single soul (or mind) are not the soul itself; they are merely things that the soul does. Virtues and vices differ. They *are* the soul because they exist *as* the soul when it is oriented (or tensioned) in a certain manner. That is why Claudius himself is reprehensible, not merely his actions.

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<sup>481</sup> i.e. the mind and soul are the same thing.

<sup>482</sup> Whether the Middle Stoa drifted away from psychological monism is debatable, cf. J.M. Cooper 1999, 449–84; T. Tieleman 2003, 198–287.

<sup>483</sup> *Ep.* 89.19; 95.38; 102.20; 106.11 f.; 108.1 f.; 109.17; 113.1. For the tripartite division of Seneca's advisory methodology: I. Hadot 1969, 103–26.

<sup>484</sup> cf. D.L. IV.18: ἔφασκε δὲ ὁ Πολέμων δεῖν ἐν τοῖς πράγμασι γυμνάζεσθαι καὶ μὴ ἐν τοῖς διαλεκτικοῖς θεωρήμασι.

<sup>485</sup> *Ep.* 113.6: “non enim quicquid ab homine fit homo est.” On this issue with virtues: J.M. Cooper 2004, 320–32. On the consistency of Seneca's monism: A. Setaioli 2007.

## 12.2 Claudius' corrupted soul

How does the above relate to Claudius' form in the *Apocolocyntosis*? It has to do with the identification of an individual's character with the specific state of tension (*διάθεσις*) of his physical pneuma—not his actions. Tension is the collective state of the many aspects of the mind, the qualities of which Stoics understood as corporeal matter in a certain state (*ὑλη πως ἔχουσα*). Different dispositions and moods result from the soul being tensioned in certain states (*ψυχὴ πως ἔχουσα*). Virtue is no different. It is merely the soul in proper tension (*εὐτονία*).<sup>486</sup>

That was a bit dense. To restate the matter otherwise may be helpful. Imagine two pieces of clay, one a cube and the other a pyramid. Each will differ in what is needed to rearrange them into the same shape; and as such, it might be easier to reshape the cube into a sphere. Suppose now that the clay shapes are the soul tensioned in a certain way. The square represents someone who is naturally cheerful and energetic, the pyramid someone saturnine and apathetic. The different states of pneumatic tension will similarly find it easier or harder to reconfigure into similar emotional states. It may be more difficult for the exuberant person to become depressed, and *vice versa*. Consequentially, the broad uniformity of Claudius' reactions describes the state of his mind—"tam facile homines occidebat quam canis adsidit" (10.3). His soul was tensioned to overreact, and had come to savor cruelty.<sup>487</sup>

Thus the soul presides over the actions of its body.<sup>488</sup> And just as the soul acts upon the body, the outside reflects the inside.<sup>489</sup> Seneca exhibits a keen interest in this divide, especially instances of liminality. As a tragedian, Seneca employs a trope whereby one character discerns another's inner emotions or intentions through their movement and, more usually, the look on their face.<sup>490</sup> Rather than strict physiognomy, which Seneca also shows some partiality to, Gregory Staley has argued that this motif is more a creative development of philosophical theories relating to the human

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<sup>486</sup> *Ep.* 113.2: "virtus autem nihil aliud est quam animus quodammodo se habens; ergo animal est."

<sup>487</sup> *Dial.* IV.5.3: "origo huius mali ab ira est, quae ubi frequenti exercitatione et satietate in oblivionem clementiae venit et omne foedus humanum eiecit animo, novissime in crudelitatem transit."

<sup>488</sup> *Ep.* 103.2, 104.2, 114.3 f.; cf. 113.23.

<sup>489</sup> *Ben.* I.1.5; *Dial.* XI.5.5; *Ep.* 52.12, 115.3.

<sup>490</sup> An interpretation that appears all the more likely given research on the reliability of the face to signal internal conditions: P. Ekman 1982; P. Ekman & E.L. Rosenberg 1997.

will and passions—providing a precedent for this phenomenon in the *Apocolocyntosis*.<sup>491</sup> Seneca’s prose works, on the other hand, feature a more clearly philosophical yet equally macabre fascination with torture, mutilation of the body, and the corporeal-psychic divide of ugliness.<sup>492</sup> *De ira* in particular covers this interplay between the soul, mind, and actions.<sup>493</sup>

*De ira* Book II begins with the question “ira utrum iudicio an impetu incipiat.” Seneca argues that anger is a threefold process, each of which the mind (or soul) fully controls. The mind assents to an impression that it has been injured; the mind assents to an impression that the injury should make it angry; the mind assents to an impression that the outrage unconditionally deserves vengeance.<sup>494</sup> In giving oneself over to a vice, one indulges in the pneumatic tension of that feeling, which facilitates future shifts into that psychic state.<sup>495</sup> Hence vices developed during one’s youth are more difficult to remove.<sup>496</sup> Furthermore, if an *irascens* is hideous to behold, the *animus* enabling such a display can only be more horrible.<sup>497</sup> This is Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis*.

Seneca holds that anger is the immediate assent to a hostile impression, and therefore the opposite of self-control. To this definition of anger certain Stoic principles apply: no good exists without reason; reason follows nature; virtue imitates nature, fault corrupts it.<sup>498</sup> Such logic provides for the intrinsic opposition of anger to nature.<sup>499</sup> It then follows that the three-dimensional shape of Claudius’ corporeal soul, as formed by pneumatic tension (τὸ τριχῆ διαστατὸν μετὰ ἀντιτυπίας), will be unnatural.

<sup>491</sup> G.A. Staley 2010, 66–95.

<sup>492</sup> Catalogs 8 (physiognomy), 9 (trope), 23 (bodily harm). On Seneca inventing the human will, cf. A. Dihle 1985, 138–63; B. Inwood 2005, 132–56; M. Frede 2011, 31–48.

<sup>493</sup> *De ira* fits into a tradition of works on anger, but not with originality. See: W.V. Harris 2001, 88–126.

<sup>494</sup> *Dial.* IV.1–4. It is important to remember that a verbal apology would count as vengeance.

<sup>495</sup> Epict. II.18.12–4: εἰ οὖν θέλεις μὴ εἶναι ὀργίλος, μὴ τρέφε σου τὴν ἔξιν, μηδὲν αὐτῇ παράβαλλε ἀξητικόν...

<sup>496</sup> *Dial.* IV.18.2: “facile est enim teneros adhuc animos componere, difficulter reciduntur vitia quae nobiscum creverunt.” Further discussion: P.L. Donini 1995.

<sup>497</sup> *Dial.* IV.36.1–3: “quibusdam, ut ait Sextius, iratis profuit aspexisse speculum...et quantum ex vera deformitate imago illa speculo repercussa reddebat? animus si ostendi et si in ulla materia perlucere posset, intuentis nos confunderet ater maculosusque et aestuans et distortus et timidus.”

<sup>498</sup> *Ep.* 66.39, 50.8, 122.5; M. Frede 1993.

<sup>499</sup> *Dial.* III.6 f.

13. The title *Apocolocyntosis*

Another instance of Stoic sentiment in the satire merits mention. The title, as Dio relates, is pun on the word ἀποθέωσις.<sup>500</sup> But ἀποκολοκύντωσις fails to make contextual sense. Claudius does not transform into a vegetable; and gourds, cucumbers, or melons have no appearance in the satire.<sup>501</sup> Some therefore suppose that the elusive gourd is the dice box which appears at the end of the satire.<sup>502</sup> Another proposal is that ‘the gourd’ was Claudius’ nickname.<sup>503</sup> Widest support goes to a metaphorical meaning in which gourds signify something base.<sup>504</sup> This view is supported by a study which argues that the humble gourd is a “natural symbol” of stupidity.<sup>505</sup>

Connotations of cucurbits aside, an unrelated article by John Sellars has provided the inspiration to offer another interpretation.<sup>506</sup> A heavenly transformation into a vegetable yields a simpler understanding when taken from a Stoic vantage. The basis lies in the hierarchical relationship between life forms. The Stoic god is the unified body of the cosmos—a living and rational animal whose divine λόγος is its governing principle.<sup>507</sup> Plant life is alogical (in the privative sense) since it is only composed of φύσις and ἔξις, which is the tenor that holds bodies together. The title *Apocolocyntosis* may then be seen as an ironic and a pedantic self-contradiction, for god cannot be a mindless vegetable.<sup>508</sup> Speaking in a *pars pro* sense, the post lacuna *ignotus* makes the same joke—“est aliquid in illo Stoici dei, iam video; nec cor nec caput habet.”<sup>509</sup> This

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<sup>500</sup> LX.35.3. H. Wagenvoort 1958 suggests the title is a pun on the punishment of ἀποραφανίδωσις. H. MacL. Currie 1962a finds a scatological implication. Either would be a coinage in the Stoic tradition of καυολογία (Plut. *Mor.* 1068D).

<sup>501</sup> For which species of gourd is meant: J.L. Heller 1985.

<sup>502</sup> B. Baldwin 1993. Cf. F.A. Todd 1943, J.M.K. Martin 1945.

<sup>503</sup> D. Hoyos 1991. Cf. E. Müller-Graupa 1930.

<sup>504</sup> H. Eisenberger (1978, 270) takes the gourd to signify ‘Dummkopf’, C. Begass (2010, 340) as ‘Hohlkopf’. Further support for an association of stupidity: M. Pulbrook 1981; O. Schönberger 1988. Ancient gourd imagery: G. Sommariva 1985; A. Setaioli 2006.

<sup>505</sup> R. Norrman & J.M. Haarberg 1980. See further: J. Cels Saint-Hilare 1994. These perhaps sufficiently address the objections from M. Coffey 1961, 249.

<sup>506</sup> J. Sellars 2011.

<sup>507</sup> *SVF* II.1013; S.E. *M.* IX.79 f.; Alex. *Fat.* 191.30 f, 192. 11 f.; D.L. VII.140, 143. Cf. Cic. *ND* I.37; Epict. *Diss.* I.14.1; Alex. *Mixt.* 227.8 f., 39.

<sup>508</sup> cf. J.M. Haarberg 1982, 112: “An ‘apocolocyntosis’ then, means a parodistical [*sic*] and by necessity frustrated deification of a king of fools (or foolish king) in the spirit of carnivalesque mockery.”

<sup>509</sup> *Apoc.* 8.1. For usage: *TLL* III, 404.5 ff. (*caput*); IV, 935.80 ff. (*cor*).

explanation should find support in Ittai Gradel's sentiment that "Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* is essentially a burlesque philosophical, rather than religious, work."<sup>510</sup> Moreover, such an interpretation can unobtrusively coexist with any of the other theories about the significance of the chosen vegetable being a gourd. It does, however, make most sense for the title of a literary undertaking to reflect an inherent or central aspect of the work.

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As detailed in *De clementia*, the prosperity of a nation lies not with a specific set of principles or doctrine. The most efficient means to attain good governance is to have a good ruler—a ruler who is flexible and adaptive, who relies on reasonable judgment to find decisions that engender the greatest amount good. Perverse motivation, not the executions themselves, is what made Claudius so egregious. Yet to what extent is Seneca's denunciation of Claudius ethical in nature? All character assassination is moral at heart, and always it aims to have a person elicit a negative emotional response. The ways to do so are twofold—either destroy a person's reputation, or destroy their credibility. The latter does not make sense for a dead man: the former is an unnecessary given the required sympathies of the audience to appreciate the *Apocolocyntosis* as satire. Seneca's aim is truer.

Seneca does not modify or invent biographical details, he does not deride aspects of Claudius' private life, he makes no effort to doubt or mock Claudius' good intentions, and he does not question the things that Claudius personally valued. Seneca attacks Claudius' identity via his sense of morality, his psychic disposition, which regularly allowed for ethically unjustifiable instances of anger and violence. Seneca channels his Stoicism to hold Claudius to all his actions; and the image of the late Princeps reflects the pollution of his mind and soul. Stoic psychology and theories of emotion account for Claudius' appearance in the satire, which itself yields a morally disapproving comment on the way Claudius conducted himself in all areas of his life. No fault or blame is to be dispersed. Claudius is responsible for assenting to each idea and action, whether they originate from his own mind or that of another.

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<sup>510</sup> I. Gradel 2002, 328. The quote continues: "[*Apocolocyntosis*] harps on several notions from philosophy: the Stoic idea that the soul of the virtuous man will after death find his above in heaven (and by this criterion, Claudius could not get in, power or nor power." This observation has not been widely echoed.

The case that Seneca's criticism of Claudius is limited to statements with deeper moral implications resumes in Chapter VI. Its focus, and that of Chapter VII, is the modes of communication in the satire, particularly the linguistic features of the text in relation to the information communicated. Such an analysis hinges on the hermeneutic relationship between the text and its delivery. This is established in the following chapter.

## V. FORM AND FEATURES

The last section established two premises for the overall, macro comprehension of the *Apocolocyntosis*. First, the satire targets Claudius as a person. Second, the statements made about Claudius' anger and violence are in themselves moral judgments. But this does not necessarily explain what is being satirized. What is it that Seneca holds up for his readers to see? Combining the two conclusions from the previous section offers Claudius' immorality as *an* object of satiric scrutiny. Does Seneca revisit other issues? It appears not. Claudius' lack of personal morality is *the* essential concern of the *Apocolocyntosis*: all other comments flow forth from this point. The focus of Part II now turns to demonstrating that the ethical element found in comments about Claudius is entirely the satirical subject of the text. It would, however, be inappropriate to offer any sort of textual analysis before the development of (or conformity to) a theoretical model in which the text *qua* literature is understood. The process to meet this objective thus falls into two parts, framework and analysis.

The present chapter prefaces the analysis proper, Chapters VI and VII, with the literary-critical views and considerations that inform the analytic method. The interpretation of what Seneca says depends on how he says it; and how Seneca says something in the *Apocolocyntosis* is a product of both his own mind and sensibilities, and the medium of literary communication that he has chosen to carry his thoughts. Yet despite numerous scholarly readings of the *Apocolocyntosis*, none has interpreted the text with a discursive typology of satire—none has studied the *Apocolocyntosis* in systematic terms of what is satiric in the text.<sup>511</sup> Existing linguistic-stylistic accounts focus overwhelmingly on the intertextuality of the *Apocolocyntosis*;<sup>512</sup> and of the thematic-stylistic elements discussed, carnival and the carnivalesque garner most of the

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<sup>511</sup> As Niklas Holzberg noted in his 2015 write up of *Apocolocyntosis* scholarship, to be found on his website ([niklasholzberg.com/Homepage/Bibliographien.html](http://niklasholzberg.com/Homepage/Bibliographien.html)): “und jetzt sind überwiegend Autoren angloamerikanischer Companion- und sonstiger Handbuchartikel am Werk, die uns schon deshalb kaum weiterbringen, weil die meisten von ihnen das in anderen Sprachen über den Text Geschriebene ignorieren – das umfasst hier etwa 75%! – und sich überdies auf gerade schick im Trend liegende Aspekte der „Interpretation“ beschränken. Was bisher kaum erforscht wurde, ist die satirische und die narrative Technik, der Stil, die Intertextualität, die Wortspiele, ja überhaupt alles, was uns den Text als solchen besser verstehen lehrt.”

<sup>512</sup> e.g. R. Roncali 1987; U. Schmitzer 2000; A. Bonandini 2010b. Work on specific authors ranges wide, but Homer and Vergil receive the most attention.

attention.<sup>513</sup> Both concentrations ultimately view the text as an artistic expression of a personal message. But if the author reveals something of “his most profound self in his language”, then it should also be acknowledged that the author’s chosen mode of discourse influences the expression of any personal revelations.<sup>514</sup> Consequently, to know what Seneca wanted to highlight for his audience, it must be clear what channels his authorial attention and energy were directed into. That requires a theory of what satire is.

#### 14. *The tools of comedy*

Satire, as a literary concept, is presently understood to subsume the classification of genre.<sup>515</sup> Rather than a genre, which entails some degree of linguistic homogeneity or topical consistency, satire does not carry specific stylistic demands. Instead, it adheres to the requirements found in recognized genres because satire itself is a level of discourse higher than genre.<sup>516</sup> Satire is a mode of communication used to convey a critical and often contentious message, which it does specifically through the features and devices characteristic of or native to comedy.<sup>517</sup> These are here dubbed the tools of comedy.

The broad concept of comedy encapsulates numerous tropes and attributes, but not all ‘speak’ to the audience.<sup>518</sup> Stereotype, to give an example, is present in the *Apocolocyntosis*, though not as a source of critical information or funniness in itself. It provides a narrative framework that, in turn, supplies the audience with an implied background against which they may recognize certain comments to be humorous or deprecative.<sup>519</sup> For instance, nothing of critical importance is conveyed by the fact that Seneca casts Hercules in his *comicus* capacity when the hero first encounters Claudius. The familiar dynamic would, however, let the audience know that Claudius, when he

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<sup>513</sup> Interest being steady since the 1980s. More recent examples: A.L. Coviello 1997; R. Nenadic & M. Pozzi 1999; L. Radif 2004.

<sup>514</sup> M. Foucault 1986, 148.

<sup>515</sup> Not entirely dissimilar to R.C. Elliott’s (1960) idea of satire as a human impulse, which developed over and into various species of art.

<sup>516</sup> This idea already appears to have been developed by P. Simpson 2003.

<sup>517</sup> For satire as both a genre and mode of writing: R. Paulson 1967, 4; L. Guilhamet 1987, 7.

<sup>518</sup> Individual taxonomies of humor are numerous, but two indispensable books for the study of humor are V. Raskin 1985 and S. Attardo 1994.

<sup>519</sup> On this model and the humor of stereotypes: Y. Zhao 1988.

does have to mollify the demigod, will likely do so with a flawed and outrageous response—one comical purpose of having a gullible character like Hercules *comicus* is that he can be led on by things that are incongruent with fact or normal thinking.<sup>520</sup> The narrative stereotype merely enhances the likelihood that Seneca’s audience registers the reply as ironic. Claudius’ response, or rather its irony, is the actual conveyor of criticism.

Similarly, the description of Claudius’ body and voice are not themselves part of the satiric message. Seneca’s caricatural depiction of Claudius is only a framework within which the reader’s knowledge can find physiognomic implications. The caricature itself does not deliver an ethical remark, for ugliness is not morally wrong; it is a technique that facilitates the audience in forming negative physiognomic conclusions about Claudius. The audience must apply their own knowledge of physiognomy to the description of Claudius’ body in order to see what is negative about it. Thus, while scholars are correct that these descriptions communicate negative ideas about Claudius, Seneca himself is also not exactly the one telling the audience what is bad about Claudius. He merely enables them to see his own view of things.

Irony, on the other hand, is a tool for delivering an actual message. The mental act whereby one ‘gets’ the irony, wit, or humor of an utterance is itself the realization of a reference to something else. There is no separation between these comedic devices and the satirist’s opinion. To appreciate something as ironic, witty, or humorous is to become conscious of a connection that the satirist wants his audience to realize. That is how these tools of comedy ‘speak’ Seneca’s thoughts and opinions to the reader.

On two of these techniques, wit and humor, a note of specification is due. Wit and humor encompass the elements of allusion, parody, puns, and other types of word-play; and although interchangeable in modern speech, here they are conceived distinctly. In linguistic terms, humor aligns broadly with script-based comedy, wit with pragmatic comedy. Satiric wit is both clever and sarcastic—“C. Caesarem non desiit [Claudius] mortuum *persequi*” (II.2). Satiric humor overlooks similarities between the

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<sup>520</sup> *Apoc.* 7. Hercules also assumes his *tragicus* mask to threaten Claudius in iambic senarii. After which, Hercules *comicus* fears a *μωροῦ πλῆγῆ*—a pun conflating the tragic expression *θεοῦ πλῆγῆ* (a worry for his *tragicus* counterpart) and the physical retorts suffered by the *stupidus*. The pun would not be witty, or even a pun, if the reader did not notice the implied relationship between the characters in that scene.

target and the intended audience, highlights the differences, and edifies the negative—“itaque quod Gallum facere oportebat: Romam cepit [Claudius]” (6.1). Humor is a comedy of personality and character, wit a comedy of sophistication.<sup>521</sup> Witticisms are agonistic language that challenge the knowledge of the audience—“idem Claudium vidisse se dicet [Appiae viae curator] iter facientem *non passibus aequis*” (1.2). Humor is addressed to the imagination, wit to the intellect. Yet each relies on the right amount of wrong. The most concrete difference is that humor can be wordless, whereas wit is inextricably tied to expression.

Part II therefore examines moments of wit, humor, and irony as the occasions when Seneca most clearly expresses what he wants the audience to think about in the *Apocolocyntosis*. These instances, as Chapters VI and VII show, center on Claudius’ anger and brutality. The audience, by recognizing the violence exhibited during Claudius’ reign, is made to see the apotheosis as an apology for this type of conduct in a ruler. Any number of claims and conjectures can be attached to or derived from this recognition, but the unavoidable juxtaposition between Claudius’ behavior and his apotheosis stands on its own as a moral comment. Is this the type of Princeps that should be revered? As he later writes in *De clementia*, anger and violence are not a kingly right or sign of strength. Peace and harmony, as Seneca has Augustus make claims to, are what the gods value. And those who would think otherwise, those who would vindicate Claudius’ temper are not merely in the moral wrong—they are woefully out of place with the characteristic and values of the current regime. *Apocolocyntosis* thereby marks the beginning of Seneca’s campaign to bring his philosophical wisdom into the real of political decision-making.

Before that point can be approached, the abovementioned framework for analyzing the *Apocolocyntosis* needs to be justified. Satire as a mode of discourse is the heart of the theory, and so the point to begin with.

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<sup>521</sup> cf. Arist. *EN* 1128a: ὁ δὲ βωμολόχος ἦττων ἐστὶ τοῦ γελοίου, καὶ οὔτε ἑαυτοῦ οὔτε τῶν ἄλλων ἀπεχόμενος εἰ γέλωτα ποιήσει, καὶ τοιαῦτα λέγων ὧν οὐδὲν ἂν εἴποι ὁ χαρίεις, ἔνια δ’ οὐδ’ ἂν ἀκούσαι.

## 15. *Satire*

Definitions of satire abound. They range from concise yet sweeping statements such as “satire is militant irony”, to ideas of satire as a compound mode of “attack, entertainment, and preaching”; while others understand it as more of a literary-artistic dynamic between satirist, audience, and the satirized in which “the satirist aims a certain combination of attack and artifice (including, in different formulations, wit, humor, exaggeration, fictionality) at the satiric object that has attracted his or her notice.”<sup>522</sup> But if a recent handbook is a fair indicator,<sup>523</sup> Northrop Frye and Mikhail Bakhtin still provide two of the most important schemata for classicists to consider—for both their lasting impact and comprehensive nature.

Frye envisages satire as a literary mythos, a quasi-philosophical dogma that experiences human life through a veil of irony.<sup>524</sup> For Bakhtin, satire is the literary embodiment of a carnivalesque outlook on life—a perception of society and the world defined by opinions which challenge the existing state of affairs, and attitudes which blur the line between jollification and mockery.<sup>525</sup> Both critics imagine that satire transcends the formal concept of genre, and is therefore less defined by its construction than the spirit or tenor of the authorial voice. These views, while undoubtedly known and understood by classical philologists, impact studies of Roman satire less because formal verse satire is what has primarily survived. Moreover, such liberalizing and all-encompassing definitions of satire have fallen out of the scholarly vogue.<sup>526</sup>

To find more recent definitions of satire, studies of individual authors or works must usually be consulted.<sup>527</sup> These works generally have two approaches toward the study of a satire, Historicism and Formalism. Historicism views satire as a form of literary communication, and may employ a critical theory (e.g. deconstruction) to situate the discourse in the sociopolitical setting of its composition or within a literary

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<sup>522</sup> N. Frye 1957, 223; N. Rudd 1986, 1; F.V. Bogel 2004, 1 f. (for the whole definition).

<sup>523</sup> D. Kennedy 2005.

<sup>524</sup> N. Frye 1957, 223–39.

<sup>525</sup> M. Bakhtin 1984, 107–37.

<sup>526</sup> D.H. Griffin 1994, 197: (literary theorists) “view with most suspicion any universalizing claim about the nature of satire, since most theories can be shown to have a polemical base or derive from a partial view of the genre.”

<sup>527</sup> A recent exception being C. Keane 2006.

tradition.<sup>528</sup> Formalism approaches satire as a type of literary categorization, and so reads a text in its capacity as being satire—a concentration on what happens ‘in’ the satire. Given the present understanding of satire as a type of communication, a Formal analysis is the more pertinent of the two approaches. If the narratorial messages in the *Apocolocyntosis* are isolated, then the signals that work sends about Seneca should become all the clearer.

*Apocolocyntosis* has not received much attention by the way of Formalist critique.<sup>529</sup> Its supreme topicality to the Neronian novitiate has kept the conversation focused on the real-world comments that Seneca could or would want to make through the text, and what purpose or practical significance that would have. Presently, however, it is contended that there is a significant message to be derived within the text itself. The sociopolitical situation at the end of the year 54 could not be factored out of the reception of this work, just as facts and hearsay about Claudius cannot be quarantined from the mind while reading it. Yet the *Apocolocyntosis* is not merely a verbal onslaught about various text-external subjects. It is also a story. And although the events are not particularly complex, the narrator and characters nonetheless preserve its logicity. Seneca maintains the internal coherence of the *Apocolocyntosis* by having the audience repeatedly think of the imbalance of anger and violence in Claudius’ life—factors that inspire the depiction of Claudius, the issues discussed at the *concilium deorum*, and the dialogue in the Underworld. Where such realizations lead a mind will vary, but the existence (and satiricalness) of Seneca’s message does not hinge on a reader’s positive or negative interaction with the intertextual ideas. What makes the *Apocolocyntosis* satiric is how Seneca feeds or gets his audience to digest certain thoughts within the text. That is why the analytical focus presently remains both wholly within the text and more literary than historical. But as noted, what exactly makes something satiric is contested territory.

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<sup>528</sup> Usually along the lines of who and what in the satirical world represents who and what in the real world, and the authorial comments to arise from such an alignment.

<sup>529</sup> O. Weinreich 1923 is seemingly the first and last work that seriously considered the *Apocolocyntosis* in terms of its story. The purpose of doing so, however, was to formulate a guess about the size of the lacuna beginning after Claudius’ reply to Hercules.

Whether one thinks of satire in terms of discourse or plot, a slightly problematic practice often appears with either model. There is a tendency, generally unobtrusive, to intermix textual analysis with strains of more subjectively qualitative criticism. This is not, of course, to decry the value of subjective thought in humane studies, or even to call for an impartial approach to the study of ancient literature. Instead, the object of contention is the effect that theoretically deduced judgments have on a work, such as whether something is funny, serious, effective, or successful. For these critical remarks often come to define and shape the worth of a work. Ralph Rosen, for instance, states:<sup>530</sup>

I understand satire as a species of comedy, or more generally “the comic,” and that when a poet mocks someone in a satirical work, that mockery invariably can be seen as a comic strategy, that is, it exists in order to make an audience laugh, whether that laughter is of the raucous physical sort or a mere intellectual appreciation of a humorous conceit. Indeed, I regard comedy (in the sense of “performed humor”) as one of the few unassailable defining qualities of satire, and by extension, of mockery, ridicule and invective. This is not to say that every work in which satire (or mockery) occurs is a work of comedy, only that wherever there is satire, there exists some measure of comedy at that moment, however fleeting that moment may be within the work as a whole.

Two semantic observations may be made. First, it is a false syllogism to say that satire is comedic, comedy exists to make people laugh, and therefore satire aims to make people laugh.<sup>531</sup> Second, if the success of satire requires scornful laughter (aloud or internal), then it would seem to imply support for the superiority theory of humor.<sup>532</sup> The view that funniness perforce involves some kind of a put-down has its supporters;<sup>533</sup> and this theory certainly seems applicable to much of satirical humor,<sup>534</sup> such as a fake newspaper headline reading ‘Caligula tormented by periodically rational thoughts’. But even there one may question whether the humor inheres within the

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<sup>530</sup> R. Rosen 2007, 19.

<sup>531</sup> Few would argue that *Huckleberry Finn* and *Animal Farm* were designed with laughter in mind.

<sup>532</sup> For a review of the various theories: P. Keith-Spiegel 1972; R.A. Martin 2007. For the various cognates that these categories have been called in the past: S. Attardo 1994, 47.

<sup>533</sup> Most outspokenly: C.R. Gruner 1978 and 1997; M. Billig 2005. For several varieties of incongruity theory: S. Attardo & V. Raskin 1991; E. Oring 1992 and 2003; W. Ruch 1998. On the Freudian release theory: J. Palmer 1994, 79–92.

<sup>534</sup> On the tendency in humor to utilize aggressive content and to have a target: P.E. McGhee & N.S. Duffey 1983.

implication that Caligula is mentally deranged, or the incongruence of rational thoughts being torturous.

More pressing is that Rosen's interpretation of satire compels him to assert himself as the determiner of whether or not a message was successfully communicated—in terms of clarity, style, funniness, or whatever seems pertinent. One objection to this position, especially in so short a text as the *Apocolocyntosis*, is that such valuation off-balances the present study of the messages in the text. Another issue is that the essential meaning communicated by an utterance is unaffected by how 'good' it is. This point is particularly relevant because the *Apocolocyntosis* is not contemporary satire: the potency, persuasiveness, and funniness of satiric wit, humor, and irony dwindle as the issues it addresses fade from relevance, memory, and existence. The present analysis therefore tries to distance itself from the question of whether a joke, passage, or whole text 'works'.<sup>535</sup> Meaning is what matters most to an appraisal of Seneca's signals and ideological self-presentation in the *Apocolocyntosis*. The concentration consequently falls on the communicative techniques most often used in satire—the tools of comedy.

#### 16. *Framework*

Stylistics informs the present understanding of satire. Analysis of the *Apocolocyntosis* is thus framed in terms of the social effects of its linguistic form; and the rhetorical distinction between form and meaning is rejected. Stylistic considerations, insofar as style is the modification of one's language to differ from itself in some aspect, are not merely aesthetic frippery to garland the internal content of an utterance—especially in satire, where such variation often plays into the comedic nature of its discourse. These considerations lead to a bipartite interpretation of satire. First, as a piece of writing, satire is a critical discourse couched in elements natural to comedy—play, fantasy, cleverness. Second, as a practice, it is the delivery of social criticism through comedic techniques, such as irony.<sup>536</sup> In no way should it be supposed that the aim of the satirist is to effect laughter, or that successful satire is always funny. The satirist and comedian share the same tools for communication, but pursue different ends.

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<sup>535</sup> R. Cortés Tovar 1986 is, therefore, presently most useful for its summarization of scholarly opinion.

<sup>536</sup> On the generic intersection of comedy and satire: R.B. Heilman 1978, 270 f.; C.A. Knight 2004.

As for why satire has or must have this comedic slant, two ideas can be offered. One is that the fun or facetious facet of this kind of antagonism protects satire from censorial scrutiny; or, conversely, the presence of a text-external, real-world discourse existing within instances of comicality protects it from dismissal as frivolous speech.<sup>537</sup> Under this rubric the audience delights in both the cleverness of a satiric utterance and its comicality as an act of hostility.<sup>538</sup> Intentionally humorous jokes must therefore overcome two inhibitions in any potential audience—opposition to the source of amusement, and the purpose to which the comicality is put. The joker and audience must have a mutual understanding of what constitutes joking for them as a group. In terms of the *Apocolocyntosis*, to accept jokes revolving around the idea that Claudius' deification was ludicrous, it follows that Seneca's audience already believed Claudius' role in the judiciary was inappropriate, his judgment inferior, or any of the other complaints about him.

Another idea is that satire requires these comedic features to remain distinct from the disparagement of plain condemnation.<sup>539</sup> Satiric discourse by nature exhibits numerous similarities with pure criticism, as both address and interpret factuality. But one difference stands out. Plain denunciation assents to the importance of its subject through the concession of sober attention: satire cannot leave its inherent moralism unadulterated lest it becomes invective, diatribe, or sermon. Satire thus detracts from the absolute seriousness of its topic by routing its message through the tools of comedy. Comedy drives satiric communication through a variety of impulses—farce, parody, irony, wit, humor—each of which embodies an instance of the author interfering with the reception of an utterance, be it for amplification or obfuscation. These are the maneuvers through which Seneca and other satirists personalize their critique, and therefore the textual elements of analytical interest.

An additional consideration for the present analysis is the theory of a satiric persona separate from the author. Persona theorists argue that the narrator does not always

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<sup>537</sup> Thus S. Freud 1905, 79, 84–6, 147.

<sup>538</sup> As F. Nietzsche (*GM*, II.6) recognized: “Ohne Grausamkeit kein Fest: so lehrt es die älteste, längste Geschichte des Menschen—und auch an der Strafe ist so viel F e s t l i c h e s!”

<sup>539</sup> cf. N. Frye 1957, 224: “two things are essential to satire: one is wit or humor, founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack.”

reflect the author's views, that the true object of laughter in certain Roman satires is the narratorial voice.<sup>540</sup> Although it is possible that the *Apocolocyntosis* was an exercise in the Cynic tradition of merely arguing an issue both ways, no strong case has been made that Seneca channels some other person to speak as the narrator. Moreover, if the *Apocolocyntosis* parodied the sentiments of Claudius' most vitriolic enemies (whence the implication that Seneca was not one of them), the whole work would become ironic when read alongside *De clementia*—and communication through irony is a hallmark of satire. But more to the point, Seneca's other works echo the values and opinions espoused in the satire. There cannot be a narratorial mask because Seneca is airing his own personal beliefs.

Further issues with a persona-theoretical analysis of the *Apocolocyntosis* may be demonstrated by engaging Niklas Holzberg's hypothesis about the author and narrator of the text.<sup>541</sup> For a variety of reasons—ranging from the conflict between the text and official propaganda, to the anachronism of the singing Apollo-Nero in the *laudes Neronis* as noted by Toynbee and Champlin,<sup>542</sup> and the claim that Tacitus and Suetonius furnish almost every historical detail referenced in the *Apocolocyntosis*—Holzberg argues that a Seneca imitator penned the text in the mid second century. The strands of his argument make some interesting points, but the cumulative idea holds problems. For one, this hypothesis cannot be proven wrong by the argument it seeks to challenge. No amount of evidence in support of Seneca's authorship can disprove that it was a Senecan impersonator: as the *Apocolocyntosis* sounds more authentically Senecan, the impersonator simply becomes more adept at his task. The more pertinent issue, however, regards the interpretation of the work if it employed a narratorial mask.

If an imitator penned the *Apocolocyntosis*, one may reasonably wonder what he hoped to accomplish with it. Holzberg maintains that the intended reader's amusement with the work would have derived from the incongruity between the vitriolic

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<sup>540</sup> e.g. W.S. Anderson 1982; M.M. Winkler 1983; S.M. Braund 1988. The theory comes originally from A.B. Kernan 1959.

<sup>541</sup> N. Holzberg 2016.

<sup>542</sup> J.M.C. Toynbee 1942; E.J. Champlin 2003a.

content of the text and Seneca's personality, which is to say his philosophical persona.<sup>543</sup> The audience is amused because 'Seneca' behaves in a manner contradictory to his personality: they laugh at the paradoxical absurdity of the narratorial persona.<sup>544</sup> What, then, was the point of such a work? Holzberg's Senecan imitator would seem to have produced the *Apocolocyntosis* for its own sake, as an exercise in entertaining an incredibly erudite crowd. And erudite they must have been, for the audience would not merely have needed to possess great familiarity with Seneca's corpus (in addition to knowledge of the Greek and Roman texts referenced), they must also have been meticulous students of Roman political history to understand the references to all the individuals and events mentioned in the text. Although that is not a problem in itself, it is surprising that such a niche amusement would have survived transmission.

Nevertheless, should Holzberg's hypothesis be entertained, the question arises whether the *Apocolocyntosis* remains a satire. Clearly it would be ironic. Yet this does not mean that the *Apocolocyntosis* was designed to render a contemporaneously pertinent moral comment. If, however, the imitator still had a satiric goal in the *Apocolocyntosis*, then it seems far likelier that Seneca himself (perhaps as a stand in for philosophers at large) would have been the butt of criticism. Lampooning Claudius is not a particularly convincing goal: he had been dead for over a century. Seneca, on the other hand, was notorious for hypocrisy, had few friends and allies toward the end of his life, and was held in poor standing by later authors who mention him.<sup>545</sup> The opening to satirize Seneca was there. Moreover, unlike Claudius' historical works, the values espoused in Seneca's texts were meant to be applicable in every age. They could be lampooned more readily because they alleged themselves to be relevant, as opposed to Claudius, whose deeds hardly impacted the political situation of the second century in any direct manner. The orientation of the narratorial persona (parodic or ironic)

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<sup>543</sup> N. Holzberg 2016, 321: "er wie der Verfasser der Epigramme den Leser anregt, sich darüber zu amüsieren, wie unvereinbar die Selbstpräsentation des (hassenden) „falschen“ Seneca mit der des (stoischen) „echten“ ist."

<sup>544</sup> id. 330: "Der Leser hätte die Lektüre eines Büchleins mit dieser Überschrift in der Erwartung begonnen, „Seneca“, der, wie er von Tacitus (Ann. 13,3,1) wusste, für Nero die *laudatio funebris* auf den vergöttlichten Claudius geschrieben hatte, werde nun die Vergöttlichung schildern. Und dann hätte er stattdessen zu seiner größten Überraschung und Erheiterung herausgefunden, dass der „Philosoph“ den verstorbenen Kaiser keine Apotheose, sondern die Erniedrigung zum Sklaven eines *libertus* in der Unterwelt habe erfahren lassen."

<sup>545</sup> viz. Quintilian, Gellius, Fronto: see the discussion in Section 7.

therefore depends on the authorial goal for the text (uncritical entertainment or contemporary satire); and the available goals for the author depend on the sentiments of the intended audience (pro- or anti-Seneca). But the identity of the impersonator is unknown, hence also his message in the *Apocolocyntosis*. The narratorial mask cannot disclose its true sentiments without the reader being informed of its text-external context.

Thus, with a narratorial persona, distinct problems accrue. The foremost issue is that a mask obfuscates an otherwise clear purpose or message for the *Apocolocyntosis*. If the satire were circulated anonymously in the 50s, it would be most straightforward to take the narrator at his word and assume that the author loathed Claudius. The text lacks any indication that the narrator should not be interpreted literally. Further, anonymous circulation prevents the narrator from donning a mask because it obscures the orientation of the author, which the audience needs to know in order to understand the work as either a satiric critique or an ironic pastiche. Much the same holds true for later authorship by ‘Seneca’. The reader must still be familiar with the author’s beliefs to discern the narratorial persona; and unlike certain of Juvenal’s satires, the narrator is not irrational or erratic, and he does not express views that are perforce “alien to the reader’s preconceptions.”<sup>546</sup> Nothing within the text suggests that the narrator should not be taken seriously. Nor is anything within the texts too outlandish to be taken seriously. In short, the *Apocolocyntosis* itself lacks the two basic problems that compel scholars toward persona-theoretic analysis.

A final point regards the *Apocolocyntosis* as Menippean satire. Simply put, Menippea is not particularly useful as a generic designation.<sup>547</sup> A literary-critical purpose of genre is to enhance or enable the meaningful comparison of works with one another, but classifying the *Apocolocyntosis* as Menippea does little to help understand it.<sup>548</sup> There is

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<sup>546</sup> W.S. Anderson 1982, 313.

<sup>547</sup> No clear consensus on how exactly to define it, either: cf. E.P. Kirk 1980, 223 ff.; J.C. Relihan 1993, 3–11; D.H. Griffin 1994, 31–4; C. Kaplan 2000, 47–58; V. Rimell 2005, 166–9; H.D. Weinbrot 2005, 1–19.

<sup>548</sup> M. Bakhtin (1984, 114–9) lists fourteen aspects of Menippea as a genre. Compare more recent assessments: J.G. Henderson 2005, 316–8; D.M. Hooley 2007, 141–69. And more generally on generic interactions: L. Roman 2014.

nothing substantial, similar, or roughly coeval to compare Seneca's work to.<sup>549</sup> Seneca's comedic and satiric influences remain unknown; and there is absolute silence on the originality or reception of Seneca's text. Moreover, any attempt to explain its Menippean characteristics reveals a wider problem with the very idea of Menippea as a genre—an inherent circularity to its definition. Definitions of Menippea spring from a set of ancient texts that are predeterminately Menippean.<sup>550</sup> The term carries no present significance.

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So goes the present approach to the *Apocolocyntosis*. Its genre of Menippea lacks meaningful relevance to the interpretation of the text, and is dissociated from analytical methodology. Satire itself is understood to be a mode of communication rather than a literary format. The satirist communicates his social and political commentary through the comedic techniques used to effect laughter in his culture. He is not a comedian *per se*, for the essential purpose of satire is not to make the audience laugh: he merely uses the same set of tools toward a different communicative purpose. Such a hermeneutic is particularly viable in the *Apocolocyntosis* because, happily, Seneca's sense of satiric comicality is not terribly hermetic—not much appears to be 'inside' jokes, which might imply something about the scope of his audience. With this framework erected, it may now be shown that the tools of comedy overwhelmingly focus on Claudius' anger and violence, and therefore that the satiric message of the *Apocolocyntosis* is essentially a moral one. Again, this is not to say that Seneca did not attack some political target *with* the satire, but rather that the criticism *in* the satire is not itself political because the tools of comedy more properly hinge on topics of ethical import and consequence.

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<sup>549</sup> *Satyricon* is oftener now read as a novel: G.L. Schmelling 1996; V. Rimell 2002. Or, at least, not as Menippea: R. Astbury 1977. Although some would disagree: E. Courtney 1962; M. Coffey 1989, 186.

<sup>550</sup> As in: J.C. Relihan 1984 and 1990; H.K. Riikonen 1987.

## VI. FROM EARTH TO HEAVEN

This chapter now begins to canvass the text for instances when the relevant tools of comedy appear. As suggested in Chapter V, these are used to relay Seneca's satirical critique, which will be shown to focus predominantly on Claudius' lack of morality. Yet not every instance of wit or humor has this exact tendency. Investigation of such instances is, for the most part, unnecessary to advance the focus of the present and subsequent sections, but the very fact of such a concession—that non-tendentious comicality exists—opens the way for a somewhat recent work to impugn the above-mentioned framework. That will be addressed next for its own sake, and in order to clarify several points before moving to the analysis.

Maria Plaza's recent work on satire seeks to draw a dichotomy between the moralizing criticism and humor in Roman satire. Hence the thesis of the work:<sup>551</sup>

Roman satirists do not deliver what they expressly promise to deliver, i.e. well-deserved ridicule of vice and vicious people, but rather give us a much more sprawling and ambiguous product, where humour is in fact more widespread than the criticism it is supposed to sweeten. This is not an accident, but an incongruity built into the very foundation of the genre: while the Roman satirist needs humour for the aesthetic merit of his satire, the ideological message inevitably suffers from the ambivalence that humour brings with it.

Although this claim arises from and is only aimed at formal verse satire, attention should be paid to the valence between the author's ideology and the role played by humor in the text. First, it should be noted that the central concept of humor in her work remains problematically vague.<sup>552</sup> In terms of the present methodology, Plaza's use of 'humor' corresponds to 'funniness', thus referring to either a technique or effect intended to evoke laughter—a definition derived from the programmatic satires of Horace, Persius, and Juvenal.<sup>553</sup> Although those texts mention wit and humor as a goal of some satirists, they never oppose funniness against moralizing or demand the combination of the two.<sup>554</sup> Laughter is simply a natural product of their craft. It is not for nothing that Horace praises Lucilius for being *facetus* rather than *iocosus*.<sup>555</sup>

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<sup>551</sup> M. Plaza 2006, 2.

<sup>552</sup> Noted elsewhere: K. Freudenburg 2008.

<sup>553</sup> M. Plaza 2006, 1 with n. 1 (Hor. S. 1.4, 10, 11.1; Pers. 1; Juv. 1).

<sup>554</sup> Hor. S. 1.4.34 f., 91–3; 10.7 f., 11–5, 54 f.; 11.1.1 f.; Pers. 1.85–7, 107 f., 116 f.

<sup>555</sup> S. 1.4.6–8: "hinc omnis pendet Lucilius, hosce secutus | mutatis tantum pedibus numerisque; facetus, | emunctae naris, durus componere versus."

As suggested in the previous section, laughter is not essential to the success of a satire. Often satire is funny, for it employs semantic forms regularly used to make people laugh. But it is an entirely different matter to say that wit and humor detract from the satiric message. Again, such a position relies on the textual critic being an arbiter of communicative success. There is, however, another consideration. Why should funniness in itself diminish the moralizing message? The answer for Plaza proceeds from the incongruity theory of humor, according to which the ‘humor response’ originates in a perceived discrepancy between expectations and objects, elements of objects, or events.<sup>556</sup> To reiterate, this is but one of several theories in humorology; and Plaza’s thesis would change if she preferred superiority theory. For if disparagement were understood to effect the humor response, as it was by Aristotle, then it would be difficult to argue that satiric funniness lacks a value judgment or moral comment.<sup>557</sup> Indeed, Mary Beard’s recent research on Roman laughter strongly suggests that superiority and derision were inherent in the laughter evoked by ancient funny-men and enjoyed by Roman elites.<sup>558</sup> Incongruity, on the other hand, lacks any inherent communicative information—incongruity itself does not say anything, whereas an inbuilt insult does. Incongruous humor can therefore be ‘just for fun’, and thereby dilute the concentration of more serious messages. Yet, as Plaza says, humorous content is generically required in satire. The satiric message must, under that rubric, be tempered with humor or be otherwise presented alongside material intending to rouse laughter. And so one ends up with a satirical *sortes* paradox: how much humor is needed in satire? when does satire have too much or too little humor? where are those limits? and what determines those boundaries? These questions lack a meaningful or consistent answer.

Perhaps funniness does not have an ideologically consequential role in Roman verse satire. Ultimately, however, this has little bearing on the relay of a satiric message through the tools of comedy, though it should be recognized that non-satirical wit and humor serve a meta-textual role—and a notable one in the *Apocolocyntosis*. Whether it detracts from Seneca’s overall message is another question, but the plainer

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<sup>556</sup> An expression coined in P.E. McGhee 1971.

<sup>557</sup> On which: D. Zillmann 1983.

<sup>558</sup> M. Beard 2014, esp. 128–57.

instances of funniness in the *Apocolocyntosis* show a conscious interaction with more openly critical comments. Non-satirical elements of comicality almost always precede or closely follow instances when chastisement is delivered through comedic tools. The effect is such that the unmissable condemnation in Seneca's critique is further offset by straight wit or humor. And although this differs from his satiric strategy of repeating criticisms in progressively clearer terms, the unobtrusive nature of this comicality (if it must derogate from his ideology) stands as a comment on Seneca's confidence to write what he does.

Now the focus turns to the text. As was the case in Chapter IV, much preexisting scholarship can stand alongside the present account without detriment to either interpretation—though not necessarily with synergy since, as mentioned, the *Apocolocyntosis* has not been specifically studied as a satire or for the message communicated wholly within the text. *Apocolocyntosis* is therefore surveyed in sequential order. That helps to illustrate both Seneca's critical technique, and the rhetorical care he puts into the *Apocolocyntosis* which allows him to condemn Claudius' immorality in transparent terms.

### 17. *The opening*

*Apocolocyntosis* begins before the story of Claudius in heaven. The first two sections introduce the author-cum-narrator to the audience, and set a tone of enthusiastic flippancy.<sup>559</sup> Ease and levity are encouraged as the first sentence deviates from a set phrase (“quid actum sit *in caelo*”), and the narrator defensively expounds his immunity from fact-checking. With the object of laughter having drifted to Livius Geminius by the middle of the first section,<sup>560</sup> the narrator returns the focus to himself through self-deprecation. This is primed by an overworked circumlocution:<sup>561</sup>

iam Phoebus brevior via contraxerat arcum | lucis et obscure cresce-  
bant tempora Somni | iamque suum victrix augebat Cynthia regnum  
| et deformis Hiems gratos carpebat honores | divitis Autumni  
iussoque senescere Baccho | carpebat raras serus vindemitor uvas.<sup>562</sup>

<sup>559</sup> On the two sections as a unit: T.J. Robinson 2005, 229–36; M. Rühl 2011, 76 f.

<sup>560</sup> Further details on this passage: C.F. Russo 1985, 47–9; G. Binder 1987, 6–8; 1999, 110–3; A.A. Lund 1994, 58–64.

<sup>561</sup> Commentary thereon is mostly textual criticism. More interpretative: M. Rozelaar 1976, 262–6; M. De Nonno 1996; S. Grazzini 2004/5.

<sup>562</sup> Eden offers *arcum* where MSS read *ortum*. C. Scaublin 1987 amends the original to *orbem*. *Contraxerat orbem* is reminiscent of “contrahit orbem” which comes from a relevant and referenced book

(2.1)

As the narrator reports the alleged time of Claudius' death, his temporal meandering collapses under the awkward weight of *vindemitor*.<sup>563</sup> In sequel, and true to Seneca's preference for neat and precise accentuation, the narrator reneges the approximation—"puto magis intellegi si dixero..." He continues the 'taking too long' theme by complaining about indecisiveness of philosophers, whose implied pedantry segues into the narrator's next personal—that of a poetic persona which heckles him for the prosaic rendition of the time.<sup>564</sup> To this imaginary figure he concedes an abridgement of the exposition:<sup>565</sup>

iam medium curru Phoebus diviserat orbem | et propior Nocti  
fessas quatibat habenas | obliquo flexam deducens tramite lucem.  
(2.4)

The narrative then crosses over into the supernatural, as does Claudius—"animam agere coepit." Through the colloquial crudeness of "animam agere", and the first of many soul-wind-fart puns on *anima*, the tone of the narrative is lowered to a level befitting a slovenly carouser. Register change is often used for an amusing effect when transitioning from scene to scene or from character to character, and it is one of Seneca's more prominent strategies for comicality.<sup>566</sup> The effect itself has no bearing on the satiric discourse, but it plays the significant role of either adding entertainment value to what is being said or countervailing the seriousness of something just (or about to be) said—thereby providing a comedic offset to the hostility. In this particular instance, the slight to Claudius becomes all the more apparent shortly thereafter, when the godly and beautiful savior of Rome, Nero, is praised in heroic verse.

So opens Seneca's satiric act, with energy and without pretense. The living and dead are fair game, including the narrator and his audience—should they care for poetry or philosophy. But nothing of ideological substance has been said. A quote from Vergil mocks Claudius for his limp; Augustus is *divus*, Drusilla is not; and the narrator

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of Ovid (*Met.* XV.198). *Victrix Cynthia* is Propertian (IV.8.63). Other textual-critical considerations: U. Scholz 1979; H. Tränkle 1988; P.-J. Dehon 1992).

<sup>563</sup> With scarce but not dismissible poetic precedent: Hor. *S.* I.7.30; Ov. *Fast.* III.407.

<sup>564</sup> C. Damon (2010, 57) reads more into the back and forth exchange.

<sup>565</sup> *Medius orbis* is common in Vergil (*G.* I.209, 231; 4.426; *Aen.* III.512, VIII.97; *Moretum* 57). The phrase *diviserat orbem* comes from Germanicus' cosmological poem (*Arat.* 473; 526). And Seneca will use *obliquo tramite* again (*Thy.* 842). Other observations: E. Bonaccini 1994.

<sup>566</sup> On which: C. Venour et al. 2011.

labels Livius Geminius as an obsolete fraudster. None particularly matters in their given context. Each comment, however, will appear again—and sharper. Throughout the satire there is a pattern in which complex speech (usually pun or irony) broaches a subject that is revisited in blunter or harsher terms.<sup>567</sup> If this pattern is understood as a technique, then the repetitions can be seen as different stages in the development of a coherent idea. That subsequently allows an assessment of the caution used to approach certain topics, or the lack thereof. Such information holds value for gauging Seneca's comfort and confidence with his topic and message.

### 18. *Transition*

The satiric story properly begins in the third section, with Mercury continuing the 'taking too long' theme by grumbling at Clotho to let Claudius finally die.<sup>568</sup> Irony imbues the narratorial explanation for Mercury's interest in Claudius, which again addresses his bodily infirmities—"Mercurius qui semper ingenio eius delectatus esset" (3.1).<sup>569</sup> And Mercury's own explanation, "annus sexagesimus et quartus est, ex quo cum anima luctatur", references other ailments through homophonic wordplay (*annus, anus*) and homonymic innuendo (*anima*). The lines from the first divine character also initiate Seneca's tendency (or technique) to repeat derisions, which begins when Mercury introduces the idea that Claudius will not be missed—"nemo enim umquam illum natum putavit." Literally the phrase answers the puzzle of why nobody knew Claudius' *hora fatalis*: colloquially it expresses his unimportance. Claudius' *hora fatalis* was unknown because he was not important enough for anyone to care.

Mercury continues this theme with a quote from Vergil's *Georgics*, simultaneously disapproving of Claudius and complimenting Nero—"dede neci, melior vacua sine regnet in aula" (3.2).<sup>570</sup> The quotation elevates the register, which highlights it, yet it does not require the reader (or listener) to engage with their poetic literacy. The sense and insult succeeds without the original context. The satire then transitions to

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<sup>567</sup> cf. A.L. Motto & J.R. Clarke 1983. They investigate repetition in the satire, but their idea of what qualifies as (ostensibly thematic) repetition is very loose.

<sup>568</sup> More on this scene, on the Fates: P. Colafrancesco 2004, 127–36; A. Bonandini 2010a.

<sup>569</sup> Hor. *Carm.* 1.10.1–4: "Mercuri, facunde nepos Atlantis, | qui feros cultus hominum recentum | voce formasti catus et decorae | more palaestrae."

<sup>570</sup> On that and other Vergilian reminiscences: G. Dobesch 2001, 563–76.

Clotho, who bolsters the entertainment value with an incongruously downward shift in register—“sed Clotho ‘ego mehurcules’ inquit” (3.3).<sup>571</sup>

The fourth section is one of two scene changes in verse. As the setting moves from Earth to Olympus, the advent of a Golden Age is heralded under the long prosperity of the new Emperor, who will relieve suffering and restore the rule of law. The section labels Claudius’ principate as happily forgettable in the face of the young and promising Nero:<sup>572</sup>

haec ait et turpi convolvens stamina fuso | abrupit stolidae regalia  
tempora vitae. | at Lachesis redimita comas, ornata capillos, | Pieria  
crinem lauro frontemque coronans, | candida de niveo subtemina vel-  
lere sumit | felici moderanda manu, quae ducta colorem | assumpsere  
novum. mirantur pensa sorores: | mutatur vilis pretioso lana metallo,  
| aurea formoso descendunt saecula filo. | nec modus est illis, felicia  
vellera ducunt | et gaudent implere manus, sunt dulcia pensa. | sponte  
sua festinat opus nulloque labore | mollia contorto descendunt stam-  
ina fuso. | vincunt Tithoni, vincunt et Nestoris annos. | Phoebus adest  
cantuque iuvat gaudetque futuris, | et laetus nunc plectra movet, nunc  
pensa ministrat. | detinet intentas cantus fallitque laborem. | dumque  
nimis citharam fraternaue carmina laudant, | plus solito nevere man-  
nus, humanaue fata | laudatum transcendit opus. “ne demite, Parcae”  
| Phoebus ait “vincat mortalis tempora vitae | ille, mihi similis vultu  
similisque decore | nec cantu nec voce minor. Felicia lassis | saecula  
praestabit legumque silentia rumpet. | qualis discutiens fugientia Lu-  
cifer astra | aut qualis surgit redeuntibus Hesperus astris, | qualis cum  
primum tenebris Aurora solutis | induxit rubicunda diem, Sol aspicit  
orbem | lucidus, et primos a carcere concitat axes: | talis Caesar adest,  
talem iam Roma Neronem | aspiciet. flagrat nitidus fulgore remisso |  
vultus, et adfuso cervix formosa capillo.” (4.1)

The lines do not greatly distinguish themselves as panegyric. The imagery is familiar, the language unexceptional.<sup>573</sup> But the Apolline connection is anachronistic for the mid 50s.<sup>574</sup> Edward Champlin has therefore suggested that all but the first two lines were interpolated.<sup>575</sup> There are, however, reasons to question his idea.

One objection is that the narrator does not speak in short spans of verse unless quoting text-external literature.<sup>576</sup> Another is that the Earth-Olympus changeover

<sup>571</sup> R. Papke (1986, 192–6) argues that “unus erat Augurini, alter Babae...” (3.4) refers to Claudius’ tinkering with the Roman alphabet. If so, Seneca’s reference is not clear enough to say exactly where the humor lies. Cf. A. Athanassakis 1973, 293.

<sup>572</sup> B. Merfeld (1993, 49–70) offers a more variegated analysis.

<sup>573</sup> Compare the imagery: Prop. II.25.10 (ln. 14); Hor. *Carm.* II.13.26 f. (15 f.); ib. 38, S. II.2.12, Ov. *Met.* VI.60, *Trist.* IV.1.14; Sen. *Dial.* XI.16.6, Plin. *Pan.* 8.3 (23); Sen. *Cl.* I.1.4 (24), Luc. V.31; Verg. *G.* 4.552 (26 f.); Luc. I.48–50 (30 f.); Stat. *Theb.* 10.605 (31 f.).

<sup>574</sup> On this aspect: L. Jerphagnon 1983.

<sup>575</sup> Thus E.J. Champlin 2003a. Expanding on J.M.C. Toynbee 1942.

<sup>576</sup> At 2.4 the narrator quotes himself.

parallels the Olympus-Underworld transition, whereby the satire gains much of its shape and narrative cohesion. To remove either scene would upset the balance of the satire as a whole.<sup>577</sup> The Earth-Olympus changeover occurs through a series of verses that praise Nero for the good deeds he will do as emperor: the shift from Olympus to the Underworld occurs through a series of verses that ‘praise’ Claudius for a variety of bad things that happened during his reign. True, if Seneca had not initially included the *laudes Neronis*, then he may have added it later for obvious structural reasons. Yet the appearance of Phoebus is also not wholly unexpected. Helios appeared in the narrator’s past two sets of verse (2.1, 2.4).

Other considerations exist. The imperial precedent for association with Apollo was set by Augustus, who plays a major role in both this text and *De clementia*. The *laudes* also exhibits the influence of Ovid, echoes of whom are found throughout the early verse passages, and whose *Metamorphoses* are explicitly invoked during the *concilium deorum*.<sup>578</sup> Furthermore, the excision would disturb a distinct pattern in the syllabic quantities of line endings that Mary Boatwright has written about, and it would spoil the self-deprecatative joke that follows.<sup>579</sup> Noting that Claudius died while listening to *comoedi*, the narrator implies that the act had literally bored the Emperor to death—“ut scias me non sine causa illos timere.” The remark loses its humor if the narrator himself had not just delivered an uninspired run of hexameters.

Another point against the idea of a later revision regards the content of the *laudes* and its would-be contemporary history. Granted, yes, the Nero-Apollo connection only physically appears in the 60s. But considering the known events leading up to and in the early 60s, it would be nigh well impossible to occlude the irony in a poem that calls Nero a champion of justice and legality. His brother had died under suspicious circumstances; his mother had been killed for dubious reasons; and if the emendation came in or after the year 62, there would be up to three other nobles dead at his behest.<sup>580</sup> It is also debatable that a highly topical satire as the *Apocolocyntosis* would age well enough to merit editing and republication. Satire tends to have a shelf life.

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<sup>577</sup> See further: D. Kornzeniewski 1982.

<sup>578</sup> Catalog 24.

<sup>579</sup> M.T. Boatwright 1986, 13.

<sup>580</sup> viz. Octavia, Rubellius Plautus, and Sulla Felix (*cos.* 52). Perhaps also Burrus.

With the *laudes Neronis* therefore poised to remain, its effect on the critical narrative is both reiterative and accumulative. The first line of attack is forthright. Claudius' *turpis fusus* (1) is quickly discarded in favor of Nero's *novus color* (6 f.), which primes the intended audience to make their own physiognomic deductions about each Princeps. The nonchalant and unceremonious end of Claudius' life reinforces the sentiment that he was inconsequential and quickly forgettable, whereas the contrast between the two lifelines enhances the clarity of the irony within the praise for Nero. Everything that makes Nero's principate a new Golden Age—its direction under a handsome and talented individual, his prudence and respect for law and justice—speaks the opposite for Claudius and his reign. Nor should Nero's physical characteristics be underplayed. His description as a second Apollo, lithe and beautiful in form and voice, teems with ironic insinuations. Nero's *cervix formosa* evokes Claudius' *cervix opima*, which denotes a man with a savage temper; stiff or jerky bodily movements, lacking poise and finesse, signifies an insensitive man; and the youthful physique of Apollo's mirror, Nero, contrasts to Claudius' obesity. The *μεγαλόψυχος* has a fine voice, calm and measured like Apollo's song, of which only the opposite applies to Claudius in the *Apocolyntosis*.<sup>581</sup> Finally, the placidity and youthfulness symbolized by the description of Nero's head also evokes Apollo, but more readily contrasts with Claudius' baldness, old age, and obesity—a sign of mental torpidity.<sup>582</sup> Nero is everything that Claudius was not.

However genuine the praise of Nero, this extended run of verses showcases Claudius' morally compromising traits through the anticipation of their inverse in his successor. The moral critique therein ensues from the Stoic understanding of emotion and judgment, as discussed in Chapter IV. Claudius' personal flaws, bad decisions, and physical features reflect the corruption of his mind and soul. The physical outside mirrors the mental inside; and the mind (or soul) alone is responsible for moral decision-making. As such, it is uniquely fitting that Seneca should convey this point through irony, a device that also utilizes an inside-outside dichotomy.

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<sup>581</sup> Suet. *Cl.* 30; Arist. *Phgn.* 811A (thick neck, stiff body), 813A (movement), *EN* 1123B (the magnanimous man).

<sup>582</sup> Arist. *Phgn.* 807B (thick neck, fleshy body). Youth and peacefulness, respectively: R. G.M. Nisbet & M. Hubbard 1970, 255; R. Maltby 2005, 435. That Claudius was overweight and bald (or significantly balding) is highly plausible given the appearance of fat-and-bald joke (5.2).

Here ends Seneca’s satiric warm-up. With increasing candor he has expressed his satisfaction in Claudius’ death; and the growth of his enmity culminates in the first direct attack on the man. Directly after the encomium, the relief at Claudius’ exit is reiterated—“Claudium autem iubent omnes, χαίροντας εὐφημοῦντας ἐκπέμπειν δόμων.”<sup>583</sup> The quotation from Euripides is then offset by colloquially low phraseology and double entendre, “et ille quidem animam ebullit” (4.2), which sets the register at the level needed to report Claudius *vox ultima*—“vae me, puto concacavi me.”<sup>584</sup> To this the narrator appends his own interpretation, “quod an fecerit, nescio. omnia certe concacavit” (4.3). Terms could hardly be clearer as to how Seneca feels.

So concludes the first act of the *Apocolocyntosis*, and without disappointment. Humor, wit, and satiric vitriol abound. The initial four sections present Seneca’s dissatisfaction with Claudius both directly and ironically—most significantly through the pronouncement of Nero’s personal excellence. Pre-Olympus criticisms of Claudius eschew precision without succumbing to ambiguity. Seneca rejoices that Claudius is no longer emperor, but he does so because the new emperor is a morally superior individual. The rest of the satire differs in its communicative method: the roundabout approach to chastisement ceases when the narrative focus fixes on Claudius’ character (in both senses). Seneca will now raise somewhat more specific areas of ethical grievance, and continue to increase the force of their delivery at every instance.

All, however, is not so straightforward. Gradual repetitions notwithstanding, these and later sections exhibit a technique that Seneca uses throughout the satire—the use of decontextualized quotations to convey his own thoughts. Quotation itself is not a tool of comedy, but it may become so if sufficiently witty. And this Seneca accomplishes. Appropriation of other authors’ words in the *Apocolocyntosis* is not particularly obtrusive, save the occasional code-switching. Nor is it essential to know the scene that the quotation derives from. Knowledge of the speaker, text, and author do not enhance the comprehension of the intertextual significance of the quotation. The only caveat is that the words must be recognized as a quotation. But that is not an

<sup>583</sup> Generic and other issues: A. Bonandini 2011, 307–10.

<sup>584</sup> For a joint classical-medical analysis of Claudius’ life-long ailments and death: W.A. Valente *et al.* 2002. And specifically on the mushroom to kill him: V. Grimm-Samuel 1991. D. Fishwick 1965 does not mention this exclamation as a possible reference in Vespasian’s *vox ultima*; cf. M.C. Schmidt 1988, E. Courtney 2004.

issue in this modern day, and it therefore seems unlikely to have been one in the first century AD.

How is this comedic? It goes against the present methodology to assert that Seneca's use of quotation is satiric because he intends it to evoke laughter, or merely because I find the comment conveyed to be cleverly amusing. What makes Seneca's text-external quotations a legitimate tool of comedy? One answer is that they are instances of irony, for each manipulates the communicative agency over an utterance.<sup>585</sup> In neither quotation nor irony does Seneca himself actually write anything negative about Claudius: he merely makes the audience think of something unfavorable. Irony and the wittiness of a quotation both depend on the reader recognizing that an utterance contains information beyond its literal intertextual significance. Vituperation through quotation thus enables Seneca to pursue his satiric objective without diluting the communicative force of his sentiment.<sup>586</sup> Critical quotations accordingly become more prominent as the satire becomes more heated and Seneca's attacks more plain-spoken. The first of these direct quote-criticisms comes during Claudius' meeting with Hercules

### 19. *Hercules and Febris*

By the time Claudius appears in heaven there is, if there was, little ambiguity as to how he will be treated.<sup>587</sup> The satire nonetheless maintains its gradual criticism by building on old grievances and incorporating new ones. Themes turn into specific topics which then yield concrete examples. But the narrative progresses with finesse and tact, without argumentation. Seneca does not use irony to make the reader realize Claudius' incongruities and evils for themselves. Sometimes he projects his own sentiments, they having been explained or implied elsewhere—"scitis enim optime, nec periculum est ne excidant quae memoriae gaudium publicum impresserit: nemo felicitatis suae obliviscitur" (5.1). Oftener the text speaks in plain terms. An instructive

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<sup>585</sup> Numerous theories exist on what exactly makes something verbally ironic, e.g. S. Attardo 2000 (relevant inappropriateness); A. Utsumi 2000 (implicit display of the environment); A. Partington 2007 (evaluative reversal); O. Peleg et al. 2008 (indirect negation).

<sup>586</sup> E. O'Gorman (2005) seems to exaggerate the import of quoted authors' literary authority to the force and verity of Seneca's message. Seneca can speak for himself, and does.

<sup>587</sup> Generally on sections 5–7 of the satire: G. Binder 1974; M. Rühl 2011, 81–4.

example of this incremental tendency toward candor is the first specific issue raised—Claudius’ moral sensibilities as an arbiter.

The first instance of dissatisfaction with Claudian jurisprudence occurs in the *laudes Neronis*, when Apollo prophesizes that Nero will again make the laws relevant—“legumque silentia rumpet” (4.1.24). The topic is broad, the sentiment general. No specific event of Claudius’ rule is invoked in the encomium. That remains true at the second instance of this accusation, but the slight evasiveness of irony is discarded for the more memorable mordancy of quotation:

itaque et ipse Homericō versu Caesarem se esse significans ait,  
Ἰλιόθεν με φέρων ἄνεμος Κικόνεσσι πέλασσειν (erat autem sequens  
versus verior, aeque Homericus: ἔνθα δ’ ἐγὼ πόλιν ἔπραθον, ὤλεσα δ’  
αὐτούς). (5.4)

Seneca does not equivocate. Confidence surges under the cover of Homer, who is made to disclose Claudius’ malevolence explicitly rather than implicitly; and so the clarity of the satiric discontent is refined.<sup>588</sup> Nor does the exchange lack wit and humor. For unbeknownst to the character, Claudius’ citation retroactively ratifies the narratorial account of his death. The wordplay in ἄνεμος has him confirm that he simultaneously evacuated his bowels and this mortal plane.<sup>589</sup>

The narratorial quotation is notable for the omission of the original Ἰσμάρωι before ἔνθα. Seneca removes a word that might briefly distract the reader from recognizing the intended modern parallel of Rome, and he is able to selectively manipulate the content of the Homer because the quotation *quia* quotation is unimportant to the point it makes. Everything that one needs to know is there in the Greek. But if one reads the scene in a less strictly Formalist manner, as done elsewhere, the imagination can divine a select few of Claudius’ demons.<sup>590</sup> At the next instance, however, Seneca reduces his distance from the sentiment being communicated. He has one of his own characters spout the next mention of Claudius’ violent tendencies.

Subsequent to the above scene the goddess Febris interrupts Hercules’ interrogation of Claudius. She revives the image of Claudius sacking Rome—“ad sextum

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<sup>588</sup> A. Heil (2006) identifies a birth-heritage insult in this passage. Although that is not textually explicit, it should find support with D.C. Braund 1980. See also on the Lugdunum birth issue: P. Flobert 1968, S. Marcucci 1999.

<sup>589</sup> An alternate interpretation of the wordplay: P. Roth 1987.

<sup>590</sup> Thus E. O’Gorman 2005, 96–101. The role of this quote, cf. U. Schmitzer 2000.

decimum lapidem natus est a Vienna, Gallus germanus. itaque quod Gallum facere oportebat: Romam cepit” (6.1). The various denotations carried by *capere* carry the intertextual point that Claudius’ principate was a hostile takeover and occupation of Rome. But “Romam cepit” comes completely unadorned. “Gallus germanus” is a somewhat familiar pun;<sup>591</sup> and the scene itself is humorous, with Febris worked up and talking in so feverish a manner. Yet the remonstrance appears to lack a satiric cover. Where is the comicality? One answer is that the reader must utilize his encyclopedic knowledge to recognize that Febris equates Claudius to Brennus. Humor is a comedy of character, and it seems pertinent given their personal differences. But humor is subtly intangible. The humor here is a matter of sentiment rather than intellectual recognition: what makes that comparison funny depends on how the reader feels about Claudius. Nor can one safely say that the text-external reference entails irony, since “Romam cepit” is both the source of the criticism and the cue to think of Brennus. Even so, this is not intertextually apparent.

To keep the explanation of its comicality wholly within the text, one may advert to the structure of the passage or how Febris delivers the information. Her comment is organized in a way common to many jokes: set-up (“ad sextum...”), primer (“itaque quod...”), punchline (“Romam cepit”). Looking at it from more technical vantage, the semantic organization of the passage accords with several linguistic models of joking. That is to say, the comedic aspect of the passage is built into its communicative arrangement—the way it conveys information.<sup>592</sup> Under the semantic script theory of humor, for instance, what makes a text funny is that it has two distinct scripts (i.e. structured chunks of information) that negate one another.<sup>593</sup> Take the example “Max is a man of letters. He works at the Post Office.” The two scripts here are ‘intellectual’ and ‘postal worker’, and they oppose each other through the different meanings of ‘letters’. Febris’ statement is more opaque because it is not explicit what connotations are attached to a Gaul from a first century AD Roman viewpoint. The scripts are ‘Gauls now’ and ‘Gauls then’, but the intended nature of the opposition between the two is

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<sup>591</sup> Similar to “germanum Cimber occidit” (Cic. *Phil.* XI.6.14), which was known to Quintilian (*Inst.* VIII.3.29).

<sup>592</sup> See the following overviews: W.J. Pepicello & R.W. Weisberg 1983, S. Attardo 2008.

<sup>593</sup> The original work is V. Raskin 1985. This theory has evolved sizably since then. See more recently: S. Nirenburg & V. Raskin 2004.

unclear.<sup>594</sup> Thus the reader, upon seeing “Romam cepit”, revises his interpretation of the information contained in the set-up, just as the reader does with ‘man of letters’ and ‘Post Office’. In sum, Seneca has Febris say something that is linguistically recognizable as a joke. It therefore contains humor, albeit undefinable, and so conforms to the satiric mode of communicating criticism through comedy.

Moving on, Febris’ reply to Hercules enrages Claudius.<sup>595</sup> The narrator resumes control to describe the first of Claudius’ reactions in the satire:

excandescit hoc loco Claudius et quanto potest murmure irascitur.  
quid diceret nemo intellegebat. ille autem Febrim duci iubebat. illo  
gestu solutae manus, et ad hoc unum satis firmæ, quo decollare  
homines solebat, iusserat illi collum praecidi. (6.2)

Again, there is no uncertainty in the meaning or indecision from the narrator. But this time the words are his own, not a character’s. Specificity increases as the narrator moves from Febris’ mere mention of destruction to a description of Claudius actively demanding an execution. The outward sense of the parenthesis (“illo gestu solutae...”) does not carry the moral weight and condemnation of later quotes. It registers a fact, and recalls Claudius’ bodily imagery and movement. Description of the strained gesture and the explanation of its significance improves the connection between Claudius’ violent temper, somatic infirmity, and psychic irregularity—Claudius executes countrymen, Nero the laws. Claudius *carnifex* or a similar theme may have resurfaced when Claudius delivers his next lines; and it is humorously ironic that Claudius tells Hercules that he cleared Rome of much filth, be it in a scatological sense or a litigious one—“valde fortis licet tibi videaris, maluisses cloacas Augeae purgare. multo plus ego stercoris exhausti” (7.5).

However Claudius’ pre-lacuna reply is interpreted, Seneca’s technique of topical gradualism fast approaches an uncompromised level of specificity. Such frankness finally appears after the lacuna, in the council of the gods, coming *in medias res* from the mouth of an unknown speaker.

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<sup>594</sup> Perhaps the reader is to think of destructive lawyer types from Narbonensis, such as Domitius Afer, and then have their expectations overturned when Seneca implies Claudius was far more descriptive than the opportunistically litigious *novi homines* from the provinces.

<sup>595</sup> Section 7 primarily receives attention for the “ubi mures ferrum rodunt” comment; e.g. D. Kuijper 1965, J.-T. Papademetriou 1970, M. Marcovich 1977.

## 20. Council of the gods

The *concilium deorum* exhibits sharp disparity. A former mortal holds higher personal standards than traditional gods, who submit arguments comical in their flaws and inadequacies. Yet frivolous does not describe the *ignotus* who is found speaking after the lacuna.<sup>596</sup> He speaks for longer, with sarcasm and force, wit and direction; and his language is livelier and more crafted than the traditional divinities. Which god is he? The extant text divulges nothing of help. *Ignotus* is knowledgeable of Greek and Egyptian law, Stoic and Epicurean philosophy, and Latin literature from the Republic. Humor or irony might ensue were he a rustic god, perhaps also of Italic origins like Janus and Diespiter, or an Etruscan deity that received memorable attention in Claudius' *Tyr-rhenica*.<sup>597</sup> But this is far from clear.

Almost all of *ignotus*' speech denigrates Claudius' intelligence or highlights the lopsidedness of his personality, and it does both with a decidedly sexual tinge. At the outset there is also a pun alluding to Claudius' militant heterosexuality with *πρᾶγμα* in “modo dic nobis qualem deum istum fieri velis. Ἐπικούρειος θεὸς non potest esse: οὔτε αὐτὸς πρᾶγμα ἔχει τι οὔτε ἄλλοις παρέχει” (8.1).<sup>598</sup> That sentiment is followed by “Stoicus? quomodo potest ‘rotundus’ esse, ut ait Varro, ‘sine capite, sine praeputio?’”, where again one might suppose there is a comment to be had about the lack of balance in Claudius' life.<sup>599</sup> Later on his unmitigated stupidity combines with sexuality—“hic nobis curva corriget? quid in cubiculo suo faciat nesci[o]et” (8.3). This statement could refer to the trials *intra cubiculum* if *facere* is transitive with Claudius as the subject, or to Claudius' ignorance of Messalina's affairs if *facere* is intransitive and euphemistic.<sup>600</sup>

*Ignotus*' speech is primarily notable for naming a specific casualty of the Claudian regime:

illum deum <induci> ab Iove quem, quantum quidem in illo fuit,  
damnavit incesti! Silanum enim generum suum occidit. “oro, per  
<quid>?” quod sororem suam, festivissimam omnium puellarum,

<sup>596</sup> For various thoughts on the length and content of the lacuna: O. Weinreich 1923, 80–7; A. Bauer 1981, 21–3; D. Korzeniewski 1982, 110–13; G. Binder 1999, 23–5.

<sup>597</sup> L. Herrmann 1951 argues that it was Julius Caesar.

<sup>598</sup> cf. Ar. *Ec.* 1089; *Lys.* 23, 26, 661, 994; *Nu.* 196 f.; *Tb.* 581.

<sup>599</sup> Compare the use of *caput* at Petr. 132; Mart. VII.20.15, XI.46.4.

<sup>600</sup> Euphemistic use of *facere*: *CIL* IV, 10234; Catul. 110.2; Ov. *Ars* III.4.4; Petron. 45.8, 47.4, 62.4, 66.2, 87.9; Mart. I.46.1; Juv. 7.240.

quam omnes Venerem vocarent, maluit Iunonem vocare. “quare” inquit, “quaero enim, sorerem suam?” stulte, stude: Athenis dimidium licet, Alexandriae totum. (8.2 f.)

The passage refocuses the topic of Claudius’ judicial actions. Sibilance elevates the rhetoric of the *ignotus*’ rebuttal, the point being sped to its end with alliteration. The comment, however, is not about Claudius’ use of capital punishment, his violent tendencies, or the like. *Ignotus* reproves the death of L. Silanus for the uninformed reason he was killed. Silanus himself does not matter. There is no lament, insinuated or direct, over his personal potential and social importance. Nor is it suggested that the charges against Silanus were raised to clear Octavia for (a legally incestuous) marriage with Nero. Instead, the enthusiastic judge is faulted for not knowing the legislation regarding incest. The irony is patent: Claudius knew that particular law very well—he had it changed to marry his niece. His treatment within the text is enough for the reader to surmise that this was no mere misunderstanding of the law.

*Ignotus*’ accusation is also humorously ironic when considered within the text. Heretofore the criticisms and characterization of Claudius have not indicated or implied that the destruction he wrought was anything less than intentional. He has captured Rome, banished her laws, savaged her people, and called for the death of the first person to anger him. The otherwise learned *ignotus* thus appears not to have studied Claudius enough to make an accurate assessment.<sup>601</sup> Claudius is accused of being an inept judge who is unaware of the wider legal world, an unlearned dunce who has people executed because he simply does not know any better. And although Christopher Star rightly notes the emphasis on Claudius’ stupidity in the satire, the intended audience would know better and reject this interpretation.<sup>602</sup>

The charge of stupidity or ineptitude also seems plausible in one of the more memorable utterances of the satire—“quia ‘Romae’ inquis, ‘mures molas lingunt’, hic nobis curva corriget?” (8.3). The meaning is enigmatic. Why are mice licking millstones? One thought is that since these mice were less bold than those who look for actual grain, it implies that incest was furtively permitted.<sup>603</sup> Another saw a comment

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<sup>601</sup> Seneca could make this speech all the more comedic if *ignotus* were the personification of a personal attribute closely identified with Claudius, a god who would know his inner intentions such as *ira* or *saevitia*. Moreover, an angry god could make better use of the spitting sibilance throughout the passage.

<sup>602</sup> C. Star 2012, 152–4.

<sup>603</sup> A.H.J. Greenidge 1904.

on the pervasive severity of Claudius' Rome.<sup>604</sup> Others find a justification for Silanus' punishment: everything in Rome is so orderly that the mice have no scraps of solid food to eat.<sup>605</sup> Or perhaps it is a comment on Claudius' appetite, here envisioned to be such that even mice had nothing to eat.<sup>606</sup> These suggestions suppose, to some extent, that mice did not commonly lick millstones. That seems dubious: as Peter Eden has also noted, there is a mouse literally named Lick-Mill in the *Batrachomyomachia*.<sup>607</sup> How, then, to interpret this comment? If mice would often lick millstones clean, and there is every reason to suppose that they did given their usual habits,<sup>608</sup> then *ignotus*' question sounds like it might be ironic—perhaps sarcasm about something Hercules had adduced to promote Claudius, but which was actually self-defeating.<sup>609</sup> *Ignotus*' speech thus appears to revisit a point previously made with more critical attitude, thereby remaining consistent with the pattern of thematic gradualism in the text. It might also be supposed that any obliqueness in his comment is more a product of the lacuna than Seneca riddling his point.<sup>610</sup>

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Such is Seneca's treatment of Claudius in the first half of the satire. Criticisms are raised without particularity, reprised, and supplemented. Seneca's irony is not so abstruse as to require any great effort to make the intended connection; and oftener he uses sarcasm, which brandishes a patently contemptuous slant. Linguistically complex methods deliver his message without obstruction to its meaning. Personal feelings are

<sup>604</sup> J.J. Hartman 1916, 302 n. 1: "‘Romae mures molas lingunt’ significet: ‘Romae omnia nimis severe et accurate examinantur.’"

<sup>605</sup> F. Dornseiff 1928.

<sup>606</sup> M. Marcovich 1977.

<sup>607</sup> viz. Lichomyle; P.T. Eden 1984, 104. E. Ferriol (2007) would therefore seem to miss the point because there is nothing prodigious about mice eating flour or, in the world of fantasy, iron (Herod. III.37 f.).

<sup>608</sup> They are more commonly depicted drinking oil from lanterns and eating the wicks, see P. Kiernan 2014.

<sup>609</sup> Something to the effect of: "because you say that 'the sun rose every *morning* at Rome while he was in power', this man can set things straight for us?" Note the similar conclusion of A. Sizoo 1929. The next two gods to speak make that very mistake—9.3 (Janus, in opposition): "censeo ne quis post hunc diem deus fiat qui ἀρούρης καρπὸν ἔδουσω, aut ex his, quos alit ζείδωρος ἄρουρα." 9.5 (Diespiter, in favor): "cum divus Claudius et divum Augustum sanguine contingat nec minus divam Augustam aviam suam, quam ipse deam esse iussit." For more on Diespiter's speech: R. Roncali 1998.

<sup>610</sup> Section 9 contains several apparent instances of humor which, though still not entirely explicable, scholars have attempted to account for—especially the 'bean farce': W.S. Watt 1955; L. Pearson 1963; P.T. Eden 1964; R. Verdière 1975b.

announced with candor, in a posture contrary to the supposed age of dissimulation. The text of the *Apocolocyntosis* fails to distance Seneca from implications and responsibility: Seneca's critique of Claudius is understandable from within the text. Moreover, these sentiments reprise in *De clementia*, where they are articulated with greater clarity—and a more directed purpose. It is a doubtful coincidence that Seneca would here appear to test out the new direction of his personal initiative in so serpentine a form.

Seneca continues to become more aggressive as the satire reaches its climax. But as the *Apocolocyntosis* becomes more heated, so too must Seneca to make sure he does not lose his authorial cool. Without knowing what happened in the lacuna, the *ignotus* stands as the first character to mention a specific action on a specific occasion. He is also the first character to bring a distinctly human element into the satire. Although that scene contains much in the way of text-external references and wit, only Seneca's rhetoric distracts from the otherwise raw delivery of facts. It is a step above the narrator being completely blunt and specific, to be sure; but without knowing who the *ignotus* is, it is impossible to know whether his statements were inherently ironic. Nevertheless, all the critical comments in the *Apocolocyntosis* to this point have had comedic elements in them. And it is the maintenance of this balance, between comedic delivery and actual meaning, that makes the speech of Augustus the satirical highpoint of the *Apocolocyntosis*.

## VII. AUGUSTUS' SPEECH

Augustus' appearance heralds the climax of the satire. The style is vivid, fevered, and parodic; tight and ferocious, but not so malignant. Augustus speaks swiftly, and with confidence. He is sure of the facts. Yet is the scene sincere? Seneca's calculated use of wit and humor inspires several questions: does Seneca incorporate thematic comicality into Augustus' monologue? is Augustus presented differently from other characters or somehow held above reproach? and what is the relationship between the character of Augustus and the thrust of his address? Seneca has so far delivered his critique with aplomb. He has not restrained himself in topic, or hid behind obscurity to mock and deride Claudius. Nor have the characters to appear been essential for the plot—other gods and deities could have similarly advanced the story. Augustus is different. He is a historical figure, and one of importance. How Seneca used the voice of Augustus in its capacity as a source of authority might then provide an indication of the limits to Seneca's satiric vision. For what Seneca writes can only be delivered as strongly as the agent he does so through; and Augustus is a formidable mouthpiece.

### 21. *Opening remarks*

Augustus' address follows the speeches of *ignotus*, Janus, and Diespiter; and he diverges from their contributions in the *concilium deorum*. His entrance distinctively shifts the text towards a humanitarian consideration of Claudius' reign, in both theme and substance. Historical personalities accordingly form the majority of characters to appear.

Augustus opens with a *captatio benevolentiae*—"ego' inquit 'p.c., vos testes habeo, ex quo deus factus sum, nullum me verbum fecisse, semper meum negotium ago'" (10.1). The opening gambit also exemplifies phatic communion, a species of verbal behavior more akin to social intercourse than actual communication.<sup>611</sup> Augustus' words function in relation to his speech (meta-discursively) rather than as a part of the persuasive objective of the speech. They do not transmit any serious information so much as they perform an unofficial function, which here seems aimed at a point of

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<sup>611</sup> cf. B. Malinowski 1923, 315: "The whole situation consists in what happens linguistically. Each utterance is an act serving the direct aim of binding hearer to speaker by a tie of some social sentiment or other."

cameral etiquette or ceremony. Seneca, however, invests nothing in municipal workings of Olympus. Another purpose may therefore be surmised: a parody of Augustus' oratory and phraseology. The idea gains in plausibility as the speech develops.

Objectivity was not an option for Augustus. Claudius could be addressed as either a relative or *princeps senatus*. Deciding on the latter, Augustus continues with an enumeration of his accomplishments—"in hoc terra marique pacem peperit? ideo civilia bella compescuit? ideo legibus urbem fundavit, operibus ornavit" (10.2). All achievements mentioned are present on the Monumentum Ancyranum, as Allan Lund notes, and Seneca recalls its phraseology.<sup>612</sup> The satirist thus presents Augustus as he wished himself to be remembered, intermingling his *gloria* with the *labores* done in the service of Rome. But this is short-lived. Aposiopesis interrupts the ascending tricolon—"operibus ornavi, ut...quid dicam, p.c., non invenio"—and the force of Augustus' personality breaks through.<sup>613</sup> Here begins Seneca's parody of Augustus.

As Augustus' indignation surges, the register of his speech plummets. The façade of the polished Princeps dissolves: *facundia* yields to his coarser *sermo cotidianus*. Metaphor, informalities, and common phrases characterize Augustus' casual language in life, and in the majority of his address. But with the change in tone also comes a shift in focus. No longer does Augustus speak in terms of being an emperor. Seneca's character realigns himself with the thrust of the satire, and confronts Claudius as a family member—as a human being. The moral critique of Claudius resumes its normal course.

Before moving to individual elements of comicality in the speech, it should be noted that the speech itself is a parody and therefore the tools of comedy obtain throughout. Parody reflects a system of expression: it functions as a discourse of allusion to other genres and registers. The message of Augustus' speech thus becomes satiric through its delivery, which incorporates aspects of his actual speech, mannerisms, and personal quirks—elements that make the address Augustan, but leave the sentiment Senecan. In this vein Seneca has already (somewhat ironically) channeled Augustus' own anger problems with the aposiopesis and the forceful indignation of

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<sup>612</sup> e.g. Aug. *Anc.* 13: "cum per totum imperium populi Romani terra marique esset parta victoriis pax." For cross-references see *ad loc.* in A.A. Lund 1994.

<sup>613</sup> On anger in rulers, particularly Augustus: W.V. Harris 2001, 229–63 (esp. 244 ff.).

the whole monologue.<sup>614</sup> Individual instances of wit and humor also evoke Augustus' characteristically sarcastic and dark sense of humor; and Augustus' noted anxiety about adlibbing finds a reference when he reads his official proposal from a tablet.<sup>615</sup>

The parody of Augustus is not, however, wholly innocent. Parody can become satiric if it undermines its source, if it assumes the echoic and oppositional characteristics of irony; and there is always the threat of irony underlying a statement. Does Seneca have Augustus' rhetoric contribute to the satirism? The character performs no actions other than speaking during the council, but his words are more linguistically complex than any other character in the text. These comedic utterances require particular attention to assess both the message of the speech and Seneca's confidence in dealing with such a reverential figure.

## 2.2. *The effect of wit and humor*

Augustus does not present the height of comedy in the *Apocolocyntosis*. Indeed, the main detractor of easy comedy in the scene is Augustus' own voice. The commonest source of linguistic humor in the satire is high-low register change or register incongruity. Matters are thus complicated by Augustus' unscripted language, which was quite humble in real life—a lofty figure that actually used a low register. Nor would a low-high shift offer much humor. Such rhetoric would be contextually appropriate, if not expected from the sententious author. Hence it is absent from his speech. Another option would be to pursue humor through caricature—to have Augustus be too Augustan. That leads to several questions. How great a concentration of idiosyncrasies can the integrity of Augustus' character reasonably uphold? Any social being has characteristics that could be elevated to damaging heights through parody and imitation. But when would matters become offensive? A fine line separates rhetorical prosopopoeia and comedic parody. What one deems a faithful replication of an individual's sensibilities and mannerisms, another may find overstated and demeaning—it depends

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<sup>614</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 51.2, 54.1; Plut. *Mor.* 207C. Questionable is whether Seneca would hold a double standard for Augustus regarding anger; or, indeed, if Augustus is supposed to be angry throughout the speech. Nothing prevents him from delivering it completely calm. But one may also note that the afterlife is not part of Stoic dogma, and therefore the narrator can manipulate what is morally relevant or mentionable.

<sup>615</sup> *Apoc.* 11.5; Suet. *Aug.* 84.2: “instituit recitare omnia. sermones quoque cum singulis atque etiam cum Livia sua graviore non nisi scriptos et e libello habebat, ne plus minusve loqueretur ex tempore.” Sense of humor: Quint. *Inst.* VI.3.64, 77; Suet. *Aug.* 13.2, 18.1, 53.2; Macr. II.4.

on the effect of the personal quirks. Most prominent of Augustus' peculiarities in the *Apocolocyntosis* is his regular use of puns, which were no less prominent a feature in his sayings recorded by Macrobius. Nevertheless, it is impossible to determine whether Seneca's attempt at Augustan-style puns (particularly the frequency with which they appear) would have reached Roman ears as prosopopoeia or parody. As a function of rhetoric, however, their effect on the speech and dignity of the speaker is neither unbecoming nor subversive.

Take, for example, "C. Caesarem non desiit mortuum persequi." The polysemy of *persequor* highlights the discordance between Roman' annulment of Gaius' legislation and the subsequent imitation of his nephew, insofar as killing goes. Wit similarly elevates the rhetoric in "hic nomen illi reddidit, caput tulit" (11.2). Lexical reversal between *reddo* and *fero* enhances the contrast between the clauses, which highlights the disjunction of Roman' actions. Other puns heighten emphasis and sincerity, such as the paronymy in "tria verba cito dicat et servum me ducat" (11.3). In none of these examples does the Roman patois obscure the meaning or detract from the gravity of his thoughts. But there is another technique employed that does seek to be less blunt.

Roman' rhetoric utilizes the linguistic complexity of code-switching. This technical term, which suffers from various definitions in linguistics literature, here merely refers to the change of language within a single utterance. Quotations of Roman literature in the *Apocolocyntosis* are one example of this phenomenon, but an un-referential burst of Roman serves a more specific purpose in Roman literature. As Simon Swain and James Adams have both documented, Latin epistles often switch into Greek to deliver critical or sensitive thoughts, or euphemize and distance the language from the intended point.<sup>616</sup> Augustus does this in several letters to Livia when discussing Claudius' infirmities,<sup>617</sup> and once in the *Apocolocyntosis* to recite a common saying—"nam etiam si soror mea Graece nescit, ego scio: ἔγγιον γόνυ κνήμης."<sup>618</sup> The proverb raises an effective point about Claudius' treatment of Julio-Claudian family members, and brings Augustus' own actions into the conversation as a point of

<sup>616</sup> S. Swain 2002, 146–63; J.N. Adams 2003, 323–35.

<sup>617</sup> Suet. *Cl.* 4.

<sup>618</sup> MS Sangallensis contains "sorrea" where the majority of its derivatives have "soror mea." R. Roncali 1990 maintains C.F. Russo's (1985) "sura mea." P.T. Eden's (1984) "σφυρὸν meum" forces a bilingual pun between σφυρὸν and κνήμης, i.q. *sura*. K. Järvinen 2003b opts for "si forum ea".

contrast between the *divi*. The reason for shifting into Greek, it may be presumed, was to skirt some of the triviality in still remembering how Octavia remained staunchly loyal to her husband throughout the 30s BC.<sup>619</sup>

Single Greek adverbs or short phrases were also used as a means to offer a quick characterization,<sup>620</sup> a trait Augustus potentially exhibits in the text. An instance of this may be found in a corrupt section of the text—“occidit in una domo Crassum, Magnum, Scriboniam, †tristionias assarionem†, nobiles tamen.” Conservative editors do not bother with emendation. Franz Bücheler and Wilhelm Heraeus maintain “tris homines assarios” through six editions for Teubner. With minimal change Nicolae Herescu derives “tristriones assariorum” as an epithet for the unhappy trio.<sup>621</sup> Peter Eden amends aggressively with “[tristionias], <non> Assar<aci nat>ionem, nobiles tamen”, which Kimmo Järvinen turns into “tris, non Assaraci natione, nobiles tamen.”<sup>622</sup> And more recently Gerhard Binder has offered “τριῶν ἀνίους ἀσσαρίων, nobiles tamen.”<sup>623</sup> The primary issue with “tristionias assarionem” is the case endings. To disregard them reveals another solution, τρεῖς τριῶν ἀσσαρίων: “under one roof he killed Crassus, Magnus, and Scribonia—three for the price of three, but nobles all the same.”<sup>624</sup> Although the sentiment remains equivalent throughout all emendations, switching into Greek is most appropriate for a comment bluntly pronouncing this family’s lack of special worth.

Does this wit and humor have an effect on Augustus’ character? Arguably not. None of the above underplays the mood or belittles Augustus. If anything, the character seems particularly clever and fluent despite his lack of a script—not something Claudius could claim. Nor does the affective quality and rhetoric of Augustus’ speech obstruct the message or impair his *auctoritas*. His anger and disgust are necessarily understandable to the audience. But most significantly, the parody of Augustus’ language is not aggressive. Seneca does not convey a comment critical of Augustus with his linguistic imitation because the parody does not slide into caricature. Seneca thus

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<sup>619</sup> Plut. *Ant.* 54.1 f.; Suet. *Aug.* 61.2; Dio XLIX.38.1, 43.8. Previously noted by Seneca (*Dial.* VI.2.2–5).

<sup>620</sup> Thus R. Gelsomino 1959, 121.

<sup>621</sup> N.I. Herescu 1962.

<sup>622</sup> P.T. Eden 1984, *ad loc.*; K. Järvinen 2003a. Defended by P.J. Jones 1994.

<sup>623</sup> G. Binder 1992.

<sup>624</sup> The logic being: tristionias assarionem, tris tionias assarionem, tr[e]is t[r]ionias assarionem, treis trion assarion.

displays his stylistic prowess, and intimates a certain degree of familiarity with Augustus' character. Hardly coincidental: Seneca would later suggest that such knowledge was relevant to the young Nero and his regime. To look at the scene as prosopopoeia, however, the imitative language complements its predominant element—the invocation of Augustus' character and ethics. And that is where Augustus becomes satirically vulnerable. For Seneca ultimately controls the Princeps' words, and he quite understandably has something to say about the policy of exiling adulterers.

### 23. *Central message*

Augustus' address to the council foremost concerns punishment. Claudius' violence and anger have already been mentioned in the satire, but without prolonged concentration. In terms of Seneca' technique of thematic gradualism, the topic has been amply introduced for treatment by Augustus—and later in the Underworld. The charge is murder, the accounts multiple.

How does Augustus' opinion bear on the one in the Underworld? Both scenes concern the result of Claudius' unforgiving and savage tendencies as an arbiter. The denizens of the Underworld are angry with Claudius for their own executions, whereas Augustus takes a more ideological stance—“adeo istuc turpius est quod necisti quam quod occidisti” (11.1). The execution of family members is not itself the paramount issue: Augustus concentrates on how Claudius handled the responsibility of being a judge. But no character ever comments on the veracity of Claudius' judicial decisions. Indeed, Augustus avoids that point.

The majority of individuals mentioned by Augustus likely became casualties at Messalina's behest.<sup>625</sup> Thus Julia, the daughter of Drusus, was condemned for unknown reasons because she captured the jealousy of the imperial consort.<sup>626</sup> The questionable circumstances of Julia Livilla's exile was detailed in Section 3, as was Claudius' reasoning to remarry Messalina's mother to Appius Junius Silanus (*ord.* 28) in Section 2. There is no clear cause for either of their deaths. That also holds true for Cn. Pompeius Magnus, engaged to Claudius' daughter Antonia and conveniently removed before becoming an insuperable competitor for Britannicus—his parents only appear to

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<sup>625</sup> cf. H. Horstkotte 1989, doubting Messalina's agency.

<sup>626</sup> Dio LX.18.4; Tac. *Ann.* XIII.32.5, 43.3; Suet. *Cl.* 29.1.

be collateral damage.<sup>627</sup> Agrippina, however, would have to take responsibility for the downfall of L. Junius Silanus Torquatus, whose demise cleared Octavia for marriage to Nero. Tricked and disobeyed under a cloak of deceit, Claudius is nonetheless accountable for all acts carried out in his sphere of authority. As *dominus* he is liable for all under his roof, and as *dominus* he failed to maintain order. The *integritas* and *innocentia* required for his deification dissolves when denied any freedom from non-volitional responsibility.<sup>628</sup>

What exactly is it about these executions that Augustus takes exception to? They were relatives and family; and Augustus makes clear his opinion that blood is thicker than water—“nam etiam is soror mea Graece nescit, ego scio: ἔγγιον γόνυ κνήμης” (10.3).<sup>629</sup> Yet he says nothing about familial harmony and cooperation. Augustus is more concerned with the circumstances of their execution. What were the charges? Only Pompeius was dignified with a straightforward assassination.<sup>630</sup> Julia Livilla was convicted of *adulterium* with Seneca; Messalina was a multiple offender on the same charge; Silanus Torquatus, however, may have been arraigned on *stuprum* with his sister Junia Calpurnia if she was unmarried—all liable, if not actually prosecuted, under Augustus’ own *Lex Julia de adulteriis coercendis*. And so the irony soars. Seneca will sacrifice some of Augustus’ integrity as a speaker to push a point that was plausibly important to him in real life.<sup>631</sup>

The law is most topical when Augustus is most aggressive, when he condemns Messalina’s death. A rhetorical question registers his anger over Claudius’ relationship with crime and penalty—“quare quemquam ex his, quos quasque occidisti antequam de causa cognosceres, antequam audires, damnasti?” (10.4). Following the antecedent list of ill-fated relatives, adultery is the pertinent offense and an ironic subject—“hoc ubi fieri solet?” Seneca’s sarcasm is patent if Augustus questions the prosecution of adultery. Otherwise, the assertion that adultery is not prosecuted in heaven might be

<sup>627</sup> viz. M. Licinius Crassus Frugi (*PIR*<sup>2</sup>, L 190) and Scribonia (S 275).

<sup>628</sup> The two virtues were often paired, e.g. Cic. *Div. Caec.* 27; *Clu.* 152; *Phil.* 3.25; *Q. Rosc.* 26. And they were prerequisites for *dignitas*: *Or.* I.193 f., 198; *Off.* III.65; *Ver.* 2.73. Cf. *Brut.* 155; *Ver.* 5.143 f.; *V. Max.* V.8.3.

<sup>629</sup> Interpreted similarly by T. A. Suits 1975, but differently by O. Zwierlein 1982 and A. Dirkzwager 1977. Each is a matter of emending MS Sangallensis.

<sup>630</sup> Suet. *Cl.* 29.2.

<sup>631</sup> Nero quickly had A. Plautius Lateranus (*cos. des.* 65) restored to the Senatorial order, barred since 48.

a jab at the Roman Senate, reminding them that gods (like their Divus Claudius) have impunity for any and all offenses committed. But something surer is yet to come. The scene itself extracts a potent bolt of irony from Augustus' indignant statement "hoc ubi fieri solet? in caelo non fit." For Claudius is absent by that point in the satire, and has been outside the council chamber since several speakers prior. He cannot hear Augustus, he may not respond to any of the speeches: Augustus effectively holds a trial *intra cubiculum*. And when he concludes his argument with a reiteration of Claudius' executions, demanding that Claudius be punished immediately, the heavenly Senate assents to his request without any delay. Their action instantiates the very kind of anger-fueled, unthinking, and hasty decision-making that they intend to condemn in Claudius.

The text of 10.4–11.1, if read in a less Formalist manner, speaks to another kind of *defensio non recepta* trial. Augustus explicitly mentions this kind of suit in his question "quare quemquam...damnasti", following which he turns his attention to Messalina's death. His thought is singular and coherent; and the connection to the post-nuptial trials in the camp of the Praetorian Guard is unmentioned but clear. The Silius incident was not to be omitted.<sup>632</sup> Thus the first group of individuals to greet Claudius in the Underworld overlaps with those recorded by Tacitus as summarily executed.<sup>633</sup> As for the charges against Messalina and her supporters, *maiestas* or *conscientia* is likely. To Messalina *adulterium* could be added without practical effect, treason being the graver crime and her case already *mariti iudicio*. That, too, could be a source of irony if Augustus is thought to refer to the charge or legal definition of treason which allowed such trials. He was no stranger to prosecuting *maiestas*, or doing so in instances of compromised objectivity. Augustus prosecuted his daughter's lovers for *maiestas*, punishing them with interdiction or *liberum mortis arbitrium*—notably sending Jullus Antonius, son of the Triumvir, to his death in 2 BC.<sup>634</sup> Further, the Senatorial trial of Caepio and Murena in 22 BC (both arraigned on *maiestas*) proceeded

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<sup>632</sup> B. Baldwin 1964 does not find any such hint at the incident.

<sup>633</sup> viz. Traullus Montanus, Juncus Vergilianus, Vettius Valens, Saufeius Trogus (*Apoc.* 13.4; Tac. *Ann.* XI.35 f.).

<sup>634</sup> Tac. *Ann.* III.24.2.

without the defendants' testimony. When they were sentenced *in absentia* to banishment, but proved slow in their exit from Italy, Augustus sent men to kill them.<sup>635</sup> The unilateral dispensation of punishment is not absent from Augustus' historical actions as Princeps. He is a hypocrite.

In either reading Augustus holds a double standard. The ironic cant yields several questions: is Claudius to be faulted for applying the law equally to family and relatives? for his susceptibility to uxorial tricks and stratagems? for the machinations of his wives, and their ploys to put their son on the throne? None is the absolute heart of Augustus' speech, though all are present in some form—and all are equally applicable to Augustus himself.

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Posed at the beginning of the section was the question of whether Seneca held Augustus sacrosanct, above humor and beyond satirization. The above examination yields a negative answer. Seneca parodies the Princeps without detriment to his character, but summons some less savory memories; and although the irony of the scene is not wholly benign, Augustus' depiction is not pronouncedly caricatural. Nevertheless, it is difficult to say with certainty how the intended reader would interpret this depiction. Augustus is such an important and respected figure that it is hard to gauge where exactly Seneca could have gone 'too far' with his spoof. Overall, however, it seems likely that the intended audience would not take issue with Augustus' parody because offending them would not help the moral point of the *Apocolocyntosis*. It was not in Seneca's authorial interests to present issues in a way that undermined his message.

What social or political impropriety did Seneca intend for consideration? The hypocrisy of Augustus' moral superiority inheres within an astute omission. Augustus has not claimed himself ethically above any of Claudius' actions, but the moral strength of his argument rests on the tacit assumption that he adheres to a higher standard—a standard that, on more than one occasion, Augustus fell below. Yet Seneca was not so naïve to dwell on this. Politics entails hard decisions and inevitable criticism. But the recognition of Augustus' hypocrisy presupposes a comparison of the two

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<sup>635</sup> Dio LIV.3.4 f. Which they did.

*principes*; and this comparison raises one's sensitivity to a disparity in the matter. Why was Claudius so much more uniformly severe? Proportionality thus redeems Augustus while further incriminating Claudius. Moreover, Augustus encourages the reader to realize this imbalance in the conclusion to his speech: Claudius is unfit for the heavens; he is unfeeling and reprobate, not merely for the excessive severity in his judicial activity, but because his rulings were both so severe and (as Claudius bragged to Hercules) he produced so many of them.<sup>636</sup> The crisis of Claudius' reign was not political, it was humanitarian.

Seneca thereby revives the corruption of Claudius' soul, and its effect on his personal motivations. The reader is made to remember that Claudius performed such duties voluntarily, if not with an unnatural enthusiasm. Psychic weakness and the moral failing of his character are the explanations supplied by the Stoic logic of the satire. But a man cannot terrorize a population singlehandedly. He must have accomplices. Thus the Roman Senate is fittingly discernible in Augustus' final and loudest exclamation—"dum tales deos facitis, nemo vos deos esse credit." *Apocolocyntosis* then spends the remainder of its pages reinforcing the absurdity of Claudius' deification. The *nenia* details in hyperbole Claudius' under-achievements, whereafter the scene in the Underworld amply reviews the damage suffered by the senatorial order at the hands of their new god.

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<sup>636</sup> 7.4: "ego eram qui tibi ante templum tuum ius dicebam totis diebus mense Iulio et Augusto. tu scis quantum illic miseriarum contulerim, cum causidicos audirem diem et noctem."

PART II  

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CONCLUSION

*De caelo in caenum*, so goes Claudius under Seneca's pen. At first sight the surface is hostile to the Senate and Emperor. Contempt surges against a man whose actions as regent were dictated by rage and bloodlust. One layer deeper, and something different is disclosed. The scorn and disgust has little to do with specific deeds or instances. With the *Apocolocyntosis* Seneca rails against the reality that such a man was both Princeps and that he should be canonized as being a memorably good one—exasperation not merely because Claudius was a poor leader, but because he was an evil individual. Whether deluded or simply obsequious, the Conscript Fathers had erred in their judgment; and Seneca saw no reason for reticence. Let them take umbrage at their own moral falsity and the perpetual contrast between promise and performance. There was little danger in it for the new emperor's mentor.<sup>637</sup>

The essentially moral argument made against Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis* should not come as a surprise. *De ira* demonstrates Seneca's conversance with Claudius' most damaging personal trait; and satirical messages, or perhaps all social and political disagreement, near always hinge on ethics. Moreover, given the conclusion of Part I,<sup>638</sup> it seems quite conceivable that Seneca would signal his own moral preoccupations or otherwise try to expose Nero to philosophical considerations in government, either personally or indirectly through such media as the *Apocolocyntosis*. For Seneca did become more outwardly philosophical. The satire also signals Seneca's concern with justice, both in the institutional sense and in the more limited personal sense—the mutual understanding of fairness in one's interactions with others, and one's personal commitment to that morality in interpersonal dealings. But his own consideration of such issues would be theoretical, Nero's practical. The character flaws

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<sup>637</sup> K. Bringmann 1971 does not find the invective to be harsh or open enough and thus representative of a politically restricted society. Certainly the text could be cruder and visceral in its punishment of Claudius, but Seneca's language and the *Apocolocyntosis* are hardly neutered attempts at criticizing a public figure.

<sup>638</sup> i.e. with the likely onset of diminishing returns on influence from being a *rhetor*, philosophy represents the clearest means for Seneca to maintain a post-accession relationship with Nero that mimics the power structure and his authority of the tutorial period.

and personal failings presented in the *Apocolocyntosis* are thus something for Nero to recognize so that he might better his own reputation and control of the State, and something to which Stoicism could be offered as an all-in-one guiding light.

For a time, therefore, it would appear that Seneca's public voice was none too different from one decidedly more intimate. *Apocolocyntosis* handles the same essential issues as *De clementia*—personal morality, ethical decision-making, and virtue. And much like *De clementia*, *Apocolocyntosis* treats its subject (Claudius' personal standards) from an ethical and metaphysical standpoint, with Stoicism as the source of authority. It marks the recorded beginning of Seneca's intellectual move away from philosophy as means of emotional self-help, toward interactions involving inherently interpersonal human aspects. But the shift is not so dramatic. *Apocolocyntosis* maintains his familiar focus on ethically subversive behavior and internal conflict, only deviating in the format of its presentation. The more notable change is methodological, encapsulated by the lack of politics in the satire. Seneca has moved away from contemplating social phenomena in the openly political tradition of Aristotle and Panaetius, toward the more purely ethical consideration of the Early Stoa. This is most evident in *De beneficiis*, for reasons of size and totality, but is no less salient in the *Apocolocyntosis*. Seneca upends the most important public figure at Rome without dwelling on the government itself or the political fallout of his actions. Those were consequences of a deeper underlying problem.

Topics related to the Palace and its direction are, as shown, scarce. The predominance of freedmen in the Claudian regime receives brief acknowledgment, not thorough condemnation.<sup>639</sup> Narcissus appears as someone who could manipulate Claudius' murderous intent.<sup>640</sup> That is all. The political nature of Claudius' office ought not distract from the primacy of individual agency and ethics in the *Apocolocyntosis*. For if Seneca wished to lampoon Claudian policy, there was no lack of issues to spin negatively—deservedly or not.<sup>641</sup> A few examples should suffice.<sup>642</sup> Seneca could

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<sup>639</sup> 13.3 (of Narcissus): "subalbam canem in deliciis habere adsueverat." Compare the opinion of T.F. Carney 1960 on Claudius' independence.

<sup>640</sup> 13.4: "hic erat C. Silius consul designatus...Vettius Valens, Fabius, equites R. quos Narcissus duci iusserat."

<sup>641</sup> For assessments of Claudius' reign, a standard list might include: A. Momigliano 1934; Levick 1978 and 1990. For specifically Claudius in Tacitus: D.W.T.C. Vessey 1971; M. T. Griffin 1990.

<sup>642</sup> On the sources for Claudius' reign: G.B. Townend 1960, 1961, and 1964; J. Wilkes 1972, 192–203; B. Levick 1990, 187–94; D. Wardle 1992; M.T. Griffin 1994.

have cast the victory in Britannia as artificial, elephants and all;<sup>643</sup> he could have raised issue with Claudius' handling of Armenia, which had now (in 54) become a problem;<sup>644</sup> he could have complained about the favoritism shown toward Vitellius, Valerius Asiaticus, and others with less reputable origins;<sup>645</sup> and he could have lamented the supposed jealousy that withheld conquest in Germania from Domitius Corbulo, who now vindicated the Empire with legions across the Euphrates. The absence of thirteen years worth of legislation is also not to be disdained.

The only reference to policy in the *Apocolocyntosis* is not good, bad, or especially accurate. Clotho notes that Claudius “constituerat enim omnes Graecos, Gallos, Hispanos, Britannos togatos videre” (3.3). Rights given to provincial communities did not usually manifest in nomenclature. Nor was Claudius insistent on nomenclatural changes after naturalization, which helps to explain the lack of evidence for extensive enfranchisement in Greece and Britannia.<sup>646</sup> But of these provinces, Gaul received the most personal attention from the Emperor;<sup>647</sup> and one finds no shortage of Claudii in the major establishments attest.<sup>648</sup> In Spain, however, the only expansive action was an exemption from tax.<sup>649</sup> It still seems safe to say that the operation of the previous government was of little interest to Seneca.

None of this, however, is to say that the *Apocolocyntosis* evinces in Seneca a distaste for public affairs. That a man of his background had favorable access to the bully pulpit for at least five years, yet is remembered for nothing of specific relevance, may certainly suggest detachment and a lack of care. But artifice becomes this philosopher;

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<sup>643</sup> The logistics, timescale, and overall difficulty of the invasion has been debated extensively: D.E. Eichholz 1972; G. Webster 1980; J.G.F. Hind 1989 and 2007; E.W. Black 2000; E. Sauer 2002; G. Grainge 2005.

<sup>644</sup> Although Corbulo's war in Armenia has often been dismissed as a dramatic diversion (e.g. B. Walker 1952, 34-5; R. Syme 1958, 259; K.P. Seif 1973, 59-63 and 273-58), there were significant security implications for Parthian control of Armenia, as E.N. Luttwak (1976, 105) noted. The occupation or realignment of Armenia was no small matter: Rome viewed Armenia as her own territory (*CAH* XI<sup>2</sup>, 308; K. Gilmartin 1973, 586).

<sup>645</sup> On Claudius' relationship with the Senate: D. McAlindon 1956 and 1957; T.P. Wiseman 1982; B. Levick 1990 discusses Claudius' relationship with senators and knights throughout its ninth chapter.

<sup>646</sup> Dio LX.17.7: ἐπὶ μὲν οὖν τούτῳ διεσκώπτετο, ἐπὶ δὲ ἐκείνῳ ἐπηνείτο ὅτι πολλῶν συκοφαντουμένων, τῶν μὲν ὅτι τῆ τοῦ Κλαυδίου προσηρήσει οὐκ ἐχρῶντο.

<sup>647</sup> *CIL* XII, 5493, 5586-7, 5608, 5611-2, 5620-1, 5631, 5634-6, 5655, 5661; *IR* III, 182-3.

<sup>648</sup> e.g. *AE* 2009, 816; *CIL* V, 5050; XII, 452, 1563<sub>51</sub>, 1921, 1947, 4418; XIII, 1577; *ILGN* 572.

<sup>649</sup> Plin. *NH* III.30. The Rhine and Danube provinces overall received more attention in this regard (III.41, 146). Regarding the reference to Claudius and Spain, D. Nony 1968 maintains that the error disbars Seneca from having been the author.

and the *Apocolocyntosis* gains distinct political overtones when read alongside *De clementia*.<sup>650</sup> *De clementia* corroborates his focus in the *Apocolocyntosis*—not on the government itself, but its head; not the spirit of the office, but the responsibilities of a person with the power to do good. Consideration of Claudius as a person is not a clever redirection or the comfortable substitution of a psycho-ethical topic for straight politics. If Claudius is thought to fail as a person, then evaluation of his shortcomings as Princeps is otiose.

The moral message of the *Apocolocyntosis* is therefore relatively straightforward. The spirit of the man determines the quality of the ruler; and in the case of Claudius, his corrupted soul presided over a flawed and harmful rule. Although the *Apocolocyntosis* does not systematically argue its points, Seneca's narrative techniques aid the clarity and force of the satiric message. Claudius' soul is presented through Seneca's preferred mode of persuasion—careful imagery and facts laid before the reader to make him feel the point if explanation is inconvenient or cumbersome. Plain and uncomplicated language registers examples of and complaints about Claudius' anger and brutality. To yield the bluntest of his criticisms, Seneca opens and addresses the issue through his rhetorical technique of repetition. The gradual increase in specificity is made more noticeable by the small size of the text: Claudius' destructive anger does not slowly surface up through a sea of text and oblique references. Like much else in the satire, great diligence is unnecessary to get the gist. Seneca tells his reader what he wants them to hear, and he does so with clarity.

Seneca unfolds the evils of Claudius' soul, and the message of the *Apocolocyntosis*. Its narrator is poised and self-assured. The previous regime is gone and holds no further use: the Senate can be demeaned for deifying Claudius. What does this say about the intellectual climate of the Palace and Seneca's own position? It depends when the satire was written and premiered.

The satiric nature of the *Apocolocyntosis* renders its subject more relevant and potent the closer its debut was to Claudius' death. Intertextual references to the Saturnalia invigorate the old thesis that Seneca wrote the piece for the Saturnalia of 54.<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> On the topical relationship between *Apocolocyntosis* and *De clementia*: E.W. Leach 1989.

<sup>651</sup> H. Furneaux 1907, 171 n. 1. Restated and reinforced by R.R. Nauta 1987 and H.S. Versnel 1993, 110. R. Roncali 1987 suggests the temporally close rites to Isis as an alternative occasion.

Yet verse satirists never suggest that their works were performed. Further, without a strong barrier of play, some would argue that incongruence manifests when a Neroian partisan subverts the dynastic legitimation of his patron.<sup>652</sup> That, however, depends on whether the reception of the previous emperor truly mattered to the official security of the incumbent—a doubtful proposition. The coveted DIVI FILIUS was absent from *aes* coinage, and retired from *aurei* and *denarii* minted at Rome within a year of Claudius' death—a gold *quinarius* issued from 55–6 was the last (exceedingly rare) coin issued from Rome to have DIVI F.<sup>653</sup> Statuary in the East lacks θεοῦ Κλαυδίου υἱὸς after 59; and by 64/65 Nero's official genealogy as grandson of Germanicus, great-grandson of Tiberius, and twice great-grandson of Augustus was common enough to bungle his heritage as the grandson of Tiberius Caesar Augustus and the son of Germanicus Caesar.<sup>654</sup> Nero's early legal actions also reversed Claudian initiatives, such as the reduction of fines in the *Lex Papia*, the abolition of fees for advocates, and the alteration of certain obligations for quaestors designate.<sup>655</sup>

*Apocolocyntosis* is perfectly in step with this ethos of the new regime. Covert dissemination of the satire has nonetheless been asserted, lest Seneca openly flaunt his immunity from backlash.<sup>656</sup> Two complications ensue from this conjecture. First, Apollo's laudation of Nero reveals the author's bias. Second, nothing conceals Seneca's style and the telltale modulated jingling of his narratorial voice.<sup>657</sup> Moreover, political nepotism and professional discrimination were neither illegal nor taboo. It would have been understood that Seneca, by virtue of his relationship with Nero, held a privileged position and could therefore afford to be more honest. And from whom did Seneca have to fear backlash? Agrippina is the only person who comes to mind, but she would be an unconvincing answer for the many scholars who read the satire as an attempt to deprive her power.<sup>658</sup> Indeed, conflict with Agrippina could be desirable because it

<sup>652</sup> e.g. J.M.C. Toynbee 1942; B. Baldwin 1964, 45: "The official atmosphere of the early years of Nero's reign would not permit such a skit on the deified Claudius."

<sup>653</sup> *RIC*<sup>2</sup> I, Nero 10.

<sup>654</sup> F.W. Goethert 1935; *ILS* 225, 227–8; *AE* 2008, 1146–7.

<sup>655</sup> Suet. *Nero* 10.1, *Aug.* 34, *Cl.* 19; Tac. *Ann.* XIII.5.1, cf. XI.7, 22.

<sup>656</sup> K. Münscher 1922; G. Dobesch 2002.

<sup>657</sup> Again, for example: "idem Claudius vidisse sè dicit iter facientem" (1.2); "et illi pró tam bònò núntiò némò crédidit quòd víderit" (1.3); "quò decòllare hómínes sòlebát, iusseràt illi collum praecidi" (6.2). Note also the slight tendency toward anagrammatism, as in "si quis quaesiverit" (1.1).

<sup>658</sup> e.g. H. Horskotte 1985; V. Rudich 1987; C. Letta 1996; G. Giliberti 2003. Cf. R. Roncali 1998.

would afford opportunities to discredit her further in Nero's eyes. Anonymity, in short, does not serve a clear or effective purpose for the author.

Such considerations notwithstanding, Seneca was sage enough an individual to realize that if the *Apocolocyntosis* would imperil himself or his friends, or if his satiric message would not elicit a beneficial conversation, then he might withhold the satire until it was more acceptable to encourage the Senate toward integrity and nobility, when his philosophical credentials might better justify political commentary, or when the sincerity of his message had become obsolete. Seneca had experience and patience—"iniqua numquam regna perpetuo manent."<sup>659</sup> But Claudius was not going to die again. It was an opportunity to be vocal, a circumstance in which vigorous action might only be deemed disproportionate after it had become binding. Seneca therefore seized the opportunity and used the *Apocolocyntosis* to signal his personal knowledge about ethics and interpersonal affairs, and his opinion that personal morality is something the emperor should actively consider—if not for himself, then for his afterlife. *De clementia* attests to his belief that these topics were the proper stuff on which to build his new relationship with Nero; and for five years he appeared to be correct.

As such, the topics treated in the satire, together with what their treatment signals about Seneca, might be construed as prompts for Nero to begin thinking about such matters—certainly a more roundabout a way to effect a discussion than a monograph, but creative formats were more appealing to Nero. One might then inquire into why Seneca presented such topics to the Emperor: did he write the *Apocolocyntosis* because these issues were not yet on Nero's political radar? because this was something he worried about in respect to Nero? or because they were already talking points between the two, and therefore a recognizable way for Seneca to communicate his feelings on Claudius? The first seems plausible, the second unlikely, the third inevitable. If Seneca and Nero were not discussing Stoic ethics by late 54, they soon would be. *De clementia* saw to it.

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<sup>659</sup> Sen. *Med.* 196. Repeated elsewhere: *Dial.* V.16.2; *Phoen.* 660; *Thy.* 215–7; *Tro.* 258 ff.

PART III  
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ROMANCE OF A DESIGN

Composed sometime between December of 55 and of 56, *De clementia* professes to address a topic of special importance to the Emperor. It was a bold move from the former tutor to place an issue of significant importance, imperial jurisprudence, in the hands of a coddled adolescent. But the effort was not so straightforward. The essence of the treatise and Seneca's message to Nero is deeply embedded in a system of ethics that not merely requires the Emperor to act in certain ways, but to uphold a set of values which change the way he acts altogether. Scholars, however, have viewed the treatise from a different vantage. Consideration has primarily been political, seeking either to understand Seneca's thoughts on the State and proper conduct of the Princeps, or to contextualize the document in the sociopolitical milieu of the early Neronian government.<sup>660</sup> Thus, contrary to its orientation, *De clementia* is viewed neither as serious philosophy nor by philosophers seriously.<sup>661</sup> Such unilateral interest (or disinterest) comes despite the consensus that the work is extraordinary for both its imperial addressee and instructive function.<sup>662</sup> The gaps are clear, as is the work to be done.

The question for Part III is what information about the direction of Seneca's relationship with Nero can be gleaned from the text and context of *De clementia*. Nero's education had prepared him to engage with philosophical concepts and comprehend philosophical texts; and Seneca has already signaled his knowledge of ethics and interest in the moral behavior of the emperor through the *Apocolocyntosis*. Nero should have picked up these signals, thanks to both his training and the fact that signals are designed to be detected, and accordingly see that his former *rhetor* had certain thoughts about how an emperor should interact with others and conduct himself. *De clementia* simply follows up on those thoughts in a direct and clear manner. What,

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<sup>660</sup> e.g. M.B. Roller 2001, 129–212; A.M. Gowing 2005, 67–101; D. J. Kapust 2011, 153–62; E. Wilson 2014, 121–7.

<sup>661</sup> The closest is the review of S.M. Braund 2011 by K.M. Vogt (2011). But it did nothing to halt the general trend of reading *De clementia* as something other than primarily ethical philosophy, e.g. *Brill's Companion to Seneca* (Leiden, 2014), *The Cambridge companion to Seneca* (Cambridge, 2015).

<sup>662</sup> M.T. Griffin 2002, 328; R. Tarrant 2006, 14; S.M. Braund 2011, 17.

then, does Seneca's theory of clemency ask of Nero? What does it require Nero to do or learn? What signals does it send to Nero about Seneca's intellectual strengths? And what role does this all imply that Seneca should play in the new regime? These are the key question moving forward.

To begin the analysis, *De clementia* should be scrutinized as moral philosophy. That is how the text speaks to Nero, that is how the work asks to be read. Moreover, the ethical resolution of the text illuminates how Seneca thought that Nero should act as part of the government, and (less conventionally) what issues Seneca wanted Nero to consult him on. But, as mentioned, the treatise has been almost wholly ignored as a piece of philosophical writing. Matters must be addressed from the ground up.

Inquiry into the philosophy of the treatise begins in Chapter VIII. The basic tenets of Stoic ethics are reviewed at the start for the benefit of the reader. From there, an understanding of *clementia* is compiled through Seneca's definitions, but oftener through discussion of the inconsistencies and un-Stoic elements in his theory. His error, however, is so simple and so fundamental to Stoic ethics that this learned (if not intelligent) man could not have both meant what he wrote as it is preserved, and intended his essay as anything Stoic. Yet his theory is clearly meant to be Stoic: Seneca uses his rendition of *clementia* to defend the Stoics from accusations of being too severe (II.5.2). Analysis of *De clementia* must occur under the impression that Stoic doctrine underwrites its claims. Hence, on behalf of Seneca, a reinterpretation of his definitions is offered whereby his concept of *clementia* (only insofar as defined explicitly in the text) partially remains within the remit of Stoic orthodoxy. But the fix is only temporary. Other philosophical issues appear with further consideration. The reinterpretation does, however, highlight the distinctly practical effect that Seneca's deviations have on his theory. They make *clementia* teachable to an extent.

The depth or variety of these problems has not entered the discussion of *De clementia*. Heretofore the text has primarily been considered as an effort to defend Seneca's position as an *amicus principis* or, more generally, his presence at the Palace.<sup>663</sup> The philosophical inconsistencies are not, therefore, much of a concern to the supposed purpose of the text, which is seldom divorced from the grand scheme of political activity at Rome. Nor do Seneca's previous works discourage such an approach. The

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<sup>663</sup> First by F. Giancotti (1954b, 597).

intellectual vapidness of the consolations from exile makes their political purpose difficult to overlook: the interest in keeping his name alive at Rome was none too philosophical. But when he does regain his station at Rome, the philosophical overtures in the consolations begin blooming into more recognizable Stoicism. Exile presented Seneca with a significant amount of time to study philosophy and natural science; and his earlier works show an awareness and belief of normal Stoic philosophy. Moreover, the *De ira* prefigured the theoretical basis for his theory of clemency.<sup>664</sup> Why then should *De clementia* stray so far from the mark?

Before assuming that the Stoic shortcoming of the treatise were knowingly implemented in an effort to position Seneca as Nero's philosophy teacher and ethical advisor, one might consider that they might have to do with the decision to treat *clementia* as an ethical rather than sociopolitical phenomenon. Chapter IX thus begins by addressing the moral reason for why Nero should be clement, but only comes to find more contradictions of Stoic sentiment. Seneca's rationale is effectively utilitarian, arguing that *clementia* is a virtue because it promotes the most good. Such logic is noteworthy, not merely because it is un-Stoic, but for the manner it is presented. The emphasis distinctly falls on 'Seneca' rather than 'Stoicism' when it comes to the wisdom of knowing how to be clement or recognize situations requiring *clementia*.

Book I in particular is an exposé of Seneca's historical knowledge and political perspicacity, while philosophical considerations are only introduced in the fragmentary Book II. How deep into the details would Seneca go? His approach in other works allows for the supposition that any hard philosophy in the treatise was limited. Such a notion is further encouraged by the argument that *De clementia* holds parallels to *De ira*.<sup>665</sup> In features, the quality of philosophizing in *De clementia* is somewhat less lackluster than in *De ira* due to the complexity of the idea, but Seneca still avoids any great precision with his own definitions.<sup>666</sup> In form, reservation of *De clementia* Book II to illustrate the "naturam clementiae habitumque" (I.3.1) might correspond to the goal of *De ira* Book II to establish how the desires associated with anger arise. If so, the

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<sup>664</sup> As argued by: A. Nikolova-Bourova 1975; J. Fillion-Lahille 1984, 274–8; G. Viansino 1992, 120.

<sup>665</sup> P. Faider 1928, 51–3; M. Bellincioni 1984, 104 f.; G. Mazzoli 2003, 133–8.

<sup>666</sup> *De ira* lacks clarity on what actually qualifies as anger, and often struggles to distinguish anger from hatred, as at *Dial.* III.20.4. See further on these issues: W.V. Harris 2004, 112–5.

definitions to comprise the beginning of *De clementia* Book II could have set up Seneca's wonted series of examples, to which perhaps he had already alluded—"sed mox de Sulla, cum quaeremus, quomodo hostibus irascendum sit" (I.12.3). That would seem to yield another section where Seneca's politico-historical knowledge takes the fore.

The contradictions and quandaries propounded in *De clementia* amass in a way that suggests that Seneca's theory of *clementia* was indeed configured as it was in order to reengage Nero in a didactic relationship,<sup>667</sup> this time based on the moral knowledge related to ethical decision-making. Stoicism, or playing up his status as a philosopher, was accordingly something that Seneca could hope to use for purposes not strictly connected to finding the *vita beata*. Yet not all is so seemingly duplicitous. Actual ethical theory from Stoicism would aid Seneca in this effort because acts of virtue are only consistent in their results, not their execution. For a young person such as Nero, it means that a simple question such as 'who deserves clemency?' will persist even after reading the treatise, as the wisdom of *clementia* is based in the ability to make informed assessments of individuals and read into their actions—a process that requires experience to work.<sup>668</sup> *De clementia* accordingly primes Nero to ask 'how do I determine who deserves clemency?', and demarcates personal assessment as an area in which Seneca could offer his counsel, lessons, and advice. The treatise thus opens the opportunity for Seneca to have a new student-teacher relationship with Nero, and signals a personal strength that could cement or reinforce his capacity as an advisor.

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<sup>667</sup> Some prefer the target audience as the Senate: P. Grimal 1978, 121; G. Salamon 2011, para. 5. Nothing prevents the text working on both Nero and the Senate.

<sup>668</sup> This essential trait of *clementia* has also been noted in R. Sheerlinck 2016.

## VIII. DE CLEMENTIA I

Historical inquiry critically differs from the philosophical in that the former often finds it otiose to debate the true nature of social, cultural, and political phenomena. What, for instance, was the Principate? Is Mommsen's legalistic view truer than Syme's prosopographical vision? No. Neither view encapsulates the entirety of the thing in question: each merely describes part of the behavior associated with this entity identified as the Principate. But the essence of things, the Peripatetic passion for definitions, is most relevant to philosophy. A proper account of *De clementia* should therefore begin with the consideration of *clementia* and how Seneca defines the term. Prior to that, however, some philosophical exposition might be beneficial.

As Seneca was never one to detail cumbersome theory, and considering the nature of Chapter VIII, it might prove beneficial to offer a basic review of Stoic ethics. Two points of review or clarification should help with the comprehension of the argument as it proceeds. One is basic, an account of virtue-theory within the ancient system of eudemonic ethics. That will elucidate how the Stoics thought the virtues functioned. The other point is the rubric under which Stoics judged the morality of actions and motivations. A review of their beliefs should serve both to enhance the distinction made between clemency and its qualifiers, and enable a fuller account of the ethical perplexities ensuing from Seneca's theory. The inquiry can then resume with Seneca's definitions of *clementia*.

To see the implications of *De clementia* for Seneca's relationship and influence with Nero, the foremost objective for this chapter is to forge an understanding of *clementia* in both theory and practice. That, however, is more difficult than one might guess from the name of the treatise alone. As alluded to above, *De clementia* is plagued by inconsistencies, contradictions, and outright breaches of Stoic doctrine. It is thus not particularly surprising that scholars of ancient philosophy have left the work to other students of antiquity, primarily historians, to study it as a work of propaganda—another fact that makes philosophical scrutiny of the text difficult for an historian. And although lamentations over a lack of research on a given topic are trite, it must be tolerated in this instance. As Katja Vogt has written, the philosophical community

has had little incentive to pick up this treatise.<sup>669</sup> Moreover, the one substantial work on *De clementia* as a whole, Susanna Braund's scholarly commentary, is philological and historical in its focus.<sup>670</sup> Her work is referenced where pertinent, but there are no significant scholarly arguments about Seneca's philosophy of *clementia* for the present analysis to position itself in relation to. With that said, the focus can turn to background in Stoic ethics needed to scrutinize Seneca's theory of clemency.

#### 24. *Fundamental points in Stoic ethics*

As with the review of Stoic psychology in Section 12.1, what follows here is a synthesis of modern accounts.<sup>671</sup> The ideas covered here are, however, somewhat more complicated. Stoics' moral theory is predicated on their ideas of value and psychology, though it has an unclear relationship to Stoic metaphysics and theology, which leaves a problematic amount of ambiguity on certain questions.<sup>672</sup> There is ample differentiation among scholars on the specifics of interpretation, which is presently appreciated by the works referenced in the notes, but those details exceed the knowledge for what is presently necessary.

*Clementia* fits into a wider tradition of ancient legal theory that considered the soundness of human intuition against codified law. The concept appears in Greek under the notion of equity (*ἐπιείκεια*).<sup>673</sup> Aristotle provides the *locus classicus* for the legal validity of equity, which addresses the inherent tension between the generality of the law and the particular nature of individual cases.<sup>674</sup> An equitable judge would attune himself to

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<sup>669</sup> K.M. Vogt 2011, 453: "Unlike many other writings by Seneca, it does not engage with an aspect of the virtuous life. Rather, it addresses a Roman emperor, and a quality *he* needs. As a result, philosophers might feel that they can safely leave this treatise in the hands of historians and philologists. They might think that the treatise discusses a contradiction in terms: the virtue of a madman—a positive trait that someone needs who otherwise would give in to a desire for savagery and cruelty. However, with the help of Braund's book, philosophical engagement with Seneca's treatise becomes conceivable."

<sup>670</sup> S.M. Braund 2011.

<sup>671</sup> The topics are more technical, and have so required more specific literature, but the following have been generally instructive: *CHHP* 675–738; F.H. Sandbach 1985, 24–30; T. Irwin 1986; A.A. Long 1986; M. Schofield 2003; T. Brennan 2005, 115–232.

<sup>672</sup> J. Annas 1993, for example, believes that Stoic ethics are independent from both Stoic metaphysics and theology, but J.M. Cooper 1999 holds that their ethics are closely connected to their metaphysics.

<sup>673</sup> e.g. Aeschin. *Ctes.* 180; Dem. 21.90, 26.59, 34.40; Hyp. *Lyc.* 11; Isoc. 1.38, 7.33, 13.21, 15.149, 18.34; Lys. 16.11. On *ἐπιείκεια* in the courts: E.M. Harris 1994; A. Lanni 2005; S.C. Todd 1993, 58–63.

<sup>674</sup> *NE* 1137a–1138a.

the details of the persons in question, the incident itself, and consider the weight of custom alongside written law. That does not say much from a modern standpoint: to overlook details is not merely poor judging, but an injustice itself by denying the defendant a fair trial. Equity was nonetheless significant a step for the ancient world since it allowed a crime not to predetermine the punishment. The Stoic assessment of actions and decisions reached this same result by different means.<sup>675</sup>

Depending on an ethical or theological perspective, Stoic justice respectively originates in either appropriation (*οἰκείωσις*) or Nature.<sup>676</sup> This is why, in short, the *sapiens* has no use for equity: justice is a function of Nature and appropriation, not individual people or specific actions.<sup>677</sup> Nature constitutes the origin of justice because its essence (the nature of Nature) ordains what is reasonable.<sup>678</sup> The approach to justice from appropriation is more complex.

Appropriation is a specific outlook on the world bestowed by Nature, which provides an objective basis for human preferences.<sup>679</sup> The aspect of present interest regards one's affective disposition toward other people—social appropriation, as Brad Inwood calls it, which is the force that allows someone to regard all others as equally human, no matter how unfamiliar.<sup>680</sup> In this sense appropriation is a Natural point of view that, when recognized by a rational agent, drives him to judge and interact with other people in accordance with the Natural Law (*κοινὸς νόμος*).<sup>681</sup> Natural Law may be understood in several ways.<sup>682</sup> Most plainly, it is the fundamental source for morality and moral behavior: it instructs rational agents (humans and gods) on what should and should not be done. Natural Law is therefore identified with the divine rationality of Zeus, which is the principle that informs the way the entire universe works.<sup>683</sup> The basic dictate from Natural Law is that rational agents are to act in accordance with

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<sup>675</sup> Aristotle's legacy to Stoicism is unclear: F. Alesse 2000, 233–62.

<sup>676</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 1035C; Porph. *Abst.* III.19.2.

<sup>677</sup> Cic. *Tusc.* III.20 f.; D.L. VII.123; Stob. II.96.4–9. Further discussion: M.C. Nussbaum 1994, 426–9; K.M. Vogt 2008, 118–26; R. Brouwer 2011.

<sup>678</sup> As explained by M. Schofield 1995.

<sup>679</sup> S.G. Pembroke 1971; G. Striker 1983; T. Brennan 2005, 154–68. The literature on appropriation is abundant, but for the specifically Roman view see: G. Reydams-Schils 2002.

<sup>680</sup> Stob. IV.671.7–73.11; B. Inwood 1983, 193; K.A. Algra 2003.

<sup>681</sup> *SVF* I, 537 (Cleanthes' *Hymn to Zeus*); T. Brennan 2005, 182–202. On the Stoics' development of Natural Law: G. Striker 1996, 209–20; P. Mitsis 1999.

<sup>682</sup> The conception of the Natural Law splits into two camps at great variance with one another; cf. P. Mitsis 1993 and 1994, B. Inwood 1999.

<sup>683</sup> For the Stoic argument for the rationality of the cosmos: N. Powers 2012.

Nature, which is to say that they should act virtuously. Virtuous actions are the only type of actions sanctified by the Natural Law because they are the only type of actions that are *always* good; and Stoicism, being a eudemonic sect of philosophy, has human flourishing (*εὐδαιμονία*) as the goal of living (*τέλος*). Virtue, in short, is the knowledge of how to live life well under any circumstances.

Appropriation thus opens one's eyes to the proper way of interacting with all human beings, which is virtuously, since virtue is the common denominator in every objectively good human transaction and decision. And appropriation achieves this heightened state of interpersonal connection by engendering what the Stoics deemed to be good affective responses (*εὐπάθεια*) towards all other people—kindness, generosity, warmth, endearment.<sup>684</sup> Appropriation therefore entails a type of fairness which reason has imbued all humans with, and which makes mankind innately altruistic.<sup>685</sup> In practical terms, such as the distribution of justice in a society, appropriation leads to the precedence of common utility over personal utility—a critical point in the formulation of clement decisions.<sup>686</sup> Yet virtues always benefit the one being virtuous the most. That is because morality to the Stoics was a process of being rather than doing.<sup>687</sup> Doing virtuous deeds, or the deeds in themselves, does not *lead to* the good life: the act and process of doing virtuous deeds *is* the good life. But not all positive actions are equal.

Stoicism classified specific actions of merit into two categories. First, appropriate action (*καθήκον*).<sup>688</sup> A definition sufficient for the current purpose may classify an appropriate action as a reasonable (*εὐλογος*) deed that subscribes to an individual, is incumbent on that individual, and is wholly defensible upon its completion.<sup>689</sup> Appropriate actions are single actions, not a broad category of activity—Nero requesting a statue for his father on the Palatine, for example, rather than the typology of honoring

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<sup>684</sup> Cic. *Off.* I.11–4; D.L. VII.116. On this term, and the extent to which they may be thought of as ‘good feelings’: M. Graver 1999; R. Sorabji 2000, 343–56.

<sup>685</sup> On this aspect of appropriation: M.W. Blundell 1990; M.R. Wright 1995.

<sup>686</sup> Cic. *Fin.* III.64: “mundum autem censent regi numine deorum, eumque esse quasi communem urbem et civitatem hominum et deorum, et unum quemque nostrum eius mundi esse partem; ex quo illud natura consequi, ut communem utilitatem nostrae anteponamus. ut enim leges omnium salutem singulorum saluti anteponunt...”

<sup>687</sup> True for some ethical philosophies that subscribe to virtue-theory, not all—e.g. P. Foot 1978 and 2001; A. MacIntyre 1981; T. Hurka 2001.

<sup>688</sup> On the origin of the concept: D.N. Sedley 1999. Also informative: T. Engberg-Pedersen 1986.

<sup>689</sup> Cic. *Fin.* III.20–4; Sen. *Ben.* V.14.1, VI.10.2, 12.2; D.L. VII.107; Stob. II.85.14 f., *Flor.* 28.17, 42.2.

one's parents. They are reasonable deeds because they are what the Stoic notion of perfect reason suggests should be done.<sup>690</sup> They are not, however, done because they are virtuous or because the agent recognizes their moral worth. This is particularly important because Stoic ethics are equally concerned with the instigation and execution of an action, for both of which the relationship to virtue prevails in importance; and so a distinction had to be made.<sup>691</sup> Only when a course of action is actively executed for its reasonability—*κατ' ὀρθὸν λόγον*—when it is executed with the thoughts and feelings becoming virtue, may it then be deemed a correct action (*κατόρθωμα*).<sup>692</sup> Correct actions are deeds done with a knowing state of mind, either wisdom or prudence: they are done as the *sapiens* would do.<sup>693</sup> They are both flawless and judicious because the motivations for their execution stem consciously from virtue, not because the act itself is subjectively good.<sup>694</sup> Natural Law can only endorse this type of action.<sup>695</sup>

Such are the points of Stoic ethics pertinent to the present discussion. Although this is by no means the whole of Stoic ethical theory, other relevant points are discussed when needed. The focus now reverts to *De clementia* in order to define the central term of the text.

### 25. Defining *clementia*

Definitions were an important part of the Stoic persuasive process. They enhanced the clarity and distinctness of the various abstract notions integral to Stoicism, and they systematized those concepts to make them easier to teach.<sup>696</sup> But as Miriam Griffin notes, the Hellenistic philosophers had no single term for or true equivalent to *clementia*.<sup>697</sup> Thus, without a proper background to work from, Seneca produces four different definitions of clemency. He writes:

<sup>690</sup> D.L. VII.108: *καθήκοντα μὲν οὖν εἶναι ὅσα λόγος αἰρεῖ ποιεῖν.*

<sup>691</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 1050F, 1065B; S.E. *M.* VII.158; Alex. *Aphr. Fat.* 201.14; D.L. VII.125; Stob. II.59.4; *SVF* III, 263, 268.

<sup>692</sup> Cic. *Fin.* III. 7, 24, 45; IV.15; Clem. Al. *Strom.* VI.14; Plut. *Mor.* 1037C, 1039A, 1041A–B, 1046D. On this distinction: I.G. Kidd 1971.

<sup>693</sup> Ath. IV.158b; Cic. *Fin.* V.84; D.L. VII.120.

<sup>694</sup> Sen. *Ep.* 71.32; Epict. *Diss.* II.8.3; M. Aur. XI.1.3; D.L. VII.54, 93, 128.

<sup>695</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 1037C–D, 1041A; P.A. Vander Waerdt 1994, 287.

<sup>696</sup> For more on Stoic definitions: P. Crivelli 2010.

<sup>697</sup> M.T. Griffin 1976, 149.

clementia est temperantia animi in potestate ulciscendi vel lenitas superioris adversus inferiorem in constituendis poenis. plura proponere tutius est ne una finitio parum rem comprehendat et, ut ita dicam, formula edcidat; itaque dici potest et inclinatio animi ad lenitatem in poena exigenda. illa finitio contradictiones inveniet, quamvis maxime ad verum accedat: si dixerimus clementiam esse moderationem aliquid ex merita ac debita poena remittentem, reclamabitur nullam virtutem cuiquam minus debito facere. atqui hoc omnes intellegunt clementiam esse, quae se flectit citra id quod merito constitui posset. (II.3.1 f.)

On a qualitative level, *clementia* gains the cognate attributes of *temperantia animi*, *lenitas*, *inclinatio ad lenitatem*, and *moderatio*.<sup>698</sup> Problematically, however, Braund notes that the intended effect of these four definitions is inclusive, meaning that these are not approximate synonyms given to the reader to ease him into the discussion—the issues with which are explained below.<sup>699</sup> In more practical terms, *clementia* can only be wielded by a *superior* (necessarily toward an *inferior*); it is bound to the circumstance of meting out a penalty; and only the person who was wronged has the ability to be clement (I.20.3).<sup>700</sup> *Clementia* is thereby confined to a specific state of affairs, defined by both the agents in the situation and the expectation of how one of the agents will act.

For this discussion it will be important to remember that the judge (as he is called) has personally suffered an injury, and is the one who gets to assess (or judge) the situation and decide on a punishment. The judge should therefore be imagined in two contexts, one legal and the other social—more sociocultural than sociopolitical, which has been the focus of scholars heretofore.<sup>701</sup> An example of the legal context at Rome is the *maiestas* trial, where the emperor is both the victim and the judge under the law, it being a capital offense. Although valid in theory, the difficulty with this circumstance is that the definite maximum penalty, death, was also the usual and pre-

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<sup>698</sup> Seneca's note before the *moderatio* definition, "quamvis maxime ad verum accedat", should be understood as 'however much it gets at the truth'. *Quamvis* cannot plausibly mean 'although' since, if this was his preferred definition, it should have come before the remark "plura proponere tutius est..." (II.3.1). If anything, this definition is closer to the truth because it is the most specific of the four.

<sup>699</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 393.

<sup>700</sup> Note, however, how Seneca argues that leniency shown by third parties in deciding penalties and punishment is beneficial to the community (I.22–4). Perhaps importantly he does not use the word *clementia* thereat.

<sup>701</sup> e.g. P. Soverini 2000; G. Mazzoli 2003; M. Schofield 2015. K.L. Milnor 2012 is one recent example of a less politically inclined interpretation.

scribed penalty. The emperor had the choice of what to do, but almost invariably required death. Social arbitration, on the other hand, should almost always be more flexible because it occurs in any situation where social mores and other unwritten cultural rules guide one's decisions. The senator Julius Montanus, for instance, when belabored by Nero during one of his alleged midnight prowls, repelled the Emperor and proceeded to repay his assailant with a thrashing sound enough that the imperial thug had to stay out of sight for days. Both parties found it appropriate for Montanus to meet violence with violence, and additionally to avenge himself of the affront by beating his assaulter more than self-defense called for. It was Montanus' apology that got him killed.

There are also situations where the legal and cultural divide is less distinct, such as in Demosthenes LIV. The defendant Conon beats the plaintiff Ariston near to death, and then proceeds to flap his arms like a chicken and crow like a rooster while standing over Ariston's body. Pummeling Ariston was one matter, a charge of *aikēia*, but the prosecution also argued that the celebratory chicken dance violated the implicit rules of Athens' agonistic society and amounted to an act of *hubris*. Or, there is the case at Rome of L. Veratius, who amused himself by walking around and slapping freeborn individuals in the face. A slave of his would remain behind him and immediately pay the person 25 *asses*, which was the fine for *iniuria* and a derisory sum at that.<sup>702</sup> Veratius broke the law as it was written in the books, but what makes it memorable is the anti-social element of his offense—that he found a way to circumvent the law and misuse it for his own pleasure and at no real cost to himself.

Returning to Seneca's exposition of *clementia*, one will have noticed that none of his definitions are particularly thorough. Nor do they come together in an especially harmonious way, though it is also unclear whether he would have returned to them later in Book II. That does, however, seem unlikely since he moves on to expand his definitions through comparison with and discussion of *severitas*, *crudelitas*, *miseri-cordia*, and other concepts. Braund asserts that it is crucial for Seneca's explanation to establish this spectrum of terms to contextualize *clementia*.<sup>703</sup> Nevertheless, the initial

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<sup>702</sup> Gel. XX.1.13.

<sup>703</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 396.

ambiguity of his definitions is such that, even when contextualized, several reservations can be devised for Seneca to field. What, for instance, would Seneca call it if someone were wronged but was not immediately in the position to avenge himself of the slight? What if the wronged had no desire for vengeance? A lone servant who is abused daily can rise up and avenge himself, but has he been clement if while looking at the sleeping body of his master he decides to forgive and forget?

Or consider the following. A police officer catches a young burglar who has broken into his house. Despite not having the authority to do so, the officer lets him go after making him sweat in the patrol car and precinct jail. He does this because he believes the mandatory minimum for burglary is too great a punishment for the youth, and the fearful experience while under arrest was enough of a lesson. Certainly this would be an act informed by the spirit of clemency, for that very scenario is a variation on an *exemplum* in Book I about Augustus. But there is a salient difference. Augustus had the authority to execute the would-be assassin in the story, whereas the police officer does not have the sole authority to arrest, detain, and then release a criminal on his own terms. Does that change anything? Neither example presents a wholly legal or social context. Legal *clementia* seems appropriate because both regard a crime under codified law: social *clementia* seems appropriate because the offense was handled by the victim outside the courts. Augustus *could* have set up a formal trial and absolved the conspirator, but he did not; and both scenarios resolved extra-forensically. Yet that should not matter. Clemency is possible in both social and legal situations, so it should be irrelevant that Augustus could have brought the case in court. Nevertheless, it is not completely clear whether the policeman performed a virtuous action under Seneca's criteria.

Seneca also states that the parties involved in the arbitration are not on even footing. In what sense? Braund seems to suggest that the *superior* might have the ability to give and take life.<sup>704</sup> More generally, the *exemplum* about Augustus and the hypothetical about the police officer involve someone who is a *superior* in either a cultural or institutional sense. But these observations give the un-Stoic impression that *clementia* is reserved for a predefined group of people, even though Seneca says that clemency is a quality natural to all human beings (I.5.2). What prevents two equals from

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<sup>704</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 231.

acting clemently toward one another in the case of either some injury or falling out? Perhaps one party automatically gains the moral high ground upon being injured. Would that not involve a kind of social contract underlying this sense of morality?<sup>705</sup> And so on. The challenges to Seneca's theory could continue in this manner, and thereby develop a picture of the manifold difficulties facing *clementia* as it is presented. Practicality, however, endorses a more direct approach.

The signal issue with Seneca's definitions is that they do not describe what the *active* process of being clement is. Such a topic may have been discussed in Book III, where he planned to detail the cultivation of a clement spirit, but it is still an issue (for the analysis, at least) that his definitions do not describe something positive. Instead of being a decision to do something, clemency is presented as a decision *not* to do something. It is a restraint of the mind, an act of leniency (*not* doing the expected thing), or the decision *not* to meet the "merita ac debita poena." In its most operative sense *clementia* recoils from what is rightly deserved—"clementiam esse, quae se flectit citra id quod merito constitui posset" (II.3.2). From this formulation arises a contradiction in terms. Aside from the literal meaning of the quote, the use of "se flectit" is particularly troubling because, as Braund writes, it evokes an element of self-control in the practice of clemency.<sup>706</sup> Virtuous actions are virtuous in themselves, not because they are not something else, or because the agent *wanted* to do one thing but restrained himself and did something else. Furthermore, given the judicial context of the treatise, Senecan *clementia* seems to flout the understood definition of what justice entails—rendering unto someone what they are due or entitled to.<sup>707</sup> Virtues are perfect actions, and by their very definition, cannot result in anything less than what was objectively deserved. Such an inconsistency with Stoic doctrine would have to be resolved with an argument more sophisticated than merely assuring the reader that *clementia* is nonetheless just in the face of the law.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>705</sup> An Epicurean rather than Stoic concept. And Braund (2011, 28–30) has indeed detected Epicurean influences *De clementia*. For more on the social contract: A. Weale 2013, 1–31.

<sup>706</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 396.

<sup>707</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 1038E: ἔτι τὸ μὲν λέγειν αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ περὶ τοῦ Διὸς "αὔξεσθαι τὰς ἀρετὰς καὶ διαβαίνειν" ἀφίημι, μὴ δόξω τῶν ὀνομάτων ἐπιλαμβάνεσθαι, καίτοι πικρῶς ἐν τῷ γένει τούτῳ καὶ Πλάτωνα καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τοῦ Χρυσίππου δάκνοτος.

<sup>708</sup> II.7.3 f.: "venia debita poenae remisso est. clementia hoc primum praestat ut quos dimittit nihil aliud illos pati debuisse pronuntiet...de verbo, ut mea fert opinio, controversia est, de re quidem convenit."

The same contradictions of Stoic virtue theory appear elsewhere in the definition. Rather than occurring explicitly, the descriptions of *clementia* in terms of what-not-to-do supplies the incongruity—specifically, the descriptions of *temperantia animi* and *inclinatio animi ad lenitatem*. A single act considered in isolation cannot be considered merciful, cruel, or anything else. So what is the reference point that determines whether one is being lenient? *Clementia* enjoins on the judge a milder punishment. But milder than what? Moral evaluation of actions demands perspective, yet Seneca does not indicate the source of his ethical relativity. The readiest answer (or one lacking significant artificiality) is the usual habit, custom, or preferences of the *superior*—a focus corroborated by *De ira*. That, however, runs into the problem encountered above.

The problem, to reiterate, is that virtues are not the repression of a vice. Virtues are not subdued urges, or the mitigation of anything for that matter, because they are good in and of themselves. If a military officer issues forty lashes to an insubordinately disrespectful soldier, the whipping cannot become an act of clemency simply because the officer thought the man deserved more than the biblical limit. *Clementia* is not a virtue if it exists as a means to inhibit or balance out cruel or otherwise excessive tendencies: the virtuously clement judge cannot be a man who is merely able to suppress his propensity for vice. If *clementia* is a Stoic virtue, then *temperantia animi* and *inclinatio animi ad lenitatem* must be inherent qualities of the clement judge. Seneca's language is far from clear that this is the case. How to resolve this contradiction?

#### 26. Resolution in Seneca's definitions

It is not that Seneca was unaware of any theoretical incongruities with hardline Stoicism. Within the treatise he explicitly notes that doctrinaire Stoics will object to his definitions; and, indeed, if *De ira* antedates *De clementia* (as usually believed),<sup>709</sup> then he has already committed his belief in orthodox Stoicism to writing. Matters are fur-

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<sup>709</sup> Generally since the publication of M.T. Griffin 1976, which dates *De ira* to before 52 (pg. 398) and *De clementia* to sometime between 15 December 55 and 14 December 56 (pp. 407–11).

ther confused when Seneca contends that the motive to refrain from violence is rationality, which is the single most important feature of Stoic law and virtues.<sup>710</sup> Seneca appears to know what he is doing. Yet he manages to present his argument in such a way that students of antiquity since John Calvin have repeatedly seen his theory encroaching on Aristotelian equity.<sup>711</sup>

Scholars are thus understandably divided on the heterodoxy of Seneca's theory of *clementia*. Some, as said, are content to see Seneca innovating in the treatise—moving beyond the usual Stoic account of clemency.<sup>712</sup> Others claim that Seneca's theory of clemency is nonetheless authentic Stoicism.<sup>713</sup> But these latter arguments are not without limitations. Francesco D'Agostino's confidence in the stated rationality of *clementia* does not answer the abovementioned concerns with Seneca's definitions.<sup>714</sup> Melissa Dowling finds resolution in the idea that justness in Seneca's theory, hence virtuousness, comes in gradations;<sup>715</sup> and she is supported by Braund's above-mentioned assessment that Seneca is establishing a spectrum of virtues and non-virtues.<sup>716</sup> That, however, contradicts the absolute and equal nature of all virtues—which is to say, it supposes that one virtue or virtuous act can be more virtuous than another given virtue or virtuous act.<sup>717</sup> Lastly, in her engaging take on Seneca, Emily Wilson supposes that his formulation of *clementia* recognizes the emperor as being above the law, which emancipates Nero's actions from considerations of justice.<sup>718</sup> This reprises the question 'in respect to what is *clementia* clement?', since her interpretation ostensibly entails that Nero's decisions would be made in a juridical vacuum. Such an account

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<sup>710</sup> II.5.1. More proper would be to say that rationality gives one the impulse to do *good*, rather than the impulse *not* to do violence. Although doing-good may entail not-doing-violence, Stoic virtues are not prescriptive in a general way: T. Brennan 2005, 182–202; C. Jedan 2009, 121–42.

<sup>711</sup> For which, and generally on *clementia* as a legal idea: T. Adam 1970, 88–101.

<sup>712</sup> Beginning in modern scholarship with A.K. Elias (1912, 53). M.T. Griffin (1976, 154 ff.) is not opposed to such a reading. Nor do comments from B. Inwood (2005, 23–64) about the originality and innovation of Seneca as a Stoic thinker serve to dissuade. Hence the current support for Elias' theory, as recently by S.M. Braund (2012, 94).

<sup>713</sup> Others still, e.g. P. Stacey 2014, have recently treated *De clementia* without comment on its Stoic integrity.

<sup>714</sup> F. D'Agostino 1973, 118–20.

<sup>715</sup> M.B. Dowling 2006, 202 f.

<sup>716</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 396.

<sup>717</sup> See Cicero's Stoic formulation of the equality of all virtues: M.L. Colish 1985, 129 f.

<sup>718</sup> E. Wilson 2014, 124 f.

also seems to ignore that all virtues are simply one state of the soul, and therefore justice is an inherent part of clement decisions.<sup>719</sup>

The Stoicism-affirming theories rightly aver that Seneca presents *clementia* as an alternative to human positive law. They do not, however, seem to acknowledge the limitation that clemency inherently exists as an *alternative*. Clemency cannot exist independently from codified laws, customs, or habits that serve to rule and regulate. That is why Seneca declines to frame any definitions in the abstract and absolute terms of the virtues and Natural Law. Instead, it may be suggested that Seneca presents *clementia* as a virtuous remedy for the inbuilt failings of manmade legal systems, or times when customary practices and reactions would not serve to keep or improve the *status quo*. Clemency would thus be virtuous because it offers a judge the opportunity to assign the *actually* just punishment in a situation governed by a predetermined set of rules, which impliedly fail their intended purpose at that particular junction. From this vantage *clementia* is lenient and moderate with respect to what the law or custom prescribes. Mildness appears in the difference between the meted punishment and the socio-normatively or institutionally expected one, without any consideration of the individual history or proclivities of the *superior*. The personal element in *temperantia animi* and the other definitions should therefore refer to the clement judge's own sense (*animus*) of justice as being less injurious than the *poena legis* or common morality. The catch with this explanation is that the clement judge's entire conception of justice must itself be virtuous.

Subsumption of *clementia* under a code for retribution carries two relevant implications. One is how it orients the relationship between the clement judge and *clementia*. In the above paragraphs about Seneca's definitions, clemency was understood to be a function of the judge and his actions: an act was deemed clement because of the way it compared to a judge's previous rulings or temperament. That was also the source of the problems with Seneca's definitions. But those issues are not indelible parts of his theory. If the existence of *clementia* is understood to be contingent on law (rather than personal inclinations regarding retribution), then it does not matter who the judge is—the personal life and experience of the judge, both before the verdict and after it, would have no bearing on the status of a punishment as clement or not.

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<sup>719</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 440E–441D; Stob. II, 63.6–24.

Were that not the case, it would be impossible for meek, indulgent, and congenitally soft-hearted people to perform an act of clemency because *clementia* is consistent with their natural (albeit irrational to the Stoics) disposition as a person. And the virtues are untenable to no man.

That is not all. Although this slant on *clementia* helps the substantive part of Book II stay closer to Stoic canon, two problems ensue. First, Seneca never articulates anything close to the proposed solution; and it is easy to dismiss the reinterpretation as wishful apology or simply putting words in Seneca's mouth, which it does—quite deliberately because what he has written is so patently un-Stoic. Second, there are two types of law for a Stoic to consider, human and Natural, both with their own issues. Natural law is not an actual body of rules and regulations for Nero to consult, it is merely the wisdom of knowing how the world works (its 'laws') and how to live well under those conditions—but this is not a terminal disqualification. Human law in contrast, though it is a physical and consultable source, leads to a significant number of philosophically questionable corollaries, one of which is an enduring problem for the text with or without this present interpretation. At the heart of *De clementia* lies the contradiction that it is always virtuous to adhere to the letter of the law (*severitas*), yet sometimes it is also virtuous to stray from the law (*clementia*).<sup>720</sup> Authorities on Seneca, and *De clementia* in particular, do not have a straightforward answer to this paradox. Griffin, while acknowledging the inconsistencies in terminology between Book I and II, explains them as a “conflict between ‘common usage’ and technical philosophical vocabulary.”<sup>721</sup> Book I is indeed less technical than Book II, but the incongruence between *severitas* and *clementia* occurs within the same book; and at some point, presumably, the reader is supposed to start taking Seneca at his word. Writing before Griffin, Traute Adam follows the theory of an earlier scholar that Book I treats *clementia* as a political concept, and Book II as a legal one.<sup>722</sup> Again, it does nothing to explain the inter-book inconsistency between *severitas* and *clementia*.<sup>723</sup> Braund, on the other hand, simply notes Seneca's changing attitude to toward *severitas* without discussing any of

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<sup>720</sup> Although Seneca much later affirms that the *sapiens* applies *praecepta* (*Ep.* 94, 95), his coverage of that question evinces the history of debate regarding it, on which: I.G. Kidd 1979; B. Inwood 1986. It adds no further clarity to the present issue.

<sup>721</sup> M.T. Griffin 1976, 152 f.

<sup>722</sup> T. Adam 1970 (20–39), following M. Fuhrmann 1963.

<sup>723</sup> cf. I.1.4, 9.6 (non-virtue); I.5.6, 22.2, II.4 (virtue).

the problems it causes for his theory.<sup>724</sup> Seneca naturally has reasons for why it pays to be clement, but the extant treatise does little to justify the Stoic impossibility that two different courses of action could pan out to find moral equivalency.

Thus, at present, the analysis two options to move forward. The suspicion that philosophy served a functional purpose in his relationship with Nero is supported by the manifestly un-Stoic elements of *De clementia*, elements which concern not the periphery of the discussion but the core theory of what *clementia* is. If Seneca wanted Nero to think about clemency, then he need only convince Nero of its usefulness. There is no inherent need to argue that *clementia* is a Stoic virtue because Nero was not a Stoic and Stoicism does not represent a source of legitimization or authority to him. Convincing Nero that *clementia* is a Stoic virtue is only really important if the larger selling point in the treatise is the usefulness of Stoicism to a ruler. The current focus could therefore continue to demonstrate how these deviations enable the teachability of *clementia* (insofar as Stoic wisdom is life experience), and so set Seneca up as a Nero's tutor in virtues. But it seems more thorough and better for the persuasiveness of this argument to give Seneca the benefit of the doubt and suppose that his theory was in line with orthodox Stoic beliefs. For the issues to arise from that investigation only reinforce the prior point.

The first reason, then, to question Seneca's given formulation of *clementia* is that contradicts the traditionally Stoic virtue of *severitas*. Virtues are perfect actions—zero compromise, zero gradation. Someone either acts correctly, perfectly, virtuously, or they do not; and to act virtuously is to act with total propriety and appropriacy. Yet *clementia* does not prescribe any of the merited and appropriate punishments which could be deservedly imposed. The *meritae ac debitae poenae*, or that “quod merito constitui posset”, are specifically what *clementia* avoids in order to render a judgement clement. How can this be? Griffin suggests (but ultimately rejects) that it could be the difference between *recta ratio* and the demands of human law.<sup>725</sup> Braund also notes that Seneca never denies the hardline Stoic view, but merely redirects the conversation

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<sup>724</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 167.

<sup>725</sup> M.T. Griffin 1976, 160.

toward *humanitas*.<sup>726</sup> That still leaves unexplained how *severitas* could also be a virtuous course of action at the same time as *clementia*.

The second reason to question his formulation is the very fact that a partial answer to this question can be proposed. An apologist can use the very same ambiguity that problematizes his definitions to argue that Seneca envisaged *clementia* hinging on the relationship of the punishment to the crime in respect to Natural law, not the punishment to the punisher in respect to the crime. Griffin comes somewhat close to this idea by supposing that it is the intended context of the adjudication, namely *cognitio* trials, that would free the judges from applying the strict letter of the law.<sup>727</sup> An issue with this is that there is still the precedent of *merita ac debita poena* or at least a culturally expected punishment, of which *clementia* would nonetheless falls short. The judge may not be absolutely obligated to mete out a particular punishment, but the clemency or severity of the punishment he chooses would still be framed in respect to preexisting law or local custom to address it—no crime is new. If, however, a judge was under no compulsion to follow the punishments stipulated by manmade law—if he were above the law, as Seneca says of Nero—then the punishment mandated by Natural law could be the *merita ac debita poena*, as well as lenient in respect to the punishment demanded by manmade law rather than the judge’s own personal inclinations. This, of course, is still a questionable interpretation because Seneca seems quite concerned with the emotional state of the judge in the treatise. Nevertheless, presenting further evidence for the plausibility of this reinterpretation, with subsequent disclosure of its philosophical difficulties, is the stronger way to prosecute the present argument. The focus therefore moves to demonstrate that Natural law, as opposed to negative personal tendencies, is the lens through which Seneca views and describes *clementia* to Nero.

To begin in this direction, it may first be noted that there is no express evidence in the treatise for the interpretation of *clementia* as restraint-of-violence. Seneca never suggests that Nero (or, contrary to actuality, Augustus) has any violent tendencies—indeed, quite the opposite. Nero is gentle and kind, as exemplified by Seneca’s delight in the exclamation “vellem litteras nescirem!” (II.1.2).

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<sup>726</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 67 f.

<sup>727</sup> M.T. Griffin 1976, 163.

Nero supposedly proclaimed a desire for illiteracy after Burrus repeatedly pressed him to sign an execution warrant for two bandits. What does Seneca see in this? Although it is not clear that this is the case, the young Emperor cannot bemoan his state of compulsion under the law—foremost because it does not exist, secondly because it runs counter to Seneca’s central argument. Seneca also segues into another topic before divulging what exactly he finds so admirable about it, but the contrast to be made is clear enough. Nero bends back from an unthinking and immediate fulfillment of the duty that society has placed on him, exhibiting restraint through his critical attitude toward the application of the law. As Christopher Star rightly suggests, Seneca includes this episode to highlight a positive ‘inclination of the soul’.<sup>728</sup> Nero’s attitude toward life and death sharply opposes the blind momentum of the law, which in this instance reduced human life to paperwork. And in Braund’s estimation, this episode is specifically included because Nero’s remark epitomizes the virtuous clement soul,<sup>729</sup> presumably because he shows a critical attitude toward the letter of the law. The anecdote is peculiar, though, because its resolution makes Nero appear obliged to execute the letter of the law despite his wishes and, ostensibly in Seneca’s mind, his better judgment.

However its purpose is interpreted, the only restraint-from-violence in this scene is Nero’s resistance to the violence ingrained into the law. Excess exists within the law because legal systems perforce compromise between procedural equality and efficiency; and social mores are too general to account adequately for the details of all situations. There is no room to see the praise of Nero’s attitude as lauding some kind of personal improvement, which the context of Claudius and the *Apocolocyntosis* might lead one to believe. Nor does Britannicus’ death pertain to this scene because, if he was poisoned, it was an extra-legal act done in preemptive political self-defense—there was no offense yet to be forgiven. To spin this anecdote as praising restraint-from-personal-violence, it must be assumed that Nero had theretofore promptly and ungrudgingly approved a number of other warrants for execution. There is no indication of that. Instead, this story uses judicial mildness as a means to segue into the important idea that *clementia* is a manner of assessing penalties. Comparisons and clarifications

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<sup>728</sup> C. Star 2012, 123.

<sup>729</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 382 f.

of not-*clementia* may be used to argue for Seneca's focus on law and custom as the essential element to clement decisions rather than the personality of the judge. From that it is possible to contend that Natural is the medium through which *clementia* works.

27. *What clementia is not*

The parameters of *clementia* are detailed through several other actions, which Seneca defines with much welcome precision. First, Seneca opposes *clementia* to *crudelitas*, which is described in contrasting terms as *inclinatio animi ad asperiora*. As Griffin observes, his treatment of cruelty is essentially the same as that found in the orthodoxly Stoic *De ira*, which only serves to further confuse his formulation of *clementia* because he clearly knows what makes a vice.<sup>730</sup> To Seneca *crudelitas* refers to the transgression of a defined system, where a social construct—be it a formal legal system or something closer to the unwritten *mos maiorum*—imposes known and expected boundaries on a situation. Men deserving of the label 'cruel' are those "qui puniendi causam habent, modum non habent." Cruel men believe the punishment for an offense (and there must be an offense) surpasses the normatively acceptable or stipulated limit of injury—"non quidem in homines innocentes sed super humanum ac probabilem modum" (II.4.3). Their sense of justice is stricter, of retribution harsher. Yet they need not take personal pleasure in giving a more severe punishment. *Feritas* is the quality that Seneca gives to those who delight in blood and gore (II.4.2). Margaret Graver puts forth the evidence to argue that the difference between the two is the lack or presence of *ratio*, as she also notes that *feritas* is similar to insanity.<sup>731</sup> But intention also appears differentiate these two. Barbarity is an end unto itself, and by its very nature it exerts itself without any sense of moral validity or justice: cruelty operates under the guise of law or vengeance, whence its moral validity, and can thereby profess an end external to itself—namely justice. It is in this sense that *crudelitas* directly opposes *clementia*, for they interact with law and custom in exactly the opposite way. One goes too far, the other not enough.<sup>732</sup>

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<sup>730</sup> M.T. Griffin 1976, 156.

<sup>731</sup> M.R. Graver 2007, 122–5.

<sup>732</sup> To quote, in effect, John Calvin in his commentary on *De clementia*: S.M. Braund 2011, 396.

Seneca labels *crudelitas* as the inverse of *clementia*. Most people, he believes, would assume that it was *severitas*. Early in the text Seneca writes of severity as antithetical to clemency (I.1.4; 9.6). Later this is revised so that *severitas* is not only complementary to *clementia* (I.15.6–16.1; 22.2 f.), but a virtue in its own right (II.4.1). Severity is the strict execution of the *verba legis*, and the only interaction with positive law that Stoics unequivocally approve of.<sup>733</sup> But Seneca questions its efficacy, and undermines the uniformity of its virtue. In his mind *severitas* is the root of the gradual inability of punishments prescribed by manmade laws to stop crime and social vice—“et minus gravis nota est quam turba damnationum levat, et severitas, quod maximum remedium habet, adsiduitate amittit auctoritatem” (I.22.2). Whereas the deterrent power of penalties wanes over time with its repeated use, exceptionality enhances the inhibitory function of punishment. A society that does not regularly punish people, Seneca opines, is more likely to regulate itself through a common code of ethics (I.23.2). Not being a sociologist, he fails to adduce any examples for this claim, but the point is taken all the same. Societies become inured to the punishment for a commonly committed crime, which undermines the preventative function of criminal law. The truth of that statement is beside the point, and still debated in law reviews and journals of sociology. Braund is, however, certainly correct that this passage was meant to fault Claudius’ use of the law and evoke his criticism of Claudius in the *Apocolocyntosis*—perhaps suggesting a less theoretical purpose to the passage than one publically or politically propagandistic.<sup>734</sup> Either way, focus is clearly again on the law rather than the arbiter.

Several questions thus arise. The largest regards the virtue of *severitas*. How can *severitas* be a virtue if cumulative acts of judicial severity are detrimental to society? The quick answer would be that not every instance of legal rigidity is a virtue, which in turn contradicts Seneca’s own (and the usual Stoic) presentation of *severitas*. One might then propose that, rather than the *verba*, the severe judge strictly adheres to the *anima legis*—what the law ‘wants’ to do for society. Perhaps. But that is neither what Seneca writes, nor other Stoics. Moreover, even if that were the case, *severitas* according to the letter of the law would still be virtuous. And, so, one ends up with something

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<sup>733</sup> *SVF* III, 640. As exemplified by Cassius Longinus during the Pedanius Secundus trial.

<sup>734</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 363.

of a Zen koan because, as mentioned, all virtues are the same psycho-pneumatic configuration; and in this instance two virtues ostensibly prescribe two different actions, despite being the exact same frame of mind and mindset. The problem could, however, be completely obviated if the only frame of reference for the judge was Natural law, as his strict adherence to it could at the same time appear clement in relation to the written law of man. Were that so, a Naturally strict judge could be clement so long as Natural law is not the long legal system governing that community. Seneca's elevation of Nero above the law suggests just that.

Stoics, for their part, had nothing against the revision or abolition of laws and the evolution of cultural norms that usually effect such changes. So how could Seneca argue that severity is inappropriate? The answer is unclear—not the least because the Stoics held that virtue was of prudential value to human life,<sup>735</sup> whence it follows that virtue accommodates the socio-moral demands placed on a person.<sup>736</sup> That is to say, moral decisions can always be made under any and in accordance with any set of accepted laws and customs.<sup>737</sup> *Clementia* would seem to deny this tenet, unless the judge is free from manmade laws or bound to a higher set of laws.

The confused relationship between *clementia* and *severitas* is further compounded by Seneca's treatment of third-party arbitrators. The first *exemplum* in this vein is the story of Tarius and his would-be parricide of a son (I.15). Tarius uncovers his son's plot, and invites Augustus to his house to take part in the private trial. Following the proceedings, but before verdicts were read, Augustus declares that he will not accept any inheritance from Tarius, which Seneca understands as both a sign that Augustus had found the son guilty and a means for Augustus to prove that “*gratuitam esse severitatem suam*” (I.15.6).<sup>738</sup> For punishment, then, Augustus proposes *relegatio* rather than the sack, which was the expected sentence; and Seneca concludes the story with the sentiment that “*haec clementia principem decet; quocumque venerit, mansuetiora omnia faciat*” (I.16.1). That plainly contradicts his later statement, “*ita*

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<sup>735</sup> i.e. a principle that contributes to making normal human lives go well.

<sup>736</sup> *CMG* V, 4.2.1.128 f. (Zeno); *Stob.* III.733 f. (Hierocles).

<sup>737</sup> Further explanation: H.W. Ausland 1989, 380–90; G. Striker 1991, 14–24; T. Irwin 2007, 321–6.

<sup>738</sup> Disinterest thus becomes an important feature of *severitas* for Seneca, although that should be expected. Firstly, all virtuous actions are completely objective. Secondly, the signal benefit of third party arbitration, or having the State act as intermediary, is the impartiality of the audience in charge of decision-making.

clementem vocabo non in alieno dolore faciliem, sed eum qui cum suis stimulis exagitetur non prosilit” (I.20.3). Augustus had suffered no personal injury from Tarius’ son or the attempted murder.

How can Augustus’ decision exemplify the clement Princeps? Unless Seneca here uses *clementia* in a non-technical sense, which Griffin might argue for, the inconsistency is patent if he uses it as a synonym for treating someone less severely than expected.<sup>739</sup> Indeed, he retroactively undercuts the Stoic authenticity of the work with later details such as “pater tuus plures intra quinquennium culleo insuit quam omnibus saeculis insutos accepimus” (I.23.1). For the Tarius scene reprises the problem of *clementia* being clement in respect to the judge’s habits and personality if one knows that the sack was not merely the expected punishment from custom, but something that Augustus excessively utilized. Nevertheless, at that moment in the treatise, what Seneca hoped to showcase—be it imperial mildness or clemency—has nothing to do with Augustus himself or his personal tendencies. His decision is clement in respect to the punishment stipulated by Roman law and expected by its people.

The final two phenomena compared to *clementia* are *miseriordia* and *venia* (II.4.4 ff.). Pardon disregards the charges brought by the prosecution, or the offenses recognized by the *superior*, and completely exonerates a known guilty party for reasons not necessarily emotional. Pity, on the other hand, motivates the judge to render a punishment that is more bearable for the defendant, with whom the judge sympathizes (in both senses). Seneca furthermore associates the cognitive origin of pity with *miseria*, and explains that the *sapiens* never feels pity. He does not, however, explain the separation of pity from the kind of empathy that the *sapiens* uses to understand a situation fully—only that “*miseriordia est aegritudo animi*” (II.5.4).

Quite rightly, Braund remarks “Seneca’s argument here is extremely feeble.”<sup>740</sup> More diligence was needed to details given that pity, pardon, and clemency all have the same effective result from the standpoint of written law. Each fails to meet the requirements for punishment. Pity, Seneca writes, is an affectation of judgment arising from the circumstances of decision-making. It arises in the courtroom before a weeping defendant, on a battlefield before a groveling foe, and causes one to forget the

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<sup>739</sup> M.T. Griffin 1976, 152 f.

<sup>740</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 415.

reason for being there in the first place and what should be done because of that. The pitiful judge has let pathos compromise his rationality, his objectivity, and his equitable adherence to the law. Pardon, on the other hand, is the willing absolution of an individual from their punishment. The pardoner acts in a legal capacity with motivations beyond the scope of the law, and thereby knowingly defeats the purpose of the law. Neither has the purity of motivation commanded by *clementia*. *Clementia* must, therefore, pursue an idea of justness external to the judge if it differs from pity and pardon. For *miseriordia* and *venia* follow a wholly internal logic.

Clemency must adhere to a sense of justice that is external to the judge. And from the treatment of the above not-*clementia* aspects, it seems clear the *clementia* operates in respect human positive law, but according to a higher principle. For a Stoic, that would reasonably be Natural law. But again, this is an extrapolation on Seneca's behalf, as he fails to make any such technical distinctions. Some at this point might wonder if the incomplete Book II was still in draft form; and this has been suggested before.<sup>741</sup> It would certainly be a hopeful idea for Seneca's Stoic integrity given that Braund believes this section was setting up Seneca's rebuff to orthodox Stoics, who did not differentiate between pity, pardon, and clemency.<sup>742</sup>

What conclusions may be drawn from this interpretation of Seneca's theory? For one, Seneca would appear to envisage Nero as occupying the place of a philosopher king in Roman society, since he is able to make rulings in accordance with Natural law while working within the Roman legal system. *Clementia* appears to be a virtue only when a judge is in a similar position: he makes pronouncements within a preexisting framework of manmade laws, meaning that he makes judgments about behaviors which mankind has found necessary to restrict or enforce, but he does so according to a theory of justice found in an unrelated an unwritten body of law, namely Natural law.

So why would Seneca take the effort to present Nero with this interpretation of justice, or at least one small aspect of it? The most obvious reason is that to uphold this type of justice, Nero would have to study Stoicism. More basic than that, the

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<sup>741</sup> Thus P. Vallette 1930. See further: S.M. Braund 2011, 45 f.

<sup>742</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 414.

wisdom of *clementia* (and any Stoic virtue) is essentially that of life experience. To become virtuous, one must become wise in the ways of the world; and Nero would need guidance down that path. The problem remains, of course, that Nero could strictly follow the letter of Roman law and be virtuous. Seneca never resolves that problem in the treatise as it has survived, except for saying that *severitas* is less effective over time than a policy of both severity and clemency. Again, the same contradictions are still there (if not more), but by crafting and framing his theory of *clementia* in this manner, Seneca has carved out a niche for the experience he has gained in life and the wisdom he has gain in living life as a Stoic. Nero could follow the *verba legis* like Claudius, or he could learn from Seneca how to be a better, more just, and more beloved Princeps.

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So goes Seneca's theory of *clementia*. It is fraught with problems, both above and beneath its surface; and inconsistencies compound the outward difficulties in keeping a Stoic interpretation. Some may excuse Seneca on the latter point, arguing that such instances of incongruity between terms and ideas are part of his narrative technique, slowly unfolding a complex idea one layer at a time so that Nero might better understand it—initially treating *severitas* as opposing *clementia* because that is what most would assume if told clemency was virtuous. But this no less changes the fact that, when read from cover to cover, Seneca's treatise makes unexplained evolutions in its theory, which is hardly good argumentative technique. Thus *severitas* is first not a virtue (I.1.4; 9.6), then something good for Augustus in the Tarius anecdote (I.15.6–16.1), but afterwards severity is demoted to being inherently flawed despite that it “maximum remedium habet” (I.22.2), whereafter Seneca finally marks it as a virtue on par with *clementia*. So too is clemency not a Stoic virtue if its lenience inheres in the punisher's personality and proclivities, but Seneca never clarifies that essential point. The effect of this configuration and presentation, as just mentioned above, is that if Nero is convinced by Seneca's argument, or even intrigued by it, the young emperor would essentially be directed back to Seneca for guidance, advice, and further learning.

Several details should be reiterated before continuing with the analysis in the next chapter. Although Seneca does not speak of clemency in anything other than a judicial context, there seems reason enough to suppose that *clementia* also exists in

non-formal or social contexts, such as in Tarius' case. In both situations, social and legal, there is a specific relationship between the *inferior* and the *superior*, the wrongdoer and the wronged. The *superior* must have suffered a recognized wrong, which is to say his injury must be such that the law or social norms would sanction an act of retribution. Recognition of the wrong *qua* wrong by the *inferior* does not appear to be necessary, only that his particular act allows him to be punished. The *inferior* may expect a specific penalty because it is what is *always* allotted, but in situations where there is either no preconceived expectation—situations where it is felt that *something* must be done—or when one might expect a certain penalty because it is what is *usually* dispensed, consistency would seem to demand that clemency yields a punishment less severe than what would be *reasonably* expectable. Or, to rephrase, the clement punishment would not have been on the table were non-clement judges deciding the matter.

A definition of Senecan *clementia* may run thus: when someone has been the victim of a transgression, and furthermore that person can himself exact recompense from the transgressor, clemency is the willing and knowing mollification of that recompense from what would be socio-culturally expected given the offense (not the judge). With this in hand, the next question may be pursued. What does *clementia* ask of Nero? And what does that entail for Seneca?

## IX. DE CLEMENTIA II

The previous chapter ended with a definition of *clementia* in the abstract, effectively describing an attitude of forgiveness from the victim when he is in the position to take vengeance. For the present chapter, the objective is to put *clementia* on less theoretical grounds—in particular, to examine its application to and by the emperor. What does *De clementia* entail for both Seneca and Nero? The philosopher naturally does not dwell on how he or his vision of the Empire would benefit from Nero's wholehearted acceptance of the message of the text, though that was likely wrapped up in his pitch to Nero. And the Emperor would need convincing. In the extant text Seneca offers one example of how *clementia* unfolds in the real world, namely Cinna's conspiracy. It brings with it all the issues raised in Chapter VIII. But the practical and moral implications of *clementia* for Nero are more involved than Seneca's *exempla* disclose.

Going into the present analysis, the conflict between *severitas* and *clementia* still seems applicable to the emperor. If it is fine and just to apply the penalty on the books, why should the emperor deviate? An obvious answer, and the one Seneca promotes, is that it is objectively better to do so. The emperor could effectively prosecute and rule as he pleased in his domestic tribunal, which by Nero's time had become custom at Rome—though not necessarily accepted by all. Such is the reality which Seneca was dealing with. The problem is that, although the Princeps had *liberum arbitrium*, individuals nonetheless had to be arraigned on a charge. A semblance of constitutionality had to be kept. Conflict thus arises from the emperor's moral imperative to prosecute such cases (to act 'under' the law and uphold it), while concurrently being able to disregard that selfsame idea of Roman justice for an act of clemency (to act 'above' or indifferent to the law). Granted, for an autocrat, such inconsistencies are not an actual problem, but they should have been for a philosopher.

As it stands, legal clemency remains something of a paradox. Seneca describes a phenomenon that, at its heart, attempts to impose objective values on an unqualifiedly subjective construct, the law. *Clementia* motivates one to act in a certain way during judicial contexts, but in a way that does not recognize the subjective reason for that context being judicial in the first place. Seneca gives clemency the pretense of legality by having it operate within a legal system, while distinctly removing it from

the remit of the law—“*clementia liberum arbitrium habet; non sub formula sed ex aequo et bono iudicat; et absoluere illi licet et quanti vult taxare litem*” (II.7.3). Nor would it be restricted by legal *formulae*, which were simply the procedural tools used to define the nature and scope of a particular legal action, as Karl Hackl and others have noted.<sup>743</sup> *Clementia* requires that the judge have complete and utter discretion on how to punish because clement decisions are made independent of human positive law. The course of action is entirely for the clement judge to decide.

Following the arguments laid out by Katja Vogt, this idea is derived from the Stoics’ own engagement with Natural Law as a cosmopolitan phenomenon, not limited to any single charter or set of codes, but identifiable as and governed by the perfect reason of the universe.<sup>744</sup> Hence Seneca remarks that clemency is not guided by a set of rules.<sup>745</sup> That, however, re-raises the question ‘in respect to what is *clementia* lenient?’ since, if clemency does not consider *formulae* or other aspects of un-Natural Law, and Natural Law can only ever prescribe correct actions (*κατόρθωμα*), the “*inclinatio animi ad lenitatem*” has no clear point of reference beside the judge himself, which is un-Stoic for reasons already mentioned. Moreover, outside Zeno’s polity of sages, the utopian cosmic city, *sapientes* were not removed from local laws and customs.<sup>746</sup> Natural Law informs the sage’s actions within the preexisting human system. Thus Zeno states that actions should be performed in accordance with custom and civic practices, and accordingly rules need not be stipulated for actions because those custom and civil practices are the rules; and Hierocles insists on conformity to the laws and customs of one’s own city, noting that they ought not to be violated or otherwise opposed.<sup>747</sup> And so the aforementioned contradictions and inconsistencies abide.

In truth, Nero could be clement because he was the emperor. Such a reality was justification enough, and perhaps also why Seneca’s theory of *clementia* allows for the moral incongruities mentioned above—a realpolitik philosophy of sorts. As such,

<sup>743</sup> See further: K. Hackl 1976 and 1987; M. Kaser & K. Hackl 1996, 308–22.

<sup>744</sup> K.M. Vogt 2008, 161–216; cf. D. Obbink 1999.

<sup>745</sup> For the differences with Aristotelian *ἐπιείκεια*: J.M. Rist 1989, 2007.

<sup>746</sup> Cic. *Off.* I.148: “*quae vero more agentur institutisque civilibus, de iis nihil est praecipendum; illa enim ipsa praecepta sunt, nec quemquam hoc errore duci oportet, ut, si quid Socrates aut Aristippus contra morem consuetudinemque civilem fecerint locutive sint, idem sibi arbitretur licere; magnis illi et divinis bonis hanc licentiam assequebantur.*”

<sup>747</sup> *CMG* V, 4.2.1.128 f.; Stob. III.733 f.

the applied ethics of *clementia* in the hands of the emperor also fails to bring unity to the text. The same problems subsist. Progress can, however, be made if these difficulties are conveniently ignored and attention put to another question. For there is a rather large one waiting. Why should Nero be clement? And what does that signal about Seneca? These questions prime the second half of the inquiry into Seneca's theory of *clementia* and *De clementia* as a whole.

### 28. *The cause to be clement*

Philosophy has and still does devote much energy to two questions affecting the everyday lives of people. One is 'what should I believe?', which preoccupies epistemology. Another is 'how should I act?', the focus of ethics. And somewhere between these two sits 'what should I care about?', an intermediary question that differs from the former two insofar as epistemology and ethics do not necessarily dwell on the sum and substance of caring, or the fact that humans do indeed care about things. This third question relates to the greater ethical argument of *De clementia*. How one should act depends on what they value; and so the virtue of clemency, what makes *clementia* a virtue for Nero, supervenes on Seneca's presumption of what the emperor should care about. The answer is simple, and predictable for a Stoic—to live life according to Nature. If clement acts conform to the rationality of Zeus, if they are virtuous, then they should be done for their own sake like all other virtuous actions. Yet that is not Seneca's answer. The stance he strikes is distinctly utilitarian.

Seneca does not undertake a systematic explanation of how *clementia* fits into each of the above philosophical questions. That is simply not his style. Nor does it seem likely that he would have published his views on the proper direction of imperial policy. His influence was conspicuous enough: no need to make it more obvious. Instead, the question of what Nero should value is addressed in an oblique but engaging manner, ostensibly designed to have his pupil 'see' his philosophy in action as Ilsetraut Hadot would say.<sup>748</sup> The *exempla* of Book I are the primary source of evidence, but on two occasions Seneca is more explicit regarding what Nero's proper concerns and priorities are. The first arrives early on, where he claims that *clementia*, aside from being

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<sup>748</sup> I. Hadot 1969. Her exact phraseology presently eludes memory.

the perfect virtue for the Princeps, is a virtue for those “qui hominem sociale animal communi bono gentium videri volumus, sed etiam inter illos qui hominem voluptati donant, quorum omnia dicta factaque ad utilitates suas spectant” (I.3.2). The second occurs during the discussion of the title Father of the Fatherland, which Seneca avers is not for nothing—“patrem quidem patriae appellavimus ut sciret datam sibi potestatem patriam, quae est temperantissima liberis consulens suaque post illos reponens” (I.14.2). It the emperor’s selfless duty as *pater patriae* to correct and improve his subjects (I.14);<sup>749</sup> and Nero should be kind to his family, the State, because it is they who make him who he is, the emperor—“tu animus rei publicae es” (I.5.1).<sup>750</sup> *Clementia* thus works for the common good of humanity, but it also furthers one’s own station relative to and progress toward happiness; and the good emperor puts the welfare of the Empire before his own, which clemency sees to. The public good is, therefore, the emperor’s private interest.

That the emperor should care about the Empire and its inhabitants is no great insight. Seneca merely advocates *clementia* because it is conditionally the best way for Nero to fulfill his obligations to his subjects, which is the insurance of their wellbeing, the *publica utilitas* (I.12.1). Thus throughout the treatise Seneca emphasizes that *clementia* proliferates good and positivity, and that the most desirable decisions engender the widest benefit.<sup>751</sup> Moreover, the author of the *Octavia* has Seneca tell Nero:

pulchrum eminere est inter illustres viros, | consulere  
patriae, parcere afflictis, fera | caede abstinere, tempus  
atque irae dare, | orbi quietem, saeculo pacem suo. |  
haec summa virtus, petitur hac caelum via. | sic ille pa-  
triae primus Augustus parens | complexus astra est, co-  
latur et templis deus. (472–8)

But this all smacks of consequentialism. The rational and impartial demand of morality in Stoicism is not the maximization of anything—not pleasure, welfare, or any other kind of happiness. Moral actions are moral because they were executed with virtue, which means that the action is chosen for its own sake; and the virtuousness of

<sup>749</sup> cf. Arist. *Po.* 1280b: τέλος μὲν οὖν πόλεως τὸ εὖ ζῆν, ταῦτα δὲ τοῦ τέλους χάρις. Cic. *Leg.* III.5.8: “o<lli>s salus populi suprema lex esto.” On the father ruler-imagery analogy: T.R. Stevenson 1992.

<sup>750</sup> M.T. Griffin 1976, 139: “*clementia* becomes the king or Princeps because he is the *anima* of the *res publica* which he must spare as his own body.”

<sup>751</sup> e.g. I.9.12, 12.1, 13.1, 13.4, 15.7, 24.2, 26.5; II.6.3, 7.2. And inversely (bad makes worse): I.8.7; 9.5; 10.3; 13.2.

such an action inheres in the fact that it itself (the act *qua* act) is good, not because it is advantageous or the most widely beneficial or gainful.<sup>752</sup> Seneca cannot argue that *clementia* is a virtue because it is advantageous, for that would be utilitarianism—though this would also not be the first time that such modern sentiments have been found in his work.<sup>753</sup> The value of virtue is independent of its consequences: virtuous actions are chosen solely for their intrinsic properties. They are not good, advantageous, or rational because of what happens afterwards.<sup>754</sup> Yet that is exactly how Seneca argues the propriety of *clementia*.

Book I on the whole serves to demonstrate the applied good of *clementia*. Seneca prefers, as he does, to make his point with a narrative more illustrative than plainly explanatory, but he is specific about the benefits on two occasions. First, there is utility in a brief abeyance of the law (I.5.1). *Clementia* concedes a certain amount of tolerance to a judge so that his punishments may be exemplary, which can be seen to counteract the degenerative effects of *severitas* on the law (I.22.3).<sup>755</sup> Claudius' overzealous involvement in jurisdiction seems a plausible impetus behind this view,<sup>756</sup> and taken with the advertised increase in *libertas senatoria*, one may wonder if Seneca envisioned a curb for the baseline involvement of the Princeps, or merely a rescaling from Claudius' standard.

Second, *clementia* enhances the personal security of the emperor (I.8.6). Safety is represented as a reciprocal relationship between ruler and ruled: noblesse oblige and mutual *gratia* are key elements between a good emperor and his people. If the ruler knows his people and appreciates the social terrain, they will be inspired to return the favor. With love from the people and respect from the Senate, the Princeps secures *auctoritas* and *potentia*, whence his legitimacy (I.5.6). But as far as Seneca's other thoughts go, his main specimen for the virtue of *clementia* in Book I is the account of Cinna's conspiracy against Augustus (I.9).

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<sup>752</sup> A.A. Long 1996, 143–5.

<sup>753</sup> Kant in *Rechtslehre* thus criticized Seneca for comments at *De ira* I.19.5. See the edition by J. Barbeyrac, *Kants Werke* (Frankfurt, 1977), vol. VIII §49-I. Note also the distinctly modern argument of an anonymous commentator against social appropriation: J. Annas 1993, 270–4.

<sup>754</sup> See further: A.A. Long 1991.

<sup>755</sup> Seneca does not make that latter point, though it seems an inevitably important one to make if he is to strengthen the argument for *clementia* against *severitas*.

<sup>756</sup> Thus also S.M. Braund 2011, 363.

Told as part of the argument that *clementia* is valuable to a ruler, Cinna's conspiracy is itself nothing complicated. Cinna conspires to kill Augustus, who is informed of the plot. Augustus becomes troubled at having to execute the young nobleman. Livia suggests that he try the opposite of his usual policy, since executing conspirators has not reduced the number of conspiracies. Augustus meets with Cinna, explains the situation, and spares him. Cinna turns into one of Augustus most loyal partisans. The outline may be simple, but the story itself, as Braund and others have observed, is a meticulously constructed piece of narration.<sup>757</sup> There is much to derive from it.

As in the “vellem litteras nescirem!” incident with Nero, Augustus appears obligated to exact a punishment but was conflicted about doing so. He, too, was opposed to signing a death warrant as an act of violence—“nox illi inquieta erat, cum cogitaret adulescentem nobilem, hoc detracto integrum, Cn. Pompei nepotem, damnandum” (I.9.3). Such reluctance conflicts with Augustus' realization that his personal wellbeing suffers from Cinna's current lack of detention and that the law must be upheld, thereby leading him to ask “quid ergo? ego percussorem meum securum ambulare patiar me sollicito? ergo non dabit poenas?” (I.9.4). He then engages the ethical debate from the opposite side, and strikes a distinctly utilitarian stance—“quid vivis si perire te tam multorum interest? quis finis erit suppliciorum? quis sanguinis?...non est tanti vita si, ut ego non peream, tam multa perdenda sunt” (I.9.5). It turns out, however, that Augustus and his rhetorical questions have been in the presence of Livia, who provides him with the sage advice to be clement—“fac quod medici solent, qui ubi usitata remedia non procedunt temptant contraria” (I.9.6).

This scene provides is a crucial element in Seneca's protreptic strategy. Firstly, the scene itself emphasizes the opposite of an earlier point, namely that the bad ruler is inflexible;<sup>758</sup> and it exemplifies a Greek-Eastern idea, identified by Fergus Millar, that the dispensation of justice is a central concern of the good king.<sup>759</sup> But more importantly, Livia's role shows that the cognitive pathways to virtuous action need not be self-realized. In other words, Nero could get the idea of how to act virtuously from

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<sup>757</sup> S.M. Braund 2011, 258 f., with references.

<sup>758</sup> A standard mark of a tyrant: Wallace-Hadrill 1982; S.M. Braund 1998, 60–5.

<sup>759</sup> F. Millar 1992, 466–77.

someone else, or he could simply be told how to act virtuously—a point of interpretation discussed below. Perhaps predictably, this implication conflicts with any Stoic account of correct actions (*κατορθώματα*), which must be self-realized because they develop from the confirmations of virtuous impressions—the *sapiens* acts the way he does because his soul recognizes an action is virtuous.<sup>760</sup> If someone performs an act that is virtuous, but he does not do so because he himself specifically recognizes it as virtuous, then he has only executed an appropriate action (*καθήκον*). That, however, may have been enough for Seneca.

Additionally, and somewhat more cynically, it seems important that Seneca would pick an *exemplum* where a woman offers a game-changing piece of advice. He could tell Agrippina that he included it in an effort to make Nero more amenable to his mother's wishes and advice—if Augustus would listen to a woman, why not Nero? For Nero, however, the episode could easily highlight how unhelpful and overbearing his mother is in contrast to the subdued and deferential Livia; and the signal it sends is manifestly clear. Just as Augustus learned how to be clement in that particular situation, Nero could call on Seneca's superior experience and Stoic outlook to aid him in all such situations—ask for help when you need it. That hardly seems like much to request from the young Emperor.

Several other aspects of this story require attention, philosophically and otherwise. The first is that Augustus effectively pardons Cinna. One type of pardon described by Seneca is when a judge “aliquem verbis tantum admonebit, poena non adficiet, aetatem eius emendabilem intuens” (II.7.2). None too different in character is Augustus' reported speech in *De clementia*, or Seneca's parenthesis on the situation—“diutius enim quam duabus horis locutum esse constat, cum hanc poenam qua sola erat contentus futurus extenderet” (I.9.11). The ostensible difference is that Augustus intended to terrify Cinna as the punishment, whereas the admonitory judge does not think his action is punitive. But this is pure semantics. Neither Augustus nor the pardoning judge renders anything that is formally recognized as punishment, but both intend their action to effect reform in the defendant. And although the pardoner might not consider his action to be a punishment, his motivation is what would make it virtuous, not his jurisprudential ruminations.

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<sup>760</sup> Section 24 reviews these distinctions.

Nor is it clear whether the virtue of Augustus' action comes from recognition of Livia's proposal *qua* appropriate action ('this act of clemency is the right thing to do'), or recognition of *clementia* within Livia's proposal ('this is the right action because it is clement'). It depends on how his relief at hearing Livia's advice is interpreted—"gavisus sibi quod advocatum invenerat" (I.9.7). Most editors take 'sibi' with 'gavisus', placing a comma after the reflexive pronoun, which means that Augustus was happy to find someone who knew what to do.<sup>761</sup> Others, however, take it with 'advocatum', suggesting that Augustus found a supporter for a course of action conceived prior to Livia's advice.<sup>762</sup> Nevertheless, it does not change the fact that the Princeps was ultimately convinced to spare Cinna because it would potentially preclude future assassination attempts. That motivation is far from virtuous.<sup>763</sup>

Thus Seneca's philosophy of *clementia*. It is still not especially Stoic or convincingly coherent as an ethical theory. Seneca knows the major tenets of Stoicism, as seen in *De ira* and in this text,<sup>764</sup> but *De clementia* appears distinctly unable to present or explain its central thesis in recognizably Stoic or even systematic terms. Scholars have argued that the standard organization of its sections is a scrambled version of the original order or incomplete, which might explain some of its dysfunction.<sup>765</sup> But none of those accounts has prevailed.

As for the present analysis, little more can be done with the philosophy of *De clementia* without lapsing into redundancy. The points to be made have been made. Seneca's definition of clemency in terms of *temperantia animi* and *inclinatio animi ad lenitatem*, remitting the "merita ac debita poena", does not describe a virtue since it implies that the act of clemency is good specifically because it is not something else; and virtues are done for their own sake and are inherently good. Moreover, the reinterpretation of Seneca's problematic definition, though superficially fixing the obvious

<sup>761</sup> Thus S.M. Braund 2011, 273 n. 1.9.7: "Ball rightly takes *advocatum* closely with *sibi*, 'i.e. a counsellor who supported Augustus's own inclinations', where most editors take *sibi* with *gavisus* and punctuate accordingly."

<sup>762</sup> A.P. Ball 1908; C. Hosius 1914; J.W. Basore 1928; S.M. Braund 2011.

<sup>763</sup> Nor is it clearly a preferred indifferent (*προηγμένον*). *SVF* III, 117–23 lists indifferents and why they are not goods. For discussion: N.P. White 1990; G. Lesses 1998; R. Sorabji 2000 93–108; R. Barney 2003, 320–39.

<sup>764</sup> e.g. I.5.3: "cum autem virtutibus inter se sit concordia nec ulla altera melior aut honestior sit." What immediately follows, however—"quaedam tamen quibusdam personis aptior est"—is questionable.

<sup>765</sup> F. Préchac 1925, lxxvi–c; P. Vallette 1930.

objections to his formulation, nonetheless permits of distinctly un-Stoic and non-virtuous attributes. Nothing offered by Seneca or here formulated on his behalf can sufficiently rebut the Stoic preference for *severitas*. Seneca's argument for the greater utility of *clementia* comes close, but it does not clearly rest on the Stoic principles of what virtue is. But perhaps this did not really matter. Seneca only had to convince one person that his theory was valid to make writing the treatise worthwhile. Conveniently for him, that person was not a Stoic—at least yet.

Chapter IX now departs from a philosophical consideration of the treatise to a historical one. *De clementia* cannot be fully assessed without considering the individual holding the pen, or why he picked it up in the first place. Nor can the nature of Seneca's theory be held separate from other discussions and discourses, whatever the philosophical state of his thesis. What signals does Seneca send by writing a text on *clementia*? What does that say about his connection to the Palace and the Emperor? *De clementia* needs to be placed in context for the fullest comprehension of its possible impact on Seneca's relationship with Nero.

### 29. *Qualities from context*

Contextualization of *De clementia* in the legal-political milieu may begin with a question. Why did Seneca treat *clementia* as a matter of ethical consideration rather than something more plainly political? This dissertation clearly has a theory for why he would, but consider the question from a more neutral vantage. Seneca argues that imperial clemency is good for the Empire and Nero's rule, both of which seem distinctly pragmatic; and the philosophy of his theory fails as Stoicism, not the least because he advocates *clementia* for utilitarian reasons. So why couch the argument in ethical terms? Why does Stoicism have to be used as the agent of justification? Seneca was a Stoic, yes; and these moral beliefs were undeniably important to his worldview. But was there a reason to avoid *clementia* as a sociopolitical phenomenon? Background primes the answer.

*Clementia* was ideologically bound to the period of intestine war under the Triumvirs, specifically Caesar the Dictator.<sup>766</sup> Although a welcome virtue for most, *clementia Caesaris* had certain implications for the Republican aristocracy. This reality

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<sup>766</sup> A general review of these facts is found in M.T. Griffin 2003.

comes across clearly in Cicero's speeches for Ligarius and Marcellus: *clementia* denoted a discretionary act of mercy, neither enabled nor encouraged by the law. It was something done by someone in total power over another.<sup>767</sup> Hence *clementia* was limited to post-battle scenes in Augustan art, never the battle in progress.<sup>768</sup> The battlefield connection began to dissolve under Tiberius, when *clementia* slowly became an act done to fellow citizens rather than defeated enemies. Under Gaius (and presumably Claudius) there were annual sacrifices to *Clementia*, though significant attention did not return until Nero's time.<sup>769</sup>

It is no real surprise, or coincidence, that the sense of *clementia* channeled by Seneca should appear under Caesar. Constitutional reform was long overdue by his time. For nearly a century before Actium the Republican government had failed to function with any fluidity.<sup>770</sup> The constitution and traditional principles were repeatedly lacerated, perforated, mutilated until the Republic of the *nobiles* was no more. Under the weight of her own structure she collapsed, eviscerated by opportunists hawking betterment and restoration—submission and transformation. Certain responsibilities would have to burden a single man. Yet the Princeps was not the thing that would restore the constitution. The position was not embedded within a legal framework. It existed as an entity constructed separately from but in coordination with the revival of the Republic. The constitutionality of *clementia principis* was a legal fallacy.

As the first emperor, Augustus relied on his overwhelming *auctoritas* to legitimize personal involvement with the maintenance of the Republican government and public welfare. The role of *auctoritas* to the legitimacy of his position was immense, for the Princeps only remained within the remit of Republican constitutional law by his retention of *tribunicia potestas* and *imperium proconsulare*. The former bestowed *sacrosanctitas*, allowing him to veto official decrees of magistrates and the right to assemble both the Senate and *concilium plebis*; the latter control of the legions, whence his actual power. The lack of foundation in the Republican constitution manifests in the creation

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<sup>767</sup> Cic. *Lig.* 10 f., 15 f., 19, 29 f.; *Mar.* 9; *Deiot.* 8. E. Malaspina (2001) argues for Seneca's awareness of these speeches.

<sup>768</sup> e.g. the Belvedere altar, Boscoreale cups. The military connotation was unavoidable for Augustus, whence dedications as the *clipeus virtutis* (*AE* 1952, 165). See further: L. Beltrami 2005.

<sup>769</sup> Tac. *Ann.* IV.74.3; Dio LIX.16.10. The belligerent Germanicus is still so associated on the *s.c. de Cn. Pisone patre* (ln. 90), along with *moderatio* (ll. 26, 146, 167), *iustitia* and *magnitudo animi* (ll. 90 f.).

<sup>770</sup> On the establishment of un-Republican precedent: H.I. Flower 2010, 80–96.

of a new vocabulary of honorifics that sought to redeem the Princeps' inapplicability to normal legal jargon. The absence of a basis in any *lex* eventually allowed the Princeps to experiment with punishment and pardon in the name of *publica utilitas*. Such flexibility would normally bring into question the idea of whether the government has the duty to always punish law-breakers. But the Princeps was a convenient exception. He was operatively inside and responsibly outside the law—"princeps legibus solutus est."<sup>771</sup>

As Michael Peachin has argued, the extent of this *liberum arbitrium* may not have been obvious because Augustus left major ambiguities and faults in the legal system.<sup>772</sup> The trial system of *cognitio* used by the Princeps, senatorial trials, city magistrates, and governors was not bound to formal edicts. The legal apparatus remained passive, ignorance of the law widespread; praetorian edicts shifted constantly; and rhetoric continued to determine cases rather than a recognized body of legal norms.<sup>773</sup> Tacitus in the *Dialogus* evokes a picture of contemporary courtrooms in which rhetorical advocacy was absent. He exaggerates. Pliny notes M. Aquilius Regulus' brutally *ad hominem* style of attack that made him *δυσκαθαίρετος*, while Quintilian either assumes or implies a sizeable audience, as with the *ingens coetus* at the trial of a poisoner.<sup>774</sup>

The field of jurisprudence was also uneven. Jurists taught what their teachers had taught before them, and they left the language of the law unchanged until the mid third century. The division of law into sacred and profane, public and private also left wide gaps of knowledge. Sacred and profane law did not interact or influence each other, leading students of sacred law to ignore the profane.<sup>775</sup> Roman jurists exhibit a near conscious avoidance of constitutional and administrative law from the time of Cicero to nearly that of Septimius Severus. And although Roman penal literature is generally scarce, jurisprudence before Hadrian also betrays a sharp disinterest with criminal law and procedure—neither being strictly separated from private law. The various obscurities in an already broad field allowed the perfusion of moral philosophies to supplement and contend for areas of the law. Of the two main schools of

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<sup>771</sup> *Dig.* I.3.31.

<sup>772</sup> M. Peachin 2001.

<sup>773</sup> For these challenges to jurists: B.W. Frier 1985, esp. 183, 249, 286 f.

<sup>774</sup> Tac. *Dial.* 39; Plin. *Ep.* I.5.11–15 (Regulus), VII.6.9 (poisoner).

<sup>775</sup> Cic. *Leg.* II.19.47; 22.52.

jurisprudence, the Proculian and Sabinian, Peripatetic and Stoic philosophy were likely their respective alliances.<sup>776</sup> *De clementia*, as a legal text that did not discuss the law, was therefore unlikely unique. Moreover, it could be interpreted in two different ways. *De clementia* could be seen as Seneca writing about something philosophical in his political capacity as a senator, or writing about something political from his personal perspective as a Stoic. The signal that sends about Seneca's intentions for the work is ambiguous, but perhaps that was intentional.

Nothing in the political and legal atmosphere clearly accounts for Seneca's decision to treat *clementia* as an internal and ethical phenomenon.<sup>777</sup> The field of law was large and filled with enough ambiguity on its own that Seneca might treat such a subject in whatever tactful manner he pleased. And his tact, it might be remembered, allowed for the regular use of *rex* and its derivatives: there was no doubt that the emperor had absolute power. Nor had clemency been abused by Claudius, meaning that it did not require re-justification. *De clementia* could, on the other hand, be interpreted as a vindication for an upcoming or present political reality, though the text is more exhortative than apologetic. This treatise thus appears to be something that Seneca personally wanted Nero to consider—and for practical reasons. The moral defensibility of *clementia* maintained in Books I and II anticipates a real-life plan for Nero to cultivate clemency in Book III, for one must grasp the ethicality of clemency (based in Nature) in order to cultivate it as a genuine Stoic virtue. But Nero was no student of philosophy, Stoicism or otherwise. He could, however, become one.

When considered within the model of signaling erected by this dissertation, the signals that Seneca sends through *De clementia* become clearer. Chapter III showed Nero had a background propaedeutic to philosophical education; and in the conclusion to Part I, it was suggested that Seneca held no particular advantage when working with someone whose primary activity was political. The imperial tutor had great stature in the pre-accession milieu, and preeminence in the educative environment. Unexceptional nonetheless describes his senatorial career. If Nero desired political advice of weight, any number of other senators might offer their experiences as suggestions

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<sup>776</sup> Clearest at Gai. II.79 (*si quis ex aliena materia novam speciem fecerit*). Sabinians prefer οὐσία, Proculians εἶδος.

<sup>777</sup> cf. P. Grimal 1970, 15 f.

to the youth—Seneca’s brother perhaps being one of them. Yet how many people could engage Nero as a person, on an internal and ethical level, without presumption or offense? Thus, in the *Apocolocyntosis*, Seneca signals his contemplation of the emperor’s code of ethics and his keen awareness of the effect that decisions have on the wellbeing of an individual. He lambastes Claudius for living viciously and injuring numerous others because of it. Hence, when he exhorts Nero to pursue a moral good found only in situations of interpersonal decision-making—a virtue, no less, that can be cultivated through the direction and wisdom of others—*De clementia* not only signals Seneca’s ability to help the emperor with the moral considerations involved in person-to-person affairs (both involving and beyond the scope of *clementia*), it signals to Nero the political imperative of having such an advisor at his side (a point only further emphasized by Seneca’s moral authority with him), and it signals Seneca’s suitability to fulfill that role.

Maybe Seneca had reason to believe that Nero would take up the mantle of *clementia*. Recorded history certainly fails to suggest that it would have been a promising prospect. Even so, publication and propagandistic promotion could put pressure on the young prince to educate himself. But if this was an honest attempt to teach Nero, either apart from or in addition to any purpose *De clementia* might serve as agitprop, it might be asked why clemency was the virtue chosen for cultivation.

### 30. *Practical considerations*

The final question is the significance of *clementia* itself. Why present *clementia* to Nero? There are plenty of other virtues, both Roman and Stoic. The sources, however, in the colors of the Humanist saint and the Beast of Revelations, suggest that Seneca sensed a black heart at Nero’s core.<sup>778</sup> More plausible is that Seneca witnessed some worrisome behavior. Tacitus reports that the year 56 saw the beginning of Nero’s nighttime enormities, to which Suetonius adds his usual richness.<sup>779</sup> Whoring, thieving, drinking, and fighting are hobbies unbecoming of a noble youth. Yet between fighting and killing exists a line, one that Nero never personally needed to cross—as far as known.

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<sup>778</sup> Suet. *Nero* 7.1;  $\Sigma$  *Juv.* 5.109.

<sup>779</sup> *Ann.* XIII.25; Suet. *Nero* 26.

With the lawful exception of the Christian arsonists,<sup>780</sup> the aesthetics of violence were enjoyed within the cultural standard. The new Princeps was not the old: Nero did not seek out the capacity of executioner. Nor was he compelled to extremes by violent emotions. Ambiguity, rumor, and suspicion loom out of Nero's most notorious instances of violence. His cowardice and lack of self-confidence created victims to fell. Such is a better target for *De clementia*: to make Nero slow down, think, and act after deliberation—"ita aliquando, scribas necesse est istud quod tibi in odium litteras adduxit, sed sicut facis, cum magna cunctatione, cum multis dilationibus" (II.2.3). For that is exactly what Nero did not do in 55, when *De clementia* was likely conceived, after the freedman Paris reports a conspiracy.<sup>781</sup>

The time of composition raises several considerations. Based on an intertextual reference to Nero's age being eighteen, most place the debut of *De clementia* up to a year after 15 December 55.<sup>782</sup> That would entail a publication date after Britannicus' death. Was this much of a consideration? Details of Nero's interactions with his stepbrother are sparse; and silence plays its usual hand in the *Annales*, evening out any tension in the period up to Britannicus' death.<sup>783</sup> Yet action arrives without hesitation once Nero has power. Tacitus' narrative suggests that any pretense supporting a non-hostile relationship collapsed during the Saturnalia of 54, when Britannicus' personal sentiments drunkenly emerged in a song—*carmen est error*.

Political rivalry need not entail personal antipathy, but the combination of the two seldom allows for easy solutions. Certain conflicts may have been foreseeable to those who knew the two boys—or those who recognized the motto of the Principate. When had it ever been worth risking a contest with a potential challenger when unopposed and preemptive action could be taken? Nevertheless, Britannicus' death is not presented as inevitable. Tacitus' narrative suggests the idea was spontaneous, and suppresses its expedience—the death of Britannicus secured Nero a decade of political stability and personal safety. Moreover, with indisputable power comes the ability to construe information, which consistently proves useful when the discussion regards

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<sup>780</sup> About the historicity of which B.D. Shaw 2015 has serious reservations.

<sup>781</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.20 f.

<sup>782</sup> Sen. *Cl.* I.19.1. First argued by E. Albertini 1923. Some follow F. Préchac 1932, putting it before Britannicus' death, e.g. O. Zwielerlein 1996 and P. Schimmenti 2001. Others after it: B. Mortureaux 1989, 1643–5.

<sup>783</sup> They had interacted as early as 47 (Tac. *Ann.* XI.11.2; Suet. *Nero.* 7.1).

*arcana domus aut imperii*. Tacitus declines to comment on the realpolitik logic of this practice, or hint at its currency during the time he was writing. Instead, Britannicus' death is the peripeteia in the story of Agrippina, whose benefit from two *principes* was that they afforded her a middle stance as a mother-stepmother mediator. Further, much like how the advocacy of independent thought in *De clementia* would reduce her sway over Nero's decisions, the removal of Britannicus freed Nero from the power-balancing game to which Tacitus alludes.<sup>784</sup>

Whatever the utility of Britannicus' death, the uncertainty of personal enmity distorts true motives, dilutes its transmission, and weakens its memory. Thus the Pisonian conspirator Subrius Flavus omits it from Nero's hateful crimes; Tacitus only has Seneca mention the murder of Britannicus for rhetorical effect; Britannicus fails to appear in Suetonius' memorable graffiti against Nero; no perceptible ramifications appear in the Senate; and an inscription from the year 63 or 65, dedicated to Nero, Poppaea, and Britannicus, fails to suggest that scandalmongering penetrated the depths of the Empire.<sup>785</sup> Any cunning mantra of killing, as had and would smother so many imperial kinsmen, was incident to matters internal to the Palace—and better ignored than discussed. Cynical suspicions may yet construe *De clementia* as a multi-purpose document juggling the interests of philosophy, justice, political spin, and a campaign of deception. The necessity of such a document, however, would seem to be lacking.<sup>786</sup>

Returning to the date of composition, what was Seneca doing at the time? For six months in 55 Seneca held a suffect consulship.<sup>787</sup> He had reached the peak of his political career, unless he would take to the provinces as a governor. It is significant, therefore, that Seneca would expend energy on a work which notifies Nero of a need for further knowledge, a work which would send Nero back into education—back to their old relationship. Book III contained discussion of “quomodo ad hanc virtutem perducatur animus”, and could have contained the details of how Seneca might go

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<sup>784</sup> *Ann.* XIII.14.

<sup>785</sup> *SEG* XVI, 748 (Amisos); Tac. *Ann.* XV.67.2: “odisse coepi, postquam parricida matris et uxoris, auriga et histrio et incendiarius extitisti.” 62.2: “neque aliud superesse post matrem fratremque interfectos, quam ut educatoris praeceptorisque necem adiceret.”

<sup>786</sup> Only a slight attempt at defense emerges—“dat tyranus crudelis et iracundus qui munus suum fastidire te iniuriam iudicaturus est” (*Ben.* II.18.6).

<sup>787</sup> G. Camodeca 1986. Accepted at *PIR*<sup>2</sup>, T 314.

about helping Nero. For even as a whole, the treatise was not a full philosophical package. Virtues were cultivated with time, with experience, and were the result from years of living and learning about life as human. They could not be ripped from the pages of a book or, least of all in Seneca's mind, grasped by armchair theorization. It is therefore very important to note that Senecan *clementia* is more teachable than actual virtues because it demands a certain type action in a specific dynamic rather than merely embodying a broad typology of action, such as being brave.<sup>788</sup> That would be a fine reason for Seneca to select *clementia* as his virtue of choice. Clemency was going to be a project of personal transformation; and *De clementia* would be the starting point for this journey toward wisdom. Such a goal holds implications for Seneca's place at the Palace.

The call to philosophy can be variously interpreted. Seneca shows himself in the *Apocolocyntosis* to have a comfortable position at the restructured Palace. He says what he wants with finesse, art, and impunity; he has Nero's trust—perhaps enough to merit conscience of any plans for Britannicus. And although no less indebted to Agrippina, Seneca never suffered the suspicions of latent disloyalty that Nero held toward Burrus, who never had the moral authority in Nero's like that Seneca did. But unlike Burrus, who had an official position, Seneca was dependent on Nero's goodwill and friendship to maintain his influence and position as an *amicus principis*. The “vellem litteras nescirem!” incident attests to the quotidian presence of Seneca at the Palace. Yet nothing discloses his specific capacity in the *cobors amicorum*. If Seneca could reengage Nero in a pedagogic relationship, then he could formalize their relationship to some degree. *De clementia* could represent an attempt to address these concerns by a man who had recently reached the apex of his political career, a man whose path forward was largely indefinite. A philosophical mentorship lacks genuine job security, to be sure, but the message of *De clementia* creates a specific need for Nero that Seneca could fulfill. Chrysippus would approve: working with a king was a livelihood suitable for the *sapiens*.<sup>789</sup>

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<sup>788</sup> According to Chrysippus, each virtue has a distinct function in relation to a set range of passions (D.L. VII, 126). There is no one thing that makes an action brave, but the same thing makes clemency clement in each instance—not imposing an expected punishment. Bravery is the knowledge of what is to be chosen, avoided, or neither (VII, 92). Clemency, by contrast, does not fit into this paradigm of knowing positive action, negative action, and neither. It is only knowledge of when to render a weaker punishment. Knowing when to render a neither stronger nor weaker punishment would be *severitas*.

<sup>789</sup> Plut. *Mor.* 1043C; D.L. VII.189; Stob. II.109.10–110.8.

Were Nero to resume studies, *De clementia* offers a suitable topic to discuss. The philosophy of the Stoics was a unified whole composed of three parts—logic, ethics, physics. Physics were indistinguishable from ethics, and so too logic from ethics. Students progressed with subjects of increasing complexity and difficulty, thereby justifying earlier assumptions in retrospect. Logic was the most elementary, mastered before ethics, and taught first by a majority of Stoics.<sup>790</sup> Seneca and Cicero follow this order, and do not express a particularly close dependency between ethics and logic.<sup>791</sup> That is not a crucial distinction in this case, as Nero had already studied logic under Alexander of Aegae. It does, however, permit of the plausibility that Nero need not have finished a whole course in logic before Seneca would want to introduce him to ethics. Whereas logic studied reason as something independent from subject matter, ethics studied reason as an active part of actions and developments. It therefore strains the limits of coincidence that at that time Seneca should produce a work for Nero treating a non-passive, highly contextualized mode of action, both in itself as something performed and as a phenomenon which extends beyond the bounds of its original arena. Thus it seems acceptable to suggest that *De clementia* represents a move by Seneca to incorporate philosophy into his relationship with Nero, and to begin teaching Nero how to see and interact with people and the world according to Nature.

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The present chapter has made several claims regarding *De clementia*. The first assertion continued the focus of the prior chapter on the Stoic-ness of Seneca’s theory. It was argued that Seneca adopts a utilitarian rationale for why Nero should be clement: *clementia* is a virtue because it propagates the most good. Virtues are not good because of their effects, however. They are inherently good, and must be chosen on that fact alone.

The second issue derived from the unconvincingly Stoic authenticity of the treatise, and asked whether there was a pressing reason for Seneca to present his theory

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<sup>790</sup> Epict. I.26; D.L. VII.50; S.E. *M.* VII.19.

<sup>791</sup> Cic. *Fin.* III.16 ff.; Sen. *Ep.* 95.51 f. Seneca will, however, employ the language of logic, e.g. 66.32: “sola ratio inmutabilis et iudicii tenax est; non enim servit sed imperat sensibus. ratio rationi par est, sicut rectum recto; ergo et virtus virtuti; nihil enim aliud est virtus quam recta ratio. omnes virtutes rationes sunt; rationes sunt, si rectae sunt; si rectae sunt, et pares sunt.”

of *clementia* in ethical terms. Considering the consequentialist value he places on this virtue, it would have been that much easier to concentrate on the purpose of law and punishment, and how clemency is sometimes the action required to achieve their intended goals. Seneca is not ostensibly bothered by the constitutionality of such actions; and indeed he embraces the power that only a king can have, never shying away from the traditionally loathsome term *rex*. Nor does anything suggest that there were political or legal reservations about the Princeps' use of clemency, or that it was otherwise in need of justification. The model of signaling constructed in this dissertation provided the needed insight. Treating *clementia* as a moral concept builds upon the message in and signals sent in the *Apocolocyntosis*, and shows that Seneca can fulfill a role of vital importance to Nero. Seneca can be Nero's moral advisor on political affairs and personal guide toward a life of virtue.

Given this, the third section of the chapter pondered why specifically Seneca would choose *clementia* as his talking point with Nero. It is possible that Seneca was motivated by Nero's reaction to a supposed conspiracy in the year 55, but Britannicus' death, and any whispers about the circumstances thereof, do not present a particularly convincing reason to write about clemency. One might also doubt the propagandistic function of such a work because, according to Tacitus' recount, clemency was one of Nero's keywords in his first speeches as emperor, and furthermore he had used clemency on several early occasions. It is also possible that the existence of *De clementia* and its time of production retroactively influenced Tacitus' impression of the Neronian novitiate, and that the treatise was the actual starting point for the interest in clemency. But ultimately it was suggested that *clementia* was chosen because it was a specific kind of action rather than broad classification. Thus, in using *clementia* as a philosophical talking point with Nero, Seneca could more effectively attempt to reengage their previous relationship as student and teacher. The source of influence that Seneca wanted with Nero was moral and philosophical. That would begin to explain the axiomatizing nature of Seneca's lines in anecdotal exchanges with Nero,<sup>792</sup> and certain lines from

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<sup>792</sup> e.g. Plut. *Mor.* 461F–462A: διὸ καὶ τοῦ Νέρωνος ὀκτάγωνόν τινα σκηνὴν ὑπερφυῆς κάλλει καὶ πολυτελείᾳ θέαμα κατασκευάσαντος, “ἤλεγξας,” ἔφη ὁ Σενέκας, “πένητα σεαυτὸν ἔαν γὰρ ταύτην ἀπολέσῃς, ἑτέραν οὐ κτήσῃ τοιαύτην.” καὶ μέντοι καὶ συνέπεσε τοῦ πλοίου καταδύντος ἀπολέσθαι τὴν σκηνὴν· ὁ δὲ Νέρων ἀναμνησθεὶς τοῦ Σενέκα μετριώτερον ἤνεγκεν. Dio LXI.18.3: κὰν συχνοὺς εὐθὺς κατεχρήσατο, εἰ μὴ ὁ Σενέκας ἔφη αὐτῷ ὅτι “ὄσους ἂν ἀποσφάξῃς, οὐ δύνασαι τὸν διάδοχόν σου ἀποκτεῖναι.”

the *Octavia* which suggest that an effort to engage Nero with philosophy had existed and failed.<sup>793</sup> Moreover, the didactic relationship with a teacher is not dissimilar to the purpose of having an advisor, a position that Seneca made clear he was interested in.

Before departing from *De clementia*, a final thought on the text may be offered. Heretofore the analysis has withheld a practical consideration of *clementia* and otherwise omitted an assessment of whether Seneca's idea has real political value. Seneca is not remembered as a political thinker—indeed, he is frequently said to have had no interest in political theory;<sup>794</sup> and of his known works, *De clementia* appears to be the only one on an explicitly political topic.<sup>795</sup> The complications with the philosophical justification of his theory have been canvassed over the past two chapters, but the idea itself also has problems—or at least how he presents clemency vis-à-vis a ruler's relationship to his subjects. To be succinct, Seneca is too optimistic.<sup>796</sup> He is correct to say that a happy populace is greatly conducive to the safety of the Princeps, but that is not because it keeps the country out of revolution. Nobles were the group to worry about: the people may abandon the emperor, but the nobility had, would, and always could actively turn on him. That is where Seneca's attitude toward fear seems entirely unrealistic. Again, he is correct that every ruler should avoid being hated, since that can only encourage conspiracies. But, being loved by the people is a passive way of discouraging plots, whereas being feared is an active deterrent because the source of disincentive is the very thing to be challenged. No number of free concerts and performances from the emperor could stifle the enduring ambitiousness of the Roman political class. But such views conflict with the happy and hopeful image of the early Neronian regime. Perhaps Seneca left these truer political realities for Nero to discover by himself.

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<sup>793</sup> ll. 495–8: “servare cives principi et patriae graves | claro tumentes genere quae dementia est, | cum liceat una voce suspectos sibi | mori iubere?”

<sup>794</sup> I. Hadot 1969, 80 f.; A. Momigliano 1969, 239–56; J.M. Cooper & J.F. Procopé 1995, XXV–XXVI.

<sup>795</sup> Seneca's ethical treatises are not, however, wholly removed from political matters. Often he draws on examples from recent political history; and, quite memorably, he is rather frank about how difficult it is for imperial *amici* to tell the truth to the Princeps (*Ben.* VI.32).

<sup>796</sup> cf. P. Garnsey 2000, 410: “Epictetus' *Discourses* (early second century AD) offers a useful antidote to this [i.e. *De clementia*] unrealistically hopeful work.”

PART III

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CONCLUSION

In 62, following the death of Burrus, Seneca petitioned the Emperor to remove his presence from the Palace and retire to the countryside. Nero denied his request. This exchange was briefly mentioned in Section 6 of Chapter II, which considered the rhetoric and style of the speakers. The substance now incites interest. Seneca asks to return much of the property and estates gifted by Nero, since they are out of proportion with the only thing Seneca could offer the emperor, his *studia*. But Nero still wants Seneca present for his *praecepta, ratio, consilium*. Thus he rejects Seneca, and notably—“et tua quidem erga me munera, dum vita suppetet, aeterna erunt: quae a me habes, horti et faenus et villae, casibus obnoxia sunt.” His reasoning here utilizes the very same logic that allowed Stoics to argue for the exclusive goodness of virtue, and more generally it rests on an issue that Seneca had recently treated at great length, gratitude. Tacitus’ rendition of the scene may then seem to suggest that Nero had no small acquaintance with Seneca’s life philosophy. The previous two chapters have offered a reason for why that might be.

This dissertation has heretofore examined the three items that, with the limitations of space, could shed the most insight into Seneca’s relationship with Nero. It was argued in Part I that, given the events and circumstances of Nero’s upbringing, Seneca came to Nero from a vantage of cultural authority, and that the educational regimen for the young prince was propaedeutic (in Seneca’s mind and Cicero’s personal experience) to the study of philosophy. Seneca was then shown to have assumed a persona, in both formal and more casual literary products, that placed great emphasis and value on ethical decision-making and morality in interpersonal dealings—a way to capitalize on his preexisting moral authority with Nero, and develop it beyond its original circumstantial origins. Part II contended that the *Apocolocyntosis* offered an overwhelmingly moral critique of Claudius as a human being, highlighting his flaws and the perils of vicious living, whereas Part III maintained that *De clementia* called on Nero to think seriously about his transactions with individuals and how to optimize

benefits in situations where some harm is expected—an exhortation for him to seek virtue in his interactions for the betterment of all.

Incidentally, Part III also raised questions about the authenticity of this ostensibly new and highly moralizing mask, donned immediately after Nero's accession. Seneca's prior work is no bastion of original or even particularly philosophical thought. Its value is more psychotherapeutic. More to the point, the philosophy espoused in *De clementia* is questionably Stoic. Interpretation of this situation thus takes one of two turns. One might maintain that Seneca's relationship with Stoicism was weak and his mistakes in *De clementia* are genuine, which makes the assumption of a philosophical mantle seem designed—related somehow to his position at the Palace. Or, one can hold that Seneca was a seasoned Stoic and therefore he purposed his misconstrual of *clementia*, which makes his relationship with philosophy appear distinctly practical for his professional life—not unfitting given his utilitarian take on *clementia*. Neither, however, suggests that Seneca feigned faith in the wisdom of the Stoa. But belief in something does not prohibit exploitation of its functionality. Indeed, people are normally joyously inclined to do so.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the thesis of this dissertation is itself the model of Seneca's relationship with Nero, as formed from the cumulation of various smaller points made in the process of analysis. Nero's upbringing, his education, and two works which he would likely have read—this set of data forms the core of information most plausibly relevant to Seneca's personal connection to the emperor. With this series of elements assembled and interpreted through the game-theoretical model of signaling, it may be suggested that Seneca set himself up as the imperial tutor in philosophy, that his “*professoria lingua*” was his service to Nero and function at the Palace.<sup>797</sup> If Nero meant to ask Seneca advice, or conversely if Seneca intended to advise Nero on something, the topics most suitable for this particular side of their relationship would revolve around proper action in interpersonal matters, which is the crux of ethics, and which (as *De clementia* and later *De beneficiis* showcase) requires the ability to form acute judgments about other people and their actions. This morally didactic connection therefore becomes the most plausible source for Seneca's influence with Nero, and it stands as an answer to the evasive question of what Seneca did

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<sup>797</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.14. For which Agrippina maligned him.

at the Palace. Seneca positioned himself to have influence with Nero in matters of interpersonal transactions and anything that involved personal assessment. That would range from dealing with Agrippina, to engaging with Senators and dignitaries, and considering the merits of individuals for political posts.

Additionally, this conclusion might explain why Seneca was retained as a speechwriter. The issue was not, as Chapter II argued, Nero's deficiency in technical ability, or anything related to the Emperor's obsession with other media. Instead, given the nature of the majority of Nero's edicts mentioned by Tacitus—explaining the murder of Agrippina, justifying the execution of Pedanius Secundus' servile *domus*, rationalizing the benefit of Sulla Felix and Rubellius Plautus' deaths to the Empire, accounting for his divorce and execution of Octavia, expounding on the would-be use of clemency in Silanus Torquatus' treason trial—it seems more likely that Seneca was needed to argue the moral appropriacy of such actions in these ethically fraught situations. That would be most true for Nero's reprimand of the populace over their uproar during the Pedanius Secundus trial, for one almost certainly imagines that Nero would have wanted to pick the option which won him the most praise. Additionally, Seneca's death scene gains a new layer of irony. It loses some of the arrogance in likening oneself to Socrates as a brilliantly inspiring philosopher, insofar as it also recalls how Socrates' students implored him to use the opportunity given to him to leave Athens, whereas Nero (far from being there to post bail) considers neither banishment nor seeing his former teacher in person.

Some might nonetheless find the whole idea questionable. How could Seneca reasonably derive influence from a subject that Nero is far from associated with? Whether or not Nero cared that Seneca wanted to teach him such things, it still stands that these were the things that Seneca wanted to teach Nero. They were the topics on which Seneca wanted to be consulted; and the point being made here is that Seneca tried to effect this relational dynamic, not necessarily that it existed in any true discipular spirit. Yet did it exist in effect? Nero did not have a clear intellectual investment in this relationship, but denying Seneca's retirement in 62 does not suggest that there was mistrust in Seneca's good judgment or intentions. The *bonae artes* had simply ceased to check Nero's inclinations. Perhaps coincidentally, a programmatic hope appears with the composition of *Naturales quaestiones* in the 60s, so providing a detailed

illustration of the physical principles treated in the tertiary part of a Stoic education—maybe also inspired by any interest Nero may have shown in the natural world, such as the Egypt and the Nile.

Some might still object. A model is a model, and not necessarily indicative of reality. But even if this model does not accurately describe the Seneca's source of influence with Nero, or the reality of Seneca's works and their place in his relationship with Nero, the descriptive failure begets a prescriptive opportunity. Just as eudemonic philosophies preach a path to happiness precisely because people experience reality as harsh, the fact that players violate game theory provides opportunities to improve the mapping of social situations, so that it can more accurately tell people what to look out for. Moreover, since the integration of game-theoretical models of human interaction with classical antiquity is relatively novel, no shortage of other models exists with which this and other relationships might be explained.

Nevertheless, Nero was not to be a philosopher king; and ordering Seneca's death during the Pisonian conspiracy only confuses the denouement of their relations. Was Nero conscious of how far he had fallen from his teacher's moral values? Was it far enough to believe that it sanctioned violence? Any recognition of personal disappointment would, however, have been Seneca's own doing. He published his beliefs, and shared them with Nero. But perhaps that is too uncanny a reality, for decades earlier the elder Seneca had warned him exactly of this danger. The hopes and dreams which one brings into politics are the very things to be feared.<sup>798</sup>

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<sup>798</sup> Sen. *Con.* II pr. 4 (to Mela): "fratribus tuis ambitiosa curae sunt foroque se et honoribus parant, in quibus ipsa quae sperantur timenda sunt."

## EPILOGUE

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Seneca the man remains something of an enigma. Now, however, there is a case (or at least the beginning of one) to be made for his position at Palace beyond the overly general ‘advisor’. He held a position of moral authority from the beginning of his relationship with Nero, and when that relationship fell into question, he used this authority to build a case that he would be of great use to Nero as philosophical mentor, or at least an ethically minded advisor on personal affairs. Thus he sought Nero’s trust in his own moral judgment, and he sought to impart some of that wisdom to Nero. His desired role may be equated to that of a court philosopher, though not in the usual sense because Seneca was personally involved in state affairs as a senator. And in the context of the game established in the Introduction, that tactic makes sense. As argued, Agrippina had an immutable source of culturally sanctioned and expected influence with Nero. There was no way for Nero to deprive her of that power while upholding the any semblance of propriety and decorum. The same would be true for Seneca if he were able to convince Nero that he did indeed have a source of valuable wisdom. Nero might be won over by other philosophers, but nobody could take away or otherwise nullify Seneca’s superior experience and insight, which in Stoic terms is the same as wisdom.

How does this change one’s impression of Seneca? The idea that philosophy had a distinctly practical purpose in Seneca’s career and position at the Palace should certainly affect the way his other treatises are interpreted. Although he may not discuss his public or private life in these works, it might become more difficult to see these texts in a light truly removed from his responsibilities at the Palace. This is not to suggest that he was writing in code, though the formation or presentation of his philosophy should have been influenced by his surroundings—all the more so if it could crop up in his professional life. A future project could therefore be to consider the philosophical idiosyncrasies or un-Stoic positions in Seneca’s corpus, and what if any practical effect they could have on politically active reader base. The same goes for any evolution he might show on definable issues.

Putting aside Seneca’s literary and philosophical persona, what does this theory entail for Seneca the man, the historical figure, Seneca *politicus*? His memory is

largely self-defined, a construct of his own devices; and Tacitus, whose depiction of Seneca is relatively neutral (or positive in its omissions), contrasts sharply with Dio, whose bias is often explicit enough to dismiss his claims outright. But the ancients had better access to biographical details about Seneca, his character, and how he conducted himself—and their appraisals of him are far less positive than most modern accounts. Granted that modern scholarship has moved beyond moral assessments of historical figures, it is nonetheless useful for any kind of analytical endeavor to know what kind of person is under consideration. For Seneca's philosophy, dramas, personal interests, career choices, and opinions all came from one brain. What does this dissertation suggest about Seneca and the charge of insincerity against him?

First of all, there is inconsistency and then there is sanctimony. Given the nature of human politics, Seneca's offense would appear to be the latter. Flattering one's masters from exile is understandable. Ovid did it. The predominance of variability and self-contradiction among politicians, or an otherwise lack of heroism in the face of danger, is what makes *constantia* a Roman virtue. Seneca was hardly the first to use illness as an excuse, and for his own benefit. Neither should one be surprised at the prodigious wealth that he accepted from the Princeps, or at the notion that he would extort the provinces—that time-honored Roman tradition. Not all politicians are inspired by benignity and altruism. And when Seneca had to write a defense of matricide, he might rest easy knowing that it was merely part of his job. All this, for better or worse, is conscionable. But as his critics then and now would say, it was baselessly self-righteous to profess himself an adherent of the simple and good, as living according to the pure and resolute virtues of Stoicism while operating (in reality if not in design) with such a self-interested and realpolitik mentality. That might be an issue to be on the lookout for in his dramas; or it could add another, more personal dimension to Seneca's clear interest in external-internal divides.

If, then, one entertains these considerations, one might ask where the line should be drawn between his political and philosophical life. The cumulative total of Seneca's memory, both his writings and his presence in annals of history, strikes people differently. Whether Seneca lived up to his sermons is mostly irrelevant to students of ancient philosophy: what primarily matters is his documentation of Stoic belief and,

for those interested in Seneca as a philosopher, his individual engagement therewith. For students of history, however, Seneca's allegiance to Stoicism (and the truthfulness of that fealty) is a desperate necessity to imagine who he was, as both a regular at the Palace and an agent of change in the Empire. His depiction in Tacitus and elsewhere hardly suffices. Hence some hesitate to believe that Seneca would completely divorce his actions as a political figure from his philosophical principles, or that he would wholly dissociate his post-accession works of philosophy from his daily life.

Although Seneca's treatises on clemency, benefits, and nature need not be direct responses to stimuli in the real world, his decision to write on such topics ought not, as suggested, be isolated from the reality around him. Is it sheer coincidence that Seneca would expatiate on gratitude while Nero's relationship with Agrippina increasingly deteriorated—or, indeed, during his own estrangement from Nero? These works were presumably not arbitrary undertakings. Moreover, the real-world implementation of ideas held within each work is but one purpose that his literary projects may have had. As argued for the *Apocolocyntosis*, sometimes the mere association with certain ideas is a desired affect. Perhaps it may then be agreed that whether or not the doctrines of Seneca's works incorporated his political policies, whether or not his works reflect his own genuine beliefs about life, and whether or not his works were designed to serve a personal or political purpose—that regardless of these things, by writing down his thoughts on philosophical topics for publication, Seneca intended to be associated with the ideas, subjects, and problems therein discussed. If so, then it seems valid to ask what currency these ideas might have had in the institutional or operational ethic of Seneca's world.

Discussion of Seneca's personal grounds for doing what he did is mostly moot. The inconsistencies of his life muddy such questions into a thoroughly turbid state; and a map for the evolution of his philosophical thoughts and interests is marred by the vague chronology of his works. Yet that is not the only approach. One could ask how Seneca's work might motivate Nero to engage with or empower his former *rhetor*. Talk and acts of clemency do occur sporadically throughout the *Annales*, though Tacitus never suggests that Nero's engagement with *clementia* is anything more than lip service to an idea which the young prince knows reflects well on himself. That could be so. But if there is some truth to the thesis of this dissertation, that indeed Seneca's

influence with Nero was philosophical to a degree, one might wish to revisit Tacitus' coverage of those topics. Stunning disappointment easily begets bitter cynicism.

# APPENDIX

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## A Seneca-Nero bargaining game

Of the tools able to explain the intricate situations of decision-making narrated by Tacitus and other historians, game theory is perhaps the most incisive. It can be used to unravel the mass of characters' motives within the narrative, to see if a historian's portrayal of individuals and events is rational; or, as in the Introduction and Part I, it can incorporate text-external knowledge of a character's personal and intellectual background, his socio-economic profile, or his political history to create a game with its own logical narrative. The purpose of this appendix is to provide a more formal example of how game-theoretic tools might be used to analyze a historical phenomenon and explain the decision-making therein. It would have been awkward and distracting if the Introduction incorporated an involved, let alone mathematical, analysis of the Palace politics treated there, and it would have been irrelevant and intrusive if included elsewhere. Hence its relegation to an appendix.

Given the topic of this dissertation, a pertinent example of game-theoretical analysis should focus on Seneca and Nero. Additionally, the game should include the variable of influence or some extension of influence, such as trust, and it should be based on a historically documented situation. No ancient writer records a specific instance where Seneca vied with another party to change or influence a decision that Nero had to make. Seneca's petition to retire in *Annales* Book XIV is the only negotiation where Seneca has a speaking part, but the party opposing his retirement is Nero. Neither the scandal with Acte nor Britannicus' poisoning has clear sides in debate. Indeed, the one time that Seneca is summoned (after Agrippina's botched assassination), Nero merely asks how to finish the deed and plan a cover-up. The game in this example must then draw on a less specific situation and illustrate a more general approach to Nero's decision-making.

For the circumstances of this game, returning to the Palace circa 55 seems most straightforward. This situation has already been described at length in the Introduction. To reiterate, at that time Agrippina was trying to gain control over her recently enthroned son, who himself was trying to escape his mother's influence; and Seneca's tenure as tutor was ending. Nero and his mother were at a strategic impasse, or equilibrium, which required unilateral action to alter the *status quo*—and undue risk. Agrippina saw no reason that her wishes should go unheard, if not unfulfilled: Nero saw no compelling reason to do his mother's bidding. It was, however, a liability and a nuisance for Nero to have Agrippina interfering in his personal affairs and government transactions, either directly or through her proxies and minions. With the inclusion of Seneca in this dynamic, this situation can be turned into a bargaining game.

Although Tacitus never explicitly mentions that Nero asked Seneca and Burrus to help him disempower Agrippina, he does write that the two advisors broadly opposed Agrippina's plans.<sup>799</sup> Further, the events described in the first twenty chapters of Book XIII greatly suggest that Seneca was involved with the incremental subversion

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<sup>799</sup> Tac. *Ann.* XIII.2.2: "certamen utrique unum erat contra ferociam Agrippinae, quae cunctis malae dominationis cupidinibus flagrans habebat in partibus Pallantem."

of Agrippina’s political power. From these descriptors a simple bargaining game may be fashioned with the crux that, if Seneca helps weaken Agrippina, then Nero will somehow return the favor. This game could be understood to take place in the real world, where the players are the historical figures, or within Tacitus’ narrative, where the players are his characters rather than strict representations of actual people. The latter approach might interest historiographers, but the historian will almost always require a hybrid approach due to the lack of personal testimony from key political agents.

The proposed bargain between Seneca and Nero could realistically unfold in several ways. One scenario could have Nero ask Seneca for help, after which Seneca adds a proviso to the deal. Alternatively, Nero could advertise his desire for help through less overt means, which Seneca could detect and then ask Nero if he wanted help. Another variation could have Seneca notice Nero’s distress and act without discussing matters with the Emperor, although that course of action more readily evokes a move in a repeated game, where Seneca’s past transactions with Nero could lead him to believe that he would be rewarded for his efforts despite acting unprompted. But as this game occurs at the beginning of Nero’s rule, it seems more probable that Seneca would have discussed any such plans with the Emperor directly. Seneca was in a new role, and perhaps uncertain about the true bounds of his authority and influence; the issue was complex, involving a considerable amount of risk to both parties involved; and although Nero was at loggerheads with Agrippina politically, she was still his mother and Seneca’s own benefactor—certain appearances had to be upheld. Seneca would do best not to appear a duplicitous ingrate. A face-to-face conversation would be the surest way to have Nero and Seneca on the same page.

In any of these scenarios, Seneca’s half of the bargain can be stated or implied. He could ask Nero for something in return at the time they make the deal, or (as seems more probable) he could agree to help without making any specific demands because he would still gain Nero’s gratitude—which can and did manifest in a variety of tangible and pecuniary forms. For the sake of simplicity, this game supposes that Seneca comes to Nero with a plan to undercut Agrippina and that, in return, he asks Nero to study philosophy. What Seneca wants in exchange for helping Nero is not particularly important, primarily because the game focuses on Nero’s decision-making, but choosing something definite makes the bargaining aspect of the game clearer and more accessible.

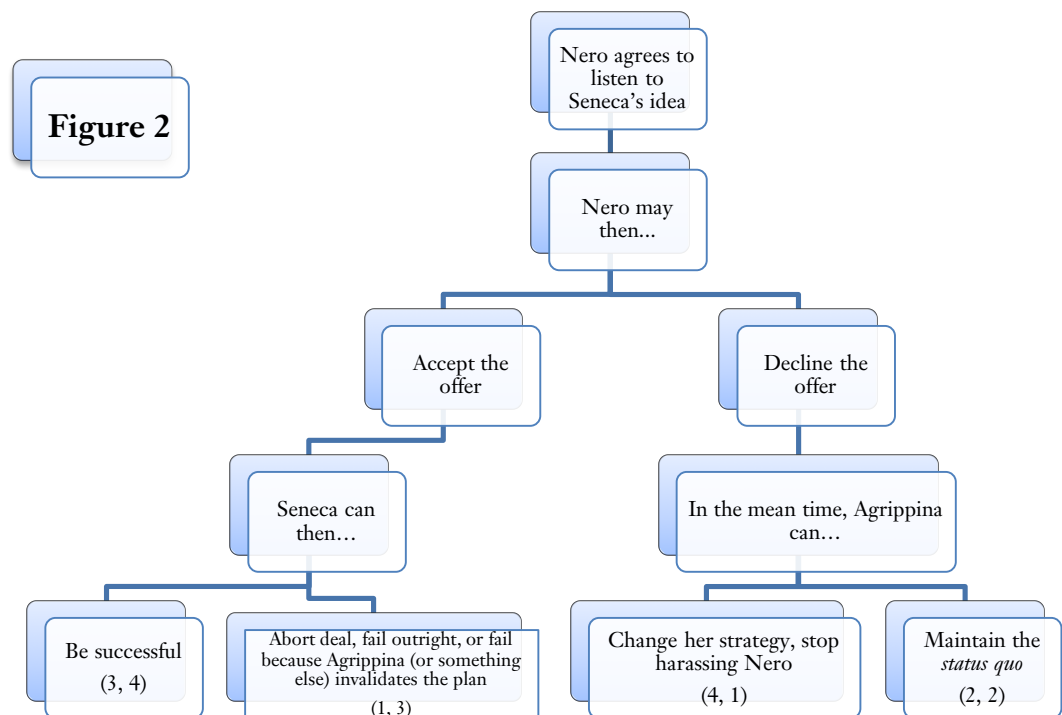
Each player thus has two possible courses of action, which produce a total of four possible consequences. These choices and their outcomes can be represented by a normal-form game, which here takes the form of a payoff matrix (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

Nero ( <i>x</i> ), row Seneca ( <i>y</i> ), column	Seneca offers to help Nero	Seneca withholds advice from Nero
Nero is open to help	( <i>x</i> , <i>y</i> ) Seneca’s pitch succeeds. They move into a sub-game (Fig. 2)	(2, 1) Missed opportunity.
Nero unreceptive to advice	(1, 2) Seneca unsuccessful.	(2, 2) No deal. <i>Status quo</i> with Agrippina preserved for the meantime.

The ordered pairs  $(x, y)$  represent the ordinal ranks of outcomes for the agent involved, with Nero's payoff being the first number and Seneca's being the second. In other words, the numbers indicate a degree of preference rather than a quantifiable unit of utility. An outcome ranked '1' is the worst, '2' second worst, '3' second best, '4' best. Accordingly, Nero would rather decline Seneca's offer for help  $(2, 1)$  than have his own request rejected by Seneca  $(1, 2)$ ; and because they do not have an agonistic relationship, neither prefers rejecting the other's request to the *status quo*. This is all fairly simple, but it also does not comprise the full bargaining process. There are subsequent moves in the game to be noted.

A realistic representation of Nero's decision-making would include a subordinate game within the outcome matrix, to account for Nero's decision-making after Seneca proposes his side of the bargain. Thus, if both players agree to bargain, a sub-game ensues to determine the payoff  $(x, y)$  found in the top left box. This sub-game can be depicted visually by an extended-form game (Figure 2). Here again the first number of the ordered pairs  $(x, y)$  refers to Nero's payoff, the second to Seneca's; and as before, because the numbers in the ordered pairs are ranks rather than utility values, they do not indicate how much a player prefers one option to the other. It is therefore safe to say that Seneca prefers Nero's acceptance of his proposal (whatever the outcome) to its rejection, but one cannot say how much more Seneca would prefer to fail at his mission  $(1, 3)$  than have Nero accept the *status quo*  $(2, 2)$ .



To continue with the example, suppose that Seneca proposes to undermine Agrippina by proposing anti-Claudian legislation in the Senate. While Seneca drafts these bills and musters the votes to pass them, Nero would be expected to start studying philosophy. The young Emperor must consider two important variables before coming to a decision. One is his preference for the possible outcomes offered by each of his possible decisions (i.e., which branch of the tree he prefers): the other is his impression of how likely each outcome is. But before those topics can be explored,

one must infer the possible outcomes in the game and rank their relative utility. To keep things simple, suppose that there are four total outcomes, two on each branch of the tree. If Nero accepts the deal, Seneca could succeed or fail. If Nero rejects the deal, Agrippina could persist in her strategy (preserve the *status quo*) or she could try to capitalize on Nero's lack of cooperation with others by striking her own bargain with him. With the outcomes of the game thus determined, their relative utility for each player can now be ranked. As this is the most interpretive part of the present example, the rationale behind these values merits clarification.

Path 4 (2, 2), which is perhaps the simplest outcome, returns the players to the dynamic found in Figure 1. Nero wanted help, but Seneca failed to suggest an acceptable plan to the Emperor; and Agrippina continued to perpetuate their strategic equilibrium. Nero and Seneca would then return to the stage game (Figure 1) to repeat the process, though Nero might be less likely to hear out his tutor's ideas. Seneca would likely have more information going into the same situation, which could allow him to make more appealing suggestions. Yet it is still uncertain whether the values found in Figures 1 and 2 would remain identical in subsequent iterations of this game. For instance, if Seneca routinely suggested ideas that Nero rejected, the relative utility of failure could change. Seneca might feel that to have tried and failed is worse than never having tried in the first place, insofar as (to modify an old saying) keeping your mouth shut and having people think you are incompetent is better than to opening it and having them confirm it. In this example, however, neither player has lost or gained anything. That is why the values are the same as if the two had never made a bargain.

Path 1 (3, 4), where each party upholds the agreement, is the best outcome for Seneca and a better outcome for Nero than the *status quo*. Seneca's opening gambit to offer Nero advice succeeds, which is a minor victory in itself. More importantly, Seneca has read into the relationships between Nero, other senior functionaries, and Agrippina with accuracy. Nero may have wanted help but felt unable to ask for it, be it for maternal pressure or other reasons; and other Palace hands may have hesitated to reach out to Nero for any myriad reasons, again likely involving Agrippina and her formidable powers. Seneca saw through this. Everything turns out as he had imagined and planned, which is why it is his optimal payoff.

The successes are threefold for the young prince. First, in accepting Seneca's help, Nero has signaled to his mother that he will actively curb her influence should she continue to harry him. Nero has also signaled that he is open to opinions and initiatives from individuals outside the foremost ranks of the Senate. Seneca is a memorable senator because he tutored Nero, but as far as is known, he was not an important senator on the floor of the Curia. This style of diplomacy might strike some as too subtle to have much of an impact. Seneca was, after all, Nero's teacher for several years: this decision could be simple favoritism. Nevertheless, this signal would have been perceptible to those looking for such a signal. The last obvious benefit to Nero from this outcome is that he received the help that he wanted. These reasons make it a better outcome than the *status quo*, though not quite as preferable as Path 3, where a path opens for Nero to deal with his problem directly.

Path 2 (1, 3), in which Seneca fails to produce (or breaks) his half of the deal, would arguably be the worst outcome for Nero. Foremost, the optics of the breakdown is almost certainly damaging. Three factors seem most relevant—how far their agreement progressed, how public its implementation was, and how public the termination of the agreement was. But the essential reason that this outcome is worse for

Nero than the *status quo* is simpler. He has given away information about his personal preferences and desires (and what they are worth to him), put in the effort to fulfill his half of the bargain, yet received nothing in turn for it. Nero has gained no palpable advantage, whereas the other players in this game (certainly Seneca, perhaps Agrippina) have more intelligence to inform their decisions.

Seneca would likely find this situation preferable to the *status quo*. As a rational agent, he would have needed to acquire additional information about the game or its players to abandon the deal. He would need to believe that breaking their pact would be more beneficial than following through. Furthermore, depending on the time scale for these events, Nero could have studied a significant amount of philosophy. Seneca could still have part of his proviso fulfilled without delivering on his promise.

In Path 3 (4, 1) can be interpreted in several ways. Most simply, it could represent Nero's preference to deal with Agrippina using a plan of his own design over Seneca's idea. This pathway could also represent a scenario where Agrippina stops trying to influence Nero or where she loses the political power to make credible threats, and is therefore unable or disinclined to sustain the *status quo*. This outcome is unlikely but possible. As described in the Introduction, the circumstances behind this set of decisions are such that Agrippina has no incentive to change her strategy of ruling through Nero. Something could happen in the world that leads Agrippina or Nero to redefine their goals, values, or preferences—which, in turn, could lead to unilateral changes of strategy because the meta-game has changed.<sup>800</sup> But such an event never happened. If, however, something did occur to effect such a dramatic change of strategy, Path 3 would arguably branch off into another sub-game.

As for the game at hand, Nero would prefer Path 3 to the Path 1 because it allows him to deal with his problem directly and therefore more efficiently. Agrippina was also the party asking for a deal: Nero had greater leverage. It could thus be to his advantage to decline or postpone Seneca's offer. Retarding any actions against Agrippina might have allowed an amount of time to pass during which Agrippina's circumstances changed for the worse, leading to the overhaul of her priorities and strategy in a way beneficial to Nero. Yet this would still bring some drawbacks. An indefinite amount of risk would be incurred from the environment effected by Agrippina's change of strategy or withdrawal; and depending on what kind of event brought about such a change, this might be enough to argue that the utility value for Path 1 would be greater than Path 3.

Alternatively, the idea that Nero could use Seneca to compromise or actively combat her interests might prompt Agrippina to negotiate with Nero before suffering any detriment. This would be an irrefutable sign of weakness for Agrippina, and it would require an expenditure of her resources or a tactical retreat to counteract its effects—putting her at a net loss. Nero would thus arrive at the bargaining table with a positive advantage that he could weigh against Agrippina, or Agrippina would arrive at the table with fewer options to negotiate with. Either way, Nero has gained an advantage at little or no cost to himself, which makes it preferable to Path 1.

Seneca's relative utility in this outcome is more difficult to explain. The main issue is that none of the players are in a zero-sum relationship: the disadvantage of one party is not necessarily an advantage for another. Seneca could very well prefer

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<sup>800</sup> i.e. the environment in which their game was taking place had changed enough to fundamentally redefine their goals and therefore the game itself.

the resolution of Nero's problems with his mother to the *status quo*, as one might expect of a friend. Nevertheless, that is not the nature of this game. Nero and Seneca are cooperating, but they are not cooperating toward a single goal. Seneca wants something from Nero and *vice versa*. Most of the benefits that Nero draws from this outcome therefore come to Seneca's detriment. His offer has been declined and he has lost the opportunity to gain from this particular issue, the combination of which makes Path 3 less desirable than Path 4. Ultimately, however, Seneca's values on the right half of the tree do not matter because the left side will always represent a higher expected utility. Seneca would not have offered a deal that would disadvantage himself.

The evaluation of these outcomes is clearly subjective. Another game theorist might believe that Nero was so angry with his mother that any situation where she stopped pestering him was equally favorable—thereby giving Path 1 and 3 the same appeal to Nero. Others might disagree with the present interpretation of the Palace dynamic circa 55, and so argue that Nash's equilibrium fails to solve the game. That would change how Seneca and Nero rank the possible outcomes. For instance, the utility of Path 1 could be greater than Path 3 for Nero because, *omnibus paribus*, Nero would have active control over the situation rather than being a passive beneficiary of external changes. Overall, however, it seems clear that Nero would prefer the *status quo* (Path 4) to Seneca's failure (Path 2), and that any outcome where Agrippina's power or behavior has changed for the better (Path 1 and 3) is preferable to the *status quo*. Gaining, be it something or nothing, is better than losing anything.

One of the benefits of game theory is that it can help analyze situations where the choices and decisions are not clear. In this game, for instance, neither half of the game tree is 'strictly dominated'—no one side will always be worse. Nero does not have a clear decision because accepting Seneca's deal is not always better than declining it, and declining is not always better than accepting. Each half of the tree has an outcome that is worse than something on the other half. So what would it take for Nero to accept Seneca's plan? The probability of each outcome is the second of the two variables that Nero would have to consider before making a choice.

Thus far the analysis has operated on a simple assumption about Nero's decision-making. Namely, if Nero declines Seneca's deal, then he believes that Seneca will fail or that Agrippina is going to work with him; or, taking it from the other perspective, if Nero accepts Seneca's deal, then he must believe that Seneca will deliver on it to some degree. Although success here need not be absolute, as in completely neutering Agrippina's political network and personal resources, Nero must think that Seneca's plan will put him ahead of the *status quo*. From here a simple question arises. What are the circumstances under which Nero can expect to profit by accepting Seneca's offer?

To explore this question, the different outcomes must be assigned a cardinal value that indicates a quantity of utility. Heretofore the numerical values represented an ordinal rank that denoted the players' degrees of preference for each outcome, not a quantifiable unit of utility. To streamline this example, assume that the cardinal utilities are the same as the ordinal ranks. Thus, if Nero accepts the deal and Seneca succeeds in weakening Agrippina, Nero would get three units of utility, which can be measured in any currency that brings satisfaction.<sup>801</sup> With these values representing

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<sup>801</sup> e.g. money, power, stability, love &c.

quantities of utility, it is now possible to calculate the conditions when Nero's expected utility for accepting Seneca's bargain is greater than declining it.

Expected utility ( $EU$ ) is product of the probability of an action happening ( $p_n$ ) and the utility value assigned to a given result ( $U_n$ ). If there is one possible outcome (i.e.,  $EU = pU$ ), then  $p = 1$  because there is a 100% chance that the one possible outcome will happen. If there are multiple possible outcomes, the sum of  $p_1, p_2, \dots, p_n$  is still 1 because the sum of all odds for a given event cannot exceed 100%. The equation to calculate expected utility in this situation will therefore be

$$EU = p_1U_1 + p_2U_2$$

because there are only two possible outcomes for each decision. As said, the variable  $U_n$  represents the utility of each possible decision: the variables  $p_1$  and  $p_2$  respectively represent the probability in Nero's mind of either outcome happening. It is easier, however, to continue if several substitutions are made.

First, remember that  $p_1 + p_2 = 1$  because the sum of all odds for a specific event cannot exceed 100%. If there is a 60% chance that Nero will accept the deal with Seneca, then there is a 40% chance that he will decline it. Since  $p_1 + p_2 = 1$ , then  $p_1 = 1 - p_2$ . This value for  $p_1$  can then be substituted back into the equation, where its subscript can be suppressed since there is only one probability left. This substitution yields

$$EU = pU_1 + U_2(1 - p).$$

Suppose, then, that probability  $p$  represents Nero's belief that Seneca will successfully complete his half of the bargain if he accepts the deal (Path 1). Nero's expected utility for accepting the deal, ( $A$ ), would be

$$E(A) = 3p + 1(1 - p),$$

which is the sum of the two utility values found on the left side of the tree multiplied by the complementary probabilities ( $p$  and  $p-1$ ) that each result will happen. Likewise, suppose that probability  $q$  represents Nero's belief that Agrippina will maintain the *status quo* if he declines the deal (Path 4). If Nero declines Seneca's offer, ( $D$ ), his expected utility will be

$$E(D) = 2q + 4(1 - q).$$

To accept Seneca's deal, Nero must believe  $E(A) > E(D)$ ; or, in words, Nero must expect to receive more utility by accepting Seneca's proposition than he would by rejecting it. A new question thus arises. Under what circumstances is  $E(A)$  greater than  $E(D)$ ?

To answer that question, the values for  $E(A)$  and  $E(D)$  listed above may be substituted into that inequality. This yields

$$3p + 1(1 - p) > 2q + 4(1 - q),$$

which may be simplified,

$$\begin{aligned} 3p + 1 - p &> 2q + 4 - 4q \\ 2p + 1 &> 4 - 2q \end{aligned}$$

$$2p + 2q > 3$$

$$p + q > 3/2,$$

thereby revealing that sum of  $p$  and  $q$  is larger than 1.5 when  $E(A)$  is greater than  $E(D)$ . The potential utility of Seneca's deal is therefore directly affected by Nero's assessment of Agrippina's future actions, of whether she will capitulate (Path 3) or maintain the *status quo* (Path 4). A solution for this game can therefore be expressed as

$$E(A) > E(D) \rightarrow p + q > 3/2.$$

That is to say, if the expected utility of accepting is strictly greater than the expected utility of declining, then the sum of the respective probabilities that Seneca will succeed and that Agrippina will not alter her strategy must exceed 150%. This expression thus explains how Nero should rationally act within these circumstances.

What does this mean in practical terms for Nero's general decision-making process? Most obviously, Nero must believe that the chances of Path 1 happening are greater than 50% for him to consider Seneca's offer. If  $p \leq 50\%$ , then  $p + q \leq 3/2$ . Hence  $E(A)$  would be less than  $E(D)$  and Nero would fare worse on average by accepting the deal. And this makes practical sense: why would Nero accept a deal where he thought that he was more likely or just as likely to end up with less utility than he began with? Rationally, he would not.

Another insight is that the payoff of Path 3 is significant enough for Nero to be satisfied with mere coin-toss odds. If Path 3 has at least a 50-50 chance of happening in Nero's eyes, he would decline Seneca's offer—even with 100% confidence in Path 1. But most situations in the real world do not admit of full certainty. What is the level of confidence that Nero must have in Seneca's plan to accept his deal? Although it has been shown that  $p$  must be greater than 50% for  $E(A) > E(D)$  to be true, this does not reveal the actual value for  $p$  that would induce Nero to accept Seneca's proposal over the safety of the *status quo*. Remember that Nero has two conditions which must be met for him to accept the plan. He must believe that Seneca's proposal is more likely to succeed than fail (i.e.,  $p > 1/2$ ), and he must believe that Agrippina is more likely to maintain the *status quo* than negotiate (i.e.,  $q > 1/2$ ). The odds of Path 1 are therefore directly related to the odds Path 4: the former is not a viable option unless the latter is similarly secure. Accordingly, the true determiner behind Nero's decision will be the odds of Path 1 to Path 3.

To calculate these odds, Path 4 needs to be factored out yet not discounted. Nero cannot ignore variable  $q$ , but he need not consider it independently because the viability of Path 1 depends on  $q$  being more likely than not. The relationship between  $p$  and  $q$  can therefore be simplified to  $p = q$ . In this case,  $E(A) > E(D)$  if

$$3p + 1 - p > 4 - 4p + 2p$$

$$2p + 1 > 4 - 2p$$

$$2p + 2p > 3$$

$$4p > 3$$

$$p > 3/4.$$

Thus, to get Nero to accept the offer, Seneca would need to instill more than 75% confidence in the success of his plan—not an insignificant amount of trust. And again,

this makes practical sense. If Nero declines Seneca's offer, he can gain nothing or more utility; but if he accepts, he can lose or gain a proportional amount of utility. Nero therefore requires odds considerably greater than a simple majority to assure him that accepting is not too much of a gamble.

At this point in the example, a classicist's mindset can be reengaged to consider the historical implications of the game-theoretical analysis. Consider, for instance, the high level of confidence that Nero needs to listen to Seneca on these issues. This might suggest that Seneca would only offer Nero advice or bargains on issues where he was a clear authority—something which actually pans out in the existing evidence. Additionally, Tacitus' narrative shows itself to be considerably lacking details relevant to the decisions made by Seneca, Burrus, and Nero to combat Agrippina's influence. Indeed, when compared to the power players found in the first hexad, Neronian officials appear rather flat and one-dimensional. That, however, is getting beside the point. The purpose of this appendix is to provide an example of how game theory might be used to analyze a situation from Roman history and illuminate certain aspects of decision-making involved. Moreover, this example requires additional and more sophisticated calculations to take full stock of the situation. One would need to consider, *inter alia*, Nero's trustworthiness in the eyes of Seneca, as well as Seneca's estimation of Agrippina's plans and intentions. But that detail exceeds what is necessary to showcase game theory in action.

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# A. TOPICAL COMPARISONS

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## I. SUETONIUS AND TACITUS

### (i) Incest

Tac. *Ann.* XIV.2:

trahit Cluvius Agrippinam potentiae eo usque provectam, ut medio diei, cum id temporis Nero per vinum et epulas incalesceret, offerret se saepius temulento comptam in incesto paratam; iamque lasciva oscula et praenuntias flagitii blanditias adnotantibus proximis... Fabius Rusticus non Agrippinae sed Neroni cupitum id memorat eiusdemque libertae astu disiectum. sed quae Cluvius, eadem ceteri quoque auctores prodidere, et fama huc inclinatur, seu concepit animo tantum immanitatis Agrippina, seu credibilior novae libidinis meditatio in ea visa est, quae puellaribus annis stuprum cum Lepido spe dominationis admiserat, pari cupidine usque ad libita Pallantis provoluta et exercita ad omne flagitium patrum nuptiis.

Suet. *Nero* 28:

nam matris concubitus appetisse et ab obtrectatoribus eius, ne ferox atque impotens mulier et hoc genere gratiae praevaleret, deterritum nemo dubitavit, utique postquam meretricem, quam fama erat Agrippinae simillimam, inter concubinas recepit. Olim etiam quotiens lectica cum matre veheretur, libidinum incestu ac maculis vestis proditum affirmant.

### (ii) Defeat at Rhandaia

*Ann.* XV.15.1-2:

interim flumini Arsaniae (is castra praefluebat) pontem imposuit, specie sibi illud iter expedientis, sed Parthi quasi documentum victoriae iusserant; namque iis usui fuit, nostri per diversum iere. addidit rumor sub iugum missas legiones et alia ex rebus infaustis, quorum simulacrum ab Armeniis usurpatum est.

*Nero* 39.1:

accesserunt tantis ex principe malis probrisque quaedam et fortuita: pestilentia unius autumnus, quo triginta funerum milia in rationem Libitinae venerunt; clades Britannica, qua duo praecipua oppida magna civium sociorumque caede direpta sunt; ignominia ad Orientem legionibus in Armenia sub iugum missis aegreque Syria retenta.

### (iii) Death of Burrus

*Ann.* XIV.51.1:

sed gravescentibus in dies publicis malis subsidia minuebantur, concessitque vita Burrus, incertum valetudine an veneno. valetudo ex eo coniectabatur, quod in se tumescentibus paulatim faucibus et impedito meatu spiritum finiebat. plures iussu Neronis, quasi remedium adhiberetur, inlitum palatum eius noxio medicamine adseverabant, et Burrum intellecto scelere, cum ad visendum eum princeps venisset, adspectum eius aversatum sciscitanti hactenus respondisse: "ego me bene habeo."

*Nero* 35.5:

Burro praefecto remedium ad fauces pollicitus toxicum misit.

(iv) The Great Fire

*Ann.* XV.39:

eo in tempore Nero Anti agens non ante in urbem regressus est, quam domui eius, qua Palantium et Maecenatis hortos continuaverat, ignis propinquaret. neque tamen sisti potuit, quin et Palatium et domus et cuncta circum haurirentur. sed solacium populo exturbato ac profugo campum Martis ac monumenta Agrippae, hortos quin etiam suos patefacit et subitaria aedificia extruxit, quae multitudinem inopem acciperent; subvectaque utensilia ab Ostia et propinquis municipiis, pretiumque frumenti minutum usque ad ternos nummos. quae quamquam popularia in inritum cadebant, quia pervaserat rumor ipso tempore flagrantis urbis inisse eum domesticam scaenam et cecinisse Troianum excidium, praesentia mala vetustis cladibus adsimulantem.

*Nero* 38.1. f.:

hoc incendium e turre Maecenatiana prospectans laetusque “flammae,” ut aiebat, “pulchritudine” Halosin Ilii in illo suo scaenico habitu decantavit.

(v) Death of Poppaea

*Ann.* XVI.6.1:

post finem ludicri Poppaea mortem obit, fortuita mariti iracundia, a quo gravida ictu calcis adflicta est. neque enim nenenum crediderim, quamvis quidam scriptores tradant, odio magis quam ex fide: quipped liberorum cupiens et amori uxoris obnoxious erat.

*Nero* 35.3:

Poppaeam duodecimo die post divortium Octaviae in matrimonium acceptam dilexit unice; et tamen ipsam quoque ictu calcis occidit, quod se ex aurigatione sero reversum gravida et aegra conviciis inceserat.

## 2. AGRIPPINA'S SEXUAL TRANSGRESSIONS

(i) Incest

*Suet. Cal.* 24.1:

cum omnibus sororibus suis consuetudinem stupri fecit plenoque convivio singulas infra se vicissim conlocabat uxore supra cubante.

*Dio* LIX.26.5:

ἐπαινούμενος οὖν διὰ ταῦτα τὰ μὲν φόβῳ τὰ δὲ καὶ ἐπ' ἀληθείας, καὶ τῶν μὲν ἥρωα τῶν δὲ θεὸν αὐτὸν ἀνακαλούντων, δεινῶς ἐξεφρόνησεν. ἡξίου μὲν γὰρ καὶ πρότερον ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον νομίζεσθαι, καὶ τῇ Σελήνῃ συγγίγνεσθαι καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς Νίκης στεφανοῦσθαι ἔλεγε, Ζεὺς τε εἶναι ἐπλάττετο, καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο καὶ γυναιξὶν ἄλλαις τε πολλαῖς καὶ ταῖς ἀδελφαῖς μάλιστα συνείναι προεφασίσσατο κ.τ.λ.

*Tac. Ann.* XII.3.1:

praevaluere haec adiuta Agrippinae inlecebris, quae ad eum per speciem necessitudinis crebro ventitando pellicit patrum, ut praelata ceteris et nondum uxor potentia uxoria iam uteretur.

*Suet. Cl.* 26.3:

verum inlecebris Agrippinae, Germanici fratris sui filiae, per ius osculi et blanditiarum occasiones plectus in amorem, subornavit proximo senatu qui censerent, cogendum se ad ducendum eam uxorem, quasi rei p. maxime interesset, dandamque ceteris veniam talium coniugiorum, quae ad id tempus incesta habebantur. ac vix uno interposito die confecit nuptias,

non repertis qui sequerentur exemplum, excepto libertino quodam et altero primipilari, cuius nuptiarum officium et ipse cum Agrippina celebravit.

Dio LX.31.6:

καὶ μετ' ὀλίγον τὴν ἀδελφιδὴν Ἀγριππῖναν ἔγημε, τὴν τοῦ Δομπίου τοῦ Νέρωνος ἐπονομασθέντος μητέρα· καὶ γὰρ καλὴ ἦν καὶ συνεχῶς αὐτῷ προσεφοίτα, μόνη τε ὡς καὶ θεῖω συνεγίνετο, καὶ τρυφερώτερον ἢ κατ' ἀδελφιδὴν προσεφέρετο.

Tac. *Ann.* XIV.2.1:

tradit Cluvius Agrippinam ardore retinendae potentiae eo usque provectam, ut medio diei, cum id temporis Nero per vinum et epulas incalesceret, offerret se saepius temulento comptam et incesto paratam; iamque lasciva oscula et praenuntias flagitii blanditas adnotantibus proximis, Senecam contra muliebres inlecebras subsidium a femina petivisse, immissamque Acten libertam, quae simul suo periculo et infamia Neronis anxia deferret per vulgatum esse incestum gloriantem matre, nec toleraturos milites profani principis imperium.

Suet. *Nero* 28.2:

nam matris concubitus appetisse et ab obtrectatoribus eius, ne ferox atque impotens mulier et hoc genere gratiae praevaleat, deterritum nemo dubitavit, utique postquam meretricem, quam fama erat Agrippinae simillimam, inter concubinas recepit. olim etiam quotiens lectica cum matre veheretur, libidinum incestum ac maculis vestis proditum affirmant.

Dio LXI.11.3:

Ἀγριππῖνα μὴ γήμηται τῷ Νέρωνι (δεινῶς γὰρ ἤδη αὐτῆς ἐρᾶν ἤρξατο), ἔργον ἀνοσιώτατον ἐτόλμησεν· ὥσπερ γὰρ οὐκ ἰκανὸν ὄν<sup>1</sup> ἐς μυθολογίαν ὅτι τὸν θεῖον τὸν Κλαύδιον ἐς ἔρωτα αὐτῆς ταῖς τε γοητείαις ταῖς τε ἀκολασίαις καὶ τῶν βλεμμάτων καὶ τῶν φιλημάτων ὑπηγάγετο, ἐπεχείρησε καὶ τὸν Νέρωνα ὁμοίως καταδουλώσασθαι.

(ii) Alleged liaisons

Tac. *Ann.* XIV.2.2:

sed quae Cluvius, eadem, ceteri quoque auctores prodidere, et fama huc inclinat, seu concepit animo tantum immanitatis Agrippina seu credibilior novae libidinis meditationem in ea visa est, quae puellaribus annis stuprum cum Lepido spe dominationis admiserat, pari cupidine usque ad libita Pallantis provoluta et exercita ad omne flagitium patris nuptiis.

Suet. *Cal.* 24.3:

reliquas sorores nec cupiditate tanta nec dignatione dilexit, ut quas saepe exoletis suis prostraverit; quo facilius eas in causa Aemili Lepidi condemnavit quasi adulteras et insidiarum adversus se conscias ei.

Dio LIX.22.6:

τοῦτο δὲ τὸν Λέπιδον ἐκείνον τὸν ἐραστὴν τὸν ἐρώμενον, τὸν τῆς Δρουσίλλης ἄνδρα, τὸν καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις αὐτοῦ ἀδελφαῖς τῇ τε Ἀγριππίνῃ καὶ τῇ Ἰουλίᾳ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου συνόντα κ.τ.λ.

Dio LIX.23.9:

ἐν τούτοις τοῖς τότε φεύγουσι καὶ ὁ Τιγελλίνος ὁ Ὀφώνιος, ὡς καὶ τὴν Ἀγριππῖναν μεμοιχευκῶς, ἐξέπεσεν.

Σ *Juv.* 1.155:

C. Fulcinius Tigillinus patre Agrigentino, Scylaceum relegatus, iuvenis egens, verum admodum pulcher, in concubinatum a Bincio e Lucio Domitius maritis Agrippinae et Fulviae, sororum Caesaris, atque in utrisque uxoribus suspectus ob hoc urbe summotus, piscatoriam

machinam exercuit, quoad accepta hereditate redditum sub conditione impetravit, ut concubitu Claudii abstineret.

Tac. *Ann.* XII.25.1:

C. Antistio M. Suillio consulibus adoptio in Domitium auctoritate Pallantis festinatur, qui obstructus Agrippinae ut conciliator nuptiarum et mox stupro eius inligatus stimulabat Claudium, consuleret rei publicae, Britannici pueritiam robore circumdaret.

Tac. *Ann.* XII.65.2:

at nov  
ercae insidiis domum omnem convelli, maiore flagitio, quam si impudicitiam prioris coniugis reticisset. quamquam ne impudicitiam quidem nunc abesse Pallante adultero, ne quis ambigat decus pudorem corpus, cuncta regno viliora habere.

Dio LXI.3.2:

ὅτι ὁ Πάλλας συνῶν τῇ Ἀγριππίνῃ πάντα φορτικὸς καὶ ἐπαχθὴς ἦν.

Dio LXI.10.1:

ὅτι ὁ Σενέκας αἰτίαν ἔσχε, καὶ ἐνεκλήθη ἄλλα τε καὶ ὅτι τῇ Ἀγριππίνῃ συνεγίνετο.

Tac. *Ann.* XV.50.4:

sed summum robur in Faenio Rufo praefecto videbatur, quem vita famaue laudatum per saevitiam impudicitiamque Tigellinus in animo principis anteibat, fatigabatque criminationibusque ac saepe in metum adduxerat quasi adulterium Agrippinae et disederio eius ultioni intentum.

### 3. AVIAN IRIDESCENCE

Seneca registers the following as a line from Nero's poetry: "colla Cytheriacae splendent agitata columbae" (*NQ* I.5.6). That phrase and the image it evokes is reminiscent of a passage from Lucretius, wherein he also describes the shimmering garland of colors to appear around the necks of pigeons:

lumine quin ipso mutatur propterea quod  
recta aut obliqua percussus luce refulgent  
pluma columbarum quo pacto in sole videtur  
quae sita cervices circum collumque coronat;  
namque alias fit uti claro sit rubra pyropo,  
interdum quodam sensu fit uti videatur  
inter caeruleum viridis miscere zmaragdus. (II.799–805)

Such similarity leads to the idea that the iridescence on the feathers of birds, which would also include peacocks, was something of topos in philosophical writings. Among Latin poets birds designated *columbae* are normally white: "nec tantum niveo gavisast ulla columbo | compar" (*Catul.* 68.125 f.); "et variis albae iunguntur saepe columbae, | et niger a viridi turtur amator ave" (*Ov. Ep.* 15.37 f.); "nam fuit haec quondam niveis argentea pennisales, | ut aequaret totas sine labe columbas" (*Ov. Met.* II.536 f.); "Spartanus tibi cedet olor Paphiaeque columbae, | cedet Erythraeis eruta gemma vadis" (*Mart.* VIII.28.11–4). That same bird, however, becomes something quite different when discussed by authors in a philosophical context. Twice in the *Lucullus* Cicero discusses the iridescence around the neck of pigeons as if it were a standard example in the philosophy of perception of an illusion:

nec vero hoc loco exspectandum est dum de remo inflexo aut de collo columbae respondeam, non enim is sum qui quidquid videtur tale dicam esse quale videatur. Epicurus hoc viderit, et alia multa. (19)

quid ergo est quod percipi possit, si ne sensus quidem vera nuntiant? Quos tu, Luculle, communi loco defendis; quod ne ita facere posses, idcirco heri non necessario loco contra sensus tam multa dixeram. tu autem te negas infracto remo neque columbae collo commoveri. primum cur? nam et in remo sentio non esse id quod videatur, et in columbae pluris videri colores nec esse plus uno. (79)

Such a hypothesis, that the iridescence of pigeons was more a philosophical topos than anything of interest to poets, is further supported by certain remarks from Sextus Empiricus:

παρὰ δὲ τὰς θέσεις ὅτι ἡ αὐτὴ εἰκὼν ἐξυπνιαζομένη μὲν λεῖα φαίνεται, ποσῶς δὲ ἐπνευομένη εἰσοχὰς καὶ ἐξοχὰς ἔχει δοκεῖ. καὶ οἱ τράχηλοι δὲ τῶν περιστερῶν παρὰ τὰς διαφοροὺς ἐπικλίσεις διάφοροι φαίνονται κατὰ χρώμα. (P. I.120)

The wider issue approached by this and other examples is whether a definite criterion of truth exists (*M.* VII.159–65). Carneades the Academic argued that there was no such single thing to establish a basis of truth. Invalid are reason, sense, presentation, or anything else, for each is able to communicate a false reality. Another possible theme that the iridescence could fit into is the ability of objects to present themselves in both a true and false form—that the iridescence could be a ‘false’ alteration of the original ‘true’ form of a pigeon’s neck, and therefore its ‘real’ form contains both a true and false presentation of the original (402–14). Stoics would not find issue with the iridescence *qua* a false form, as each aspect of an object’s presentation originates from the object itself, and so remains in accordance with the object itself. That is to say: an object cannot generate a genuinely false aspect of itself, for that would not be ‘real’ (248–52).

Thus it seems probable that Nero could have extracted this imagery from a philosophical context. But to know how he used it, either in extending a metaphor on the dual nature of something or otherwise, is the only way to advance an argument that his use was philosophical.

#### 4. STOIC LOGIC

Cicero on several occasions expresses issue with the Stoic practice of dialectics. For him dialectics do not provide the certainty of truth: sensation is enough to guide the *sapiens*. This is discussed at length in the *Lucullus*: 23–31, 37–9, 91–108, 497–509, 515–7, 583–607. His enthusiasm is clearly for more the true Peripatetic practice—“sed quis omnium doctior, quis acutior, quis in rebus vel inveniendis vel iudicandis acrior Aristotele fuit?” (*Orat.* 172)—though he does recommend Chrysippus as a later option (*Orat.* 113–5). The signal difference is that Peripatetics designate dialectics as a tool for philosophy, *ὄργανον*, not a coordinate part thereof: Ar. *Top.* 104b; Alex. *Aphr. Top.* 74.26 ff.; Ammon. *Cat.* 4.28 ff.; Elias *Cat.* 115.14 ff.; Phlp. *Cat.* 4.23 ff.; Simp. *Cat.* 4.22.

*Tusc.* IV.9–10:

M. Quia Chrysippus et Stoici, cum de animi perturbationibus disputant, magnam partem in his partiendis et definiendis occupati sunt, illa eorum perexigua oratio est, qua medeantur animis nec eos turbulentos esse patientur; Peripatetici autem ad placandos animos multa adferunt, spinas partiendi et definiendi praetermittunt: quaerebam igitur utrum panderem vela orationis statim an eam ante paullulum dialecticorum remis propellerem. A. Isto modo vero; erit enim hoc totum, quod quaero, ex utroque perfectius. M. Est id quidem rectius, sed post requires, si quid fuerit obscurius.

*Top.* 7–8:

cum omnis ratio diligens disserendi duas habeat partis, unam inveniendi alteram iudicandi, utriusque princeps, ut mihi quidem videtur, Aristoteles fuit. Stoici autem in altera elaboraverunt; iudicandi enim vias diligenter persecuti sunt ea scientia quam *διαλεκτικὴν* appellant, inveniendi artem quae *τοπικὴ* dicitur, quae et ad usum potior erat et ordine naturae certe prior, totam reliquerunt.

*Brut.* 118–20:

Tum Brutus: quam hoc idem in nostris contingere intellego quod in Graecis, ut omnes fere Stoici prudentissimi in disserendo sint et id arte faciant sintque architecti paene verborum, idem traducti a disputando ad dicendum inopes reperiantur. unum excipio Catonem, in quo perfectissimo Stoico summam eloquentiam non desiderem; quam exiguam in Fannio, ne in Rutilio quidem magnam, in Tuberone nullam video fuisse.

Et ego: non, inquam, Brute, sine causa, propterea quod istorum in dialecticis omnis cura consumitur; vagum illud orationis et fusum et multiplex non adhibetur genus. tuus autem avunculus, quem ad modum scis, habet a Stoicis id quod ab illis petendum fuit, sed dicere didicit a dicendi magistris eorumque more se exercuit. quod si omnia a philosophis essent petenda, Peripateticorum institutis commodius fingeretur oratio. quo magis tuum, Brute, iudicium probo, qui eorum [id est ex veteri Academia] philosophorum sectam secutus es, quorum in doctrina atque praeceptis disserendi ratio coniungitur cum suavitate dicendi et copia; quamquam ea ipsa Peripateticorum Academicorumque consuetudo in ratione dicendi talis est ut nec perficere oratorem possit ipsa per sese nec sine ea orator esse perfectus. contractior quam aures populi requirunt, sic illorum liberior et latior quam patitur consuetudo iudiciorum et fori.

The rigidity discussed in the last quote is reflected in Seneca's own sentiments, such as: "ebrio secretum sermonem nemo committit; viro autem bono committit; ergo vir bonus ebrius non erit'. quemadmodum opposita interrogatione simili derideatur [viz. Zenon], adtende" &c. (*Ep.* 83.9). Complaints of arbitrary distinction and unnecessary complexity and appear later, e.g. Plut. *Mor.* 1068c–e; Gal. *Inst. Log.* 1.4.4–6; Alex. Aphr. *APr.* 264.14 f.; Ammon. *Int.* 73.19 ff.

## B. PHYSIOGNOMY

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### 5. HARDNESS AS STUPIDITY, CRUELTY, OR MEANNESS

Pl. *Truc.* 915–6:

nec ruri neque hic operis quicquam facio, corrumpor situ, | ita miser cubando in lecto hic  
exspectando obdurui.

Tib. I.2.65–6:

ferreus ille fuit qui, te cum posset habere, | maluerit praedas stultus et arma sequi.

Ov. *Am.* I.6.27–8:

ferreus orantem nequiquam, ianitor, audis, | roboribus duris ianua fulva riget.

Ov. *Ep.* 10.131–2:

nec pater est Aegeus, nec tu Pittheidos Aethrae | filius; auctores saxa fretumque tui!

Ov. *Met.* V.451–2:

dum bibit illa datum, duri puer oris et audax | constitit ante deam risitque avidamque  
vocavit.

Stat. *Theb.* IV.335–40:

expecta dum maior honos, dum firmius aevum, | dum roseis venit umbra genis vultusque  
recedunt | ore mei; tunc bella tibi ferrumque, quod ardes, | ipsa dabo et nullo matris  
revocabere fletu. | nunc refer arma domum! vos autem hunc ire sinetis, | Arcades, o saxis  
nimirum et robore nati?

### 6. GREED AND EDEMA

Plb. XIII.2.1–5:

ὄτι Σκόπας ὁ τῶν Αἰτωλῶν <νομογράφος> στρατηγὸς ἀποτυχὼν τῆς ἀρχῆς, ἣς χάριν ἐτόλμα  
γράφειν τοὺς νόμους, μετέωρος ἦν εἰς τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν, ταῖς ἐκεῖθεν ἐλπίσι πεπεισμένος  
ἀναπληρώσειν τὰ λείποντα τοῦ βίου καὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς πρὸς τὸ πλεῖον ἐπιθυμίαν, οὐκ εἰδὼς ὅτι,  
καθάπερ ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδρωπικῶν οὐδέποτε ποιεῖ παύσαν οὐδὲ κόρον τῆς ἐπιθυμίας ἢ τῶν ἕξωθεν  
ὑγρῶν παράθεις...

Hor. *Carm.* II.2.9–16:

latius regnes avidum domando | spiritum, quam si Libyam remotis | Gadibus iungas et  
uterque Poenus | serviat uni. | crescit indulgens sibi dirus hydrops, | nec sitim pellas, nisi  
causa morbi | fugerit venis et aquosus albo | corpore languor.

Ov. *Fast.* I.213–6:

quaerere, ut absument, absumpta requirere certant, | atque ipsae vitii sunt alimenta vices. |  
sic quibus intumuit suffusa venter ab unda, | quo plus sunt potae, plus sitiuntur aquae.

Sen. *Dial.* XII.11.3:

ista congerantur licet, numquam explebunt inexplebilem animum, non magis quam ullus sufficiet umor ad satiandum eum, cuius desiderium non ex inopia, sed ex aestu ardentium viscerum oritur; non enim sitis illa, sed morbus est. nec hoc in pecunia tantum aut alimentis evenit.

Plut. *Mor.* 524b-c:

καίτοι τῶν διψόντων τὸν μὲν οὐ πεπωκότα προσδοκῆσειεν ἄν τις ἀπαλλαγῆσθαι πίνοντα τοῦ διψῆν, τὸν δὲ πίνοντα συνεχῶς καὶ μὴ πανόμενον οὐ πληρώσεως ἀλλὰ καθάρσεως οἴμεθα δεῖσθαι καὶ κελεύομεν ἐμεῖν ὡς οὐχ ὑπ' ἐνδείας ὀχλούμενον ἀλλὰ τινος δριμύτητος ἢ θερμότητος αὐτῶ παρὰ φύσιν ἐνούσης· οὐκοῦν καὶ τῶν ποριζόντων κ.τ.λ.

## 7. FOOD, PAUNCHES, AND MENTAL LIMITATION

Cic. *ND* II.43:

quin etiam cibo quo utare interesse aliquid ad mentis aciem putant &c.

Hor. *S.* II.2.73-9:

at simul assis | miscueris elixa, simul conchyliia turdis, | dulcia se in bilem vertent stomachoque tumultum | lenta feret pituita. vides ut pallidus omnis | cena desurgat dubia? quin corpus onustum | hesternis vitiis animum quoque praegravat una | atque adfigit humo divinae particulam aerae.

Sen. *Ep.* 15.3:

adice nunc, quod maiore corporis sarcina animus eliditur et minus agilis est. itaque quantum potes, circumscribe corpus tuum et animo locum laxa. multa secuntur incommoda huic deditos curae; primum exercitationes, quarum labor spiritum exhaurit et inhabilem intentioni ac studiis acrioribus reddit. deinde copia ciborum subtilitas inpeditur.

Plin. *NH* XI.200:

idcirco magis avidi ciborum quibus ab alvo longius spatium; item minus sollertes quibus obesissimus venter.

Muson. 18a.15-20:

οἷα δὴ τὰ τε ὠραῖα καὶ τῶν λαχάνων ἔνια καὶ γάλα καὶ τυρὸς καὶ κηρία. καὶ ὅσα μέντοι δεῖται πυρὸς ἢ σιτώδη ἢ λαχανώδη ὄντα, καὶ ταῦτ' οὐκ ἀνεπιτήδεια, ἀλλὰ σύμφυλα ἀνθρώπῳ πάντα. τὴν μέντοι οὐκ ἀνεπιτήδεια, ἀλλὰ σύμφυλα ἀνθρώπῳ πάντα. τὴν μέντοι κρεῶδη τροφήν θηριωδεστέραν ἀπέφηνε καὶ τοῖς ἀγρίοις ζώοις προσφορωτέραν.

Gal. *UP* 332:

καίτοι πολλοῖς γε τῶν πολυβόρων ζώων, οἷς ἔνεστιν εὐθὺ τὸ ἔντερον, οὐδὲν εἰς εὐρύτητα παραλλάττον αὐτοῦ τὸ κάτω πέρασ ἰδεῖν ἔστιν. ἀλλὰ ταῦθ' ὡσπερ αἰεὶ νέμεται, καὶ ἀποπατεῖ συνεχῶς, ἄμουσόν τινα καὶ ἀφιλόσοφον ὄντως, ὡσπερ ὁ Πλάτων ἔλεγε, διαζῶντα ζώην.

Ath. IV.46:

Θεόπομπος οὖν ἐν ε' Φιλιππικῶν φησι· “τὸ γὰρ ἐσθίειν πολλὰ καὶ κρεαφαγεῖν τοὺς μὲν λογισμοὺς ἐξαίρει καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ποιεῖται βραδυτέρας, ὀργῆς δὲ καὶ σκληρότητος καὶ πολλῆς σκαιότητος ἐμπίπλησι.”

Orib. XXIV.19.9:

τὸ μὲν δὴ τυφλὸν ἀντικρυς οἶον γαστήρ τίς ἐστι παχεῖα, εἰς ὑποδοχὴν περιτωμάτων ἐπιτήδειος, ἀνάλογον δ' αὐτῶ καὶ τὸ κόλον.

The commonest sentiment is that *παχέια γαστήρ λεπτόν οὐ τίκτει νόον* (Anon. Lond. 16.3 f.). Cf. Σ Pers. 1.56 f. (alluded to); Gal. *Thras.* V.878 (quoted in prose); Gr. Naz. *Carm.* 723.2, Jer. *Ep.* LII.11.4 (verbatim).

## 8. PHYSIOGNOMY IN SENECA PROSE

### *Epistulae morales*

(1) 11.2–3:

quicquid infixum et ingenitum est, lenitur arte, non vincitur. quibusdam etiam constantissimis in conspectu populi sudor erumpit, non aliter quam fatigatis et aestuantibus solet, quibusdam tremunt genua dicturis, quorundam dentes colliduntur, lingua titubat, labra concurrunt. haec nec disciplina nec usus unquam excutit, sed natura vim suam exercet et illo vitio sui etiam robustissimos admonet. inter haec esse et ruborem scio, qui gravissimis quoque viris subitus adfunditur.

(2) 30.3:

Bassus tamen noster alacer animo est. hoc philosophia praestat, in conspectu mortis hilarem et in quocumque corporis habitu fortem laetumque nec deficientem, quamvis deficiatur. magnus gubernator et scisso navigat velo, et, si exarmavit, tamen reliquias navigii aptat ad cursum. hoc facit Bassus noster et eo animo vultuque finem suum spectat, quo alienum spectare nimis securi putares.

(3) 52.12:

intersit aliquid inter clamorem theatri et scholae; est aliqua et laudandi decentia. omnia rerum omnium, si observentur, indicia sunt et argumentum morum ex minimis quoque licet capere: inpudicum et incessus ostendit et manus mota et unum interdum responsum et relatus ad caput digitus et flexus oculorum. inprobum risus, insanum vultus habitusque demonstrat. illa enim in apertum per notas exeunt; qualis quisque sit, scies, si quemadmodum laudet, quemadmodum laudetur, aspexeris.

(4) 83.19–20:

omne vitium ebrietas et incendit et detegit, obstantem malis conatibus verecundiam removet. plures enim pudore peccandi quam bona voluntate prohibitis abstinent. ubi possedit animum nimia vis vini, quicquid mali latebat, emergit. non facit ebrietas vitia, sed protrahit &c.

(5) 95. 65 ff.:

ait utilem futuram et descriptionem cuiusque virtutis; hanc Posidonius ethologian vocat, quidam characterismon appellant, signa cuiusque virtutis ac vitii et notas reddentem, quibus inter se similia discriminantur...

(6) 103.2:

erras, si istorum tibi qui occurrunt vultibus credis; hominum effigies habent, animos ferarum, nisi quod illarum perniciosus est primus incursus; quos transiere, non quaerunt.

(7) 104.28:

haec usque eo animum Socratis non moverant, ut ne vultum quidem moverent. o illam mirabilem laudem et singularem! usque ad extremum nec hilariorem quisquam nec tristiorem Socraten vidit. aequalis fuit in tanta inaequalitate fortunae.

(8) 106.5:

non puto te dubitaturum, an adfectus corpora sint (ut aliud quoque, de quo non quaeris, infulciam) tamquam ira, amor, tristitia, nisi dubitas, an vultum nobis mutent, an frontem adstringant, an faciem diffundant, an ruborem evocent, an fugent sanguinem.

(9) 114.2-3:

talis hominibus fuit oratio qualis vita. quemadmodum autem uniuscuiusque actio dicenti similis est, sic genus dicendi aliquando imitatur publicos mores, si disciplina civitatis laboravit et se in delicias dedit...non potest alius esse ingenio, alius animo color.

(10) 115.3-4:

si nobis animum boni viri liceret inspicere, o quam pulchram faciem, quam sanctam, quam ex magnifico placidoque fulgentem videremus...si quis viderit hanc faciem altiore fulgentioreque quam cerni inter humana consuevit, nonne velut numinis occursum obstupefactus resistat et, ut "fas sit vidisse," tacitus precetur?

### *Dialogi*

(11) III.1.3-5:

ut scias autem non esse sanos quos ira possedit, ipsum illorum habitum intueri; nam ut furentium certa indicia sunt audax et minaxvultus, tristis frons, torva facies, citatus gradus, inquietae manus, color versus, crebra et vehementius acta suspiria, ita irascentium eadem signa sunt...

(12) III.18.2:

ratio nil praeter ipsum de quo agitur spectat; ira vanis et extra causam obversantibus commovetur. vultus illam securior, vox clarior, sermo liberior, cultus delicatior, advocatio ambitiosior, favor popularis exasperant; saepe infesta patrono reum damnat; etiam si ingeritur oculis veritas, amat et tuetur errorem; coargui non vult et in male coeptis honestior illi pertinacia videtur quam paenitentia.

(13) III.19.1:

habet, inquam, iracundia hoc mali; non vult regi. irascitur veritati ipsi, si contra voluntatem suam apparuit; cum clamore et tumultu et totius corporis iactatione quos destinavit insequitur adiectis conviciis maledictisque.

(14) IV.5.3:

quid ergo est? origo huius mali ab ira est, quae ubi frequenti exercitatione et satietate in oblivionem clementiae venit et omne foedus humanum eiecit animo, novissime in crudelitatem transit. rident itaque gaudentque et voluptate multa perfruuntur plurimumque ab iratorum vultu absunt, per otium saevi.

(15) IV.35.3-5:

adfectus facies turbatior; pulcherrima ora foedavit, torvos vultus ex tranquillissimis reddit; linquit decor omnis iratos, et sive amictus illis compositus est ad legem, trahent vestem omnemque curam sui effundent, sive capillorum natura vel arte iacentium non informis habitus, cum animo inhorrescunt; tumescunt venae; concutietur crebro spiritu pectus, rabida vocis eruptio colla distendet; tum artus trepidi, inquietae manus, totius corporis fluctuatio...

(16) IV.36.1-4:

quibusdam, ut ait Sextius, iratis profuit aspexisse speculum; perturbavit illos tanta mutatio sui; velut in rem praesentem adducti non agnoverunt se. et quantum ex vera deformitate imago illa speculo reperiata reddebat...

(17) V.4.1-3:

ut de ceteris dubium sit, nulli certe adfectui peior est vultus, quem in prioribus libris descripsimus...

(18) V.13.1-3:

incipis vincere, si absconditur, si illi exitus non datur. signa eius obruamus et illam quantum fieri potest occultam secretamque teneamus. cum magna id nostra molestia fiet, cupit enim exilire et incendere oculos et mutare faciem...

(19) IX.4.6 f.:

numquam inutilis est opera civis boni; auditus visusque, vultu, nutu, obstinatione tacita incessuque ipso prodest. ut salutaria quaedam, quae citra gustum tactumque odore proficiunt, ita virtus utilitatem etiam ex longinquo et latens fundit. sive spatiatur et se utitur suo iure, sive precarios habet excessus cogiturque vela contrahere, sive otiosa muta est et in angusto circumsaepata, sive adaperata, in quocumque habitu est, proficit.

## 9. EXTERNAL INTERNALITY IN SENECA TRAGEDY

### *Agamemnon*

(1) 125-8:

regina Danaum et inclitum Ladae genus, | quid tacita versas quidve consilii impotens | tumido  
feroces impetus animo geris? | licet ipsa sileas, totus in vultu est dolor.

(2) 237-41:

AEG. sed quid trementes circuit pallor genas | iacensque vultu languido obtutus stupet?  
CLY. amor iugalis vincit ac flectit retro; | referimur illuc, unde non decuit prius | abire.

(3) 710-9:

silet repente Phoebas et pallor genas | creberque totum possidet corpus tremor; | stetero  
vittae, mollis horrescit coma, | anhela corda murmure incluso fremunt, | incerta nutant lumina  
et versi retro | torquentur oculi, rursus immoti rigent. | nunc levat in auras altior solito caput  
| graditurque celsa, nunc reluctantes parat | reserare fauces, verba nunc clauso male | custodit  
ore, maenas impatiens dei.

(4) 949 f.:

manus recenti sanguine etiam nunc madent | vultusque prae se scelera truculenti ferunt.

### *Hercules furens*

(5) 720-7:

haec porta regni. campus hanc circa iacet, | in quo superbo digere vultu sedens | animas  
recentes. dira maiestas deo, | frons torva, fratrum quae tamen specimen gerat | gentisque  
tantae; vultus est illi Iovis, | sed fulminantis. magna pars regni trucis | est ipse dominus, cuius  
aspectus timet | quidquid timetur.

(6) 764–7:

hunc servat amnem cultu et aspectu horridus | pavidosque manes squalidus gestat senex. |  
impexa pendet barba, deformem sinum | nodus coerctet, concavae lucent genae &c.

*Hercules Oetaeus*

(7) 250–3:

nec unus habitus durat aut uno furit | contenta vultu: nunc inardescunt genae, | pallor  
ruborem pellit et formas dolor | errat per omnes; queritur implorat gemit.

(8) 391–5:

vides ut altum famula non perdat decus? | cessere cultus penitus et paedor sedet; | tamen per  
ipsas fulget aerumnas decor | nihilque ab illa casus et fatum grave | nisi regna traxit.

(9) 1740–51:

inter vapores positus et flammae minas | immotus, inconcussus, in neutrum latus | correpta  
torquens membra adhortatur, monet, | gerit aliquid ardens. omnibus fortem addidit | animum  
ministris: urere ardentem putes. | stupet omne vulgus, vix habent flammae fidem: | tam placida  
frons est, tanta maiestas viro. | nec properat uri; cumque iam forti datum | leto satis pensavit,  
igniferas trabes | hinc inde traxit: minima quas flamma occupat | totas in ignes vertit, et quis  
plurimus | exundat ignis repetit intrepidus ferox.

*Medea*

(10) 203–6:

difficile quam sit animum ab ira flectere | iam concitatum, quamque regale hoc putet, | sceptris  
superbas quisquis admovit manus, | qua coepit ire, regia didici mea.

(11) 445–6:

atque ecce, viso memet exiluit, furit, | fert odia prae se; totus in vultu est dolor.

(12) 674–9:

maius his, maius parat | Medea monstrum. namque ut attonito gradu | evasit et penetrare  
funestum attigit, | totas opes effudit, et quidquid diu | etiam ipsa timuit promit, atque omnem  
explicat | turbam malorum, arcana secreta abdita &c.

(13) 937–9:

quid, anime, titubas? ora quid lacrimae rigant | variamque nunc huc ira, nunc illuc amor |  
diducit? anceps aestus incertam rapit &c.

*Phaedra*

(14) 657–60:

in te magis refulget incomptus decor: est genitor in te totus, et torvae tamen pars aliqua matris  
miscet ex aequo decus; in ore Graio Scythicus apparet rigor.

(15) 795–808:

vexent hanc faciem frigora parcius, | haec solem facies rarius appetat: | lucebit Pario marmore  
clarius. | quam grata est facies torva viriliter | et pondus veteris triste supercili! | Phoebos colla  
licet splendida compares: | illum caesaries nescia colligi | perfundens umeros ornat et integrit;  
| te frons hirta decet, te brevior coma | nulla lege iacens. tu licet asperos | pugnacesque deos

viribus audeas | et vasti spatio vincere corporis; | aequas Herculeos nam iuvenis toros, | Martis  
belligeri pectore latior.

*Thyestes*

(16) 330–2:

multa sed trepidus solet | detegere vultus, magna nolentem quoque | consilia produunt.

(17) 504:

cum sperat ira sanguinem, nescit tegi— | tamen tegatur.

(18) 719:

CHOR. quo iuvenis animo, quo tulit vultu necem?

NUNT. stetit sui securus et non est preces | perire frustra passus &c.

*Troades*

(19) 522–3:

adest Ulixes, et quidem dubio gradu | vultuque: nectit pectore astus callidos.

(20) 1137–42:

ipsa deiectos gerit | vultus pudore, sed tamen fulgent genae | magisque solito splendet  
extremus decor, | ut esse Phoebi dulcius lumen solet | iam iam cadentis, astra cum repetunt  
vices | premiturque dubius nocte vicina dies.

# C. POPULAR WISDOM

## 10. THE TRANSITION OF AGES

Pl. *Mer.* 983a-6:

“ess’ vacivom istac ted aetate his decebat noxiis. | itidem ut tempus anni, aetatem aliam aliud factum condecet; | nam si istuc ius est, senecta aetate scortari senes, | ubi loci est res summa nostra publica?”

Cic. *Sen.* 38:

“ut enim adulescentem in quo est senile aliquid, sic senem in quo est aliquid adulescentis probo, quod qui sequitur, corpore senex esse poterit, animo numquam erit.”

Cic. *Sen.* 76:

“sunt pueritiae studia certa; num igitur ea desiderant adulescentes?”

Sen. *Ep.* 118.14:

“nec hoc novum est, quaedam crescendo mutari. infans fuit; factus est pubes, alia eius proprietas fit. ille enim inrationalis est, hic rationalis. quaedam incremento non tantum in maius exeunt, sed in aliud.”

Sen. *Ep.* 121.15-7:

“unicuique aetati sua constitutio est, alia infanti, alia puero, alia seni; omnes ei constitutioni conciliantur in qua sunt...”

M. Ant. IX.21.2:

μέτιθι νῦν ἐπὶ ἡλικίαν, οἷον τὴν παιδικήν, τὴν τοῦ μειρακίου, τὴν νεότητα, τὸ γῆρας· καὶ γὰρ τούτων πᾶσα μεταβολὴ θάνατος. μήτι δεινόν; μέτιθι νῦν ἐπὶ βίον τὸν ὑπὸ τῷ πάππῳ, εἶτα τὸν ὑπὸ τῇ μητρὶ, εἶτα τὸν ὑπὸ τῷ πατρὶ· καὶ ἄλλας δὲ πολλὰς διαφορὰς καὶ μεταβολὰς καὶ ἀπολήξεις εὐρίσκων, ἐπερώτα σεαυτόν· “μήτι δεινόν;” οὕτως τοῖσιν οὐδὲ ἡ τοῦ ὄλου βίου λήξις καὶ παῦλα καὶ μεταβολή.

August. *Ep.* 4.1:

sed non arbitror occultum tibi esse, si falsis opinionibus tanto quisque inseritur magis, quanto magis in eis familiariusque volutatur, multo id facilius in rebus veris animo accidere. ita tamen paulatim ut per aetatem proficimus. quippe cum plurimum inter puerum et iuvenem distet, nemo a pueritia cotidie interrogatus se aliquando iuvenem dicet.

The idea is behind the certain shock when appeal or events occur regardless of age, gender, and race (e.g. *Nep. Att.* 16.1; *Plin. Ep.* X.96.9; *Suet. Cal.* 4).

## 11. NATURE AND NURTURE

Cic. *Leg.* I.46 f.:

probavit, nos ingenia iuvenum non item? an ingenia natura, virtutes et vitia, quae existunt ab ingeniis, aliter iudicabuntur? an ea non aliter, honesta et turpia non ad naturam referri necesse erit? quod laudabile bonum est, in se habeat quod laudetur necesse est; ipsum enim bonum non est opinionibus, sed natura. nam ni ita esset, beati quoque opinione essent; quo quid dici potest stultius? quare cum et bonum et malum natura iudicetur et ea sint principia naturae, certe honesta quo-que et turpia simili ratione diiudicanda et ad naturam referenda sunt. sed perturbat nos opinio-num varietas hominumque dissensio, et quia non idem contingit in sensibus, hos natura certos putamus, illa, quae aliis sic, aliis secus nec isdem semper uno modo videntur, ficta esse dicimus; quod est longe aliter.

Sen. *Dial.* IV.21.9 f.:

exprobrentur illi perperam facta. pertinebit ad rem praeceptores paedagogosque pueris placidos dari. proximis adplicatur omne quod tenerum est et in eorum similitudinem crescit; nutricum et paedagogorum rettulere mox adulescentium mores.

Quint. *Inst.* I.3.12:

mores quoque se inter ludendum simplicius detegunt: modo nulla videatur aetas tam infirma quae non protinus quid rectum pravumque sit discat, tum vel maxime formanda cum simulandi nescia est et praecipientibus facillime cedit; frangas enim citius quam corrigas quae in pravum induruerunt.

Juv. 14.31-3:

sic natura iubet: velocius et citius nos | corrumpunt vitiores exempla domestica, magnis | cum subeant animos auctoribus.

Plut *Mor.* 12C:

οὐκοῦν τὰς τούτων ὁρμὰς ταῖς ἐπιμελείαις δεσμεύειν καὶ κατέχειν προσῆκεν. ἀταμίετον γὰρ τῶν ἡδονῶν ἢ ἀκμῆ καὶ σκιρτητικὸν καὶ χαλινῶν δεόμενον, ὥσθ' οἱ μὴ τῆς ἡλικίας ταύτης ἐρρωμένους ἀντιλαμβάνόμενοι τῇ δὴ ἀνοίᾳ διδάσασιν ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τὰ ἀδικήματα.

## 12. REAPING AND SOWING

Job 4:8 (LXX):

καθ' ὃν τρόπον εἶδον τοὺς ἀροτριῶντας τὰ ἄτοπα, οἱ δὲ σπείροντες αὐτὰ ὀδύνας θειροῦσιν ἑαυτοῖς.

D-K 87 B 60 (Antiphon):

οἶμαι, τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἐστὶ παιδείσις· ὅταν γὰρ τις πράγματος κἂν ὀτουοῦν τὴν ἀρχὴν ὀρθῶς ποιήσῃται, εἰκὸς καὶ τὴν τελευτὴν ὀρθῶς γίγνεσθαι· καὶ γὰρ τῇ γῆι οἶον ἂν τις τὸ σπέρμα ἐναρόσῃ, τοιαῦτα καὶ τὰ ἔκφορα δεῖ προσδοκᾶν· καὶ ἐν νέῳ σώματι ὅταν τις τὴν παιδείσιν γενναίαν ἐναρόσῃ, ζῆι τοῦτο καὶ θάλλει διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ῥίου, καὶ αὐτὸ οὔτε ὄμβρος οὔτε ἀνομβρία ἀφαιρεῖται.

Pl. *Phdr.* 260c-d:

ὅταν ὄν ὁ ῥητορικὸς ἀγνοῶν ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακόν, λαβὼν πόλιν ὡσαύτως ἔχουσαν πείθη, μὴ περὶ ὄνου σκιάς ὡς ἵππου τὸν ἔπαινον ποιούμενος, ἀλλὰ περὶ κακοῦ ὡς ἀγαθοῦ, δόξας δὲ πλήθους μεμελετηκῶς πείσῃ κακὰ πράττειν ἀντ' ἀγαθῶν, ποῖόν τινα οἶε μετὰ ταῦτα τὴν ῥητορικὴν καρπὸν ὧν ἔσπειρε θερίζει;

Pl. *Capt.* 660-3:

TYN. quid hoc est negoti? quid ego deliqui?

HEC. rogas, | sator sartorque scelerum et messor maxume?

TYN. non "occatorem" dicere audebas prius? | nam semper occant prius quam sariunt rustici.

Cic. *Or.* II.261 f.:

ex immutatione, ut olim, Rusca cum legem ferret annalem, dissuasor M. Servilius: "dic mihi," inquit, "M. Pinari, num, si contra te dixero, mihi male dicturus es, ut ceteris fecisti?" "Ut se-mentem feceris, ita metes," inquit.

2 Corinthians 9:6:

τοῦτο δέ, ὁ σπείρων φειδομένως φειδομένως καὶ θερίσει, καὶ ὁ σπείρων ἐπ' εὐλογίαις ἐπ' εὐλογίαις καὶ θερίσει.

Galatians 6:7:

μη̄ πλανᾶσθε, θεὸς οὐ μωκτηρίζεται· ὁ γὰρ ἐὰν σπείρη ἄνθρωπος, τοῦτο καὶ θερίσει.

Another sentiment relevant and similar, *qualis pater talis filius* (Cic. *Fin.* V.12; *Off.* I.121), obtains greater in Greek writers: Ar. *Av.* 766; Philo. *VS* II.584; Lib. *Ep.* XI.471.5; Bas. *Caes. Ep.* 339. The essence of that particular phrase is expressed variously and with some frequency. Horace memorably begins one poem “o matre pulchra filia pulchrior” (*Carm.* I.16.1). Another variation common to both Greek and Latin is “plane quails dominus, talis et servus” (Petr. 58.4). This first appears in Plato, ἀτεχνῶς γὰρ αἱ τε κύνες κατὰ τὴν παροιμίαν οἰαίπερ αἱ δέσπομαι γίγνονταί τε δὴ καὶ ἵπποι καὶ ὄνοι (R. 563c), and is repeated by later writers, e.g. Cic. *Att.* V.11.5, Clem. Al. *Paed.* III.11.73.3, Lib. *Or.* XVIII.133. Plato also has more political variation (Lg. 711b-c), which is quoted by Cicero: “quales in re publica principes essent talis reliquos solere esse civi” (*Fam.* I.9.12). This is found in elsewhere, e.g. Stat. *Theb.* 4.663, Plin. *Pan.* 46.5, Hosea 4:9, Sirach 10:2.

### 13. THE POWER AND DANGER OF MONEY

Pl. *St.* 410-4:

videte, quaeso, quid potest pecunia: | quoniam bene gesta re rediisse me videt | magnasque  
apportavisse divitias domum, | sine advocatis ibidem in cercuro in stega | in amicitiam atque  
in gratiam convortimus.

Cic. *Parad.* 6:

numquam mehercule ego neque pecunias istorum neque tecta magna neque opes neque  
imperia neque eas quibus maxime astricti sunt voluptates in bonis rebus aut expetendis esse  
dixi, quippe cum viderem rebus his circumfluentes ea tamen desiderare maxime quibus  
abundarent. neque enim umquam expletur nec satiatur cupiditatis sitis, neque solum ea qui  
habent libidine augendi cruciantur sed etiam amittendi metu.

Sal. *Cat.* 11.3:

avaritia pecuniae studium habet, quam nemo sapiens concupivit; ea quasi venenis malis inbuta  
corpus animumque virilem effeminat, semper infinita insatiabilis est, neque copia neque inopia  
minuitur.

Sal. *Cat.* 11.5-7:

huc adcedebat quod L. Sulla exercitum quem in Asia ductaverat, quo sibi fidum faceret, contra  
morem maiorum luxuriose nimisque liberaliter habuerat. loca amoena, voluptaria facile in otio  
ferocis militum animos molliverant. ibi primum insuevit exercitus populi Romani amare,  
potare; signa, tabulas pictas, vasa caelata mirari; ea privatim et publice rapere, delubra spoliare,  
sacra profanaque omnia polluere. igitur ei milites, postquam victoriam adepti sunt, nihil relicui  
victis fecere.

Verg. *A.* III.56 f.:

ille, ut opes fractae Teucrum et Fortuna recessit, | res Agamemnonias victriciaque arma secutus  
| fas omne abruptit: Polydorum obruncat, et auro | vi potitur. quid non mortalia pectora  
cogis, | auri sacra fames!

Hor. *Carm.* III.16.9-20:

aurum per medios ire satellites | et perrumpere amat saxa potentius | ictu fulmineo: concidit  
auguris | Argivi domus ob lucrum | demersa exitio: diffidit urbium | portas vir Macedo et

subruit aemulos | reges muneribus; munera navium | saevos illaqueant duces. | crescentem  
sequitur cura pecuniam | maiorumque fames.

Hor. *Ep.* I.6.36–8:

scilicet uxorem cum dote fidemque et amicos | et genus et formam regina Pecunia donat, | ac  
bene nummatum decorat Suadela Venusque.

Hor. *S.* II.3.94–7:

ipse videretur sibi nequior omnis enim res, | virtus, fama, decus, divina humanaque pulchris |  
divitiis parent; quas qui construxerit, ille | clarus erit, fortis, iustus.

Prop. III.13.47–50:

at nunc desertis cessant sacraria lucis: | aurum omnes victa iam pietate colunt. | auro pulsa  
fides, auro venalia iura, | aurum lex sequitur, mox sine lege pudor.

Ov. *Am.* III.8.29 f.:

Iuppiter, admonitus nihil esse potentius auro, | corruptae pretium virginis ipse fuit.

Ov. *Fast.* I.209–18:

at postquam fortuna loci caput extulit huius, | et tetigit summos vertice Roma deos, | creverunt  
et opes et opum furiosa cupido, | et, cum possideant plurima, plura petunt. | quaerere, ut  
absumant, absumpta requirere certant, | atque ipsae vitiis sunt alimenta vices. | sic quibus  
intumuit suffusa venter ab unda, | quo plus sunt potae, plus sitiuntur aquae. | in pretio pretium  
nunc est: dat census honores, | census amicitias: pauper ubique iacet.

Sen. *Ben.* II.27.3:

non patitur aviditas quemquam esse gratum; numquam enim improbae spei, quod datur, satis  
est, et maiora cupimus, quo maiora venerunt, multoque concitator est avaritia in magnarum  
opum congestu collocata, ut flammae infinito acrior vis est, quo ex maiore incendio emicuit.

Petr. 14.2:

quid faciant leges, ubi sola pecunia regnat, | aut ubi paupertas vincere nulla potest? | ipsi qui  
Cynica traducunt tempora pera, | non nunquam nummis vendere vera solent. | ergo iudicium  
nihil est nisi publica merces, | atque eques in causa qui sedet, empta probat.

Juv. I.109–16:

expectent ergo tribuni, | vincant divitiae, sacro ne cedat honori | nuper in hanc urbem pedibus  
qui venerat albis, | quandoquidem inter nos sanctissima divitiarum | maiestas, etsi funesta  
Pecunia templo | nondum habitat, nullas nummorum ereximus aras, | ut colitur Pax atque  
Fides, Victoria, Virtus | quaeque salutato crepitat Concordia nido.

Juv. 14.135–44:

sed quo divitias haec per tormenta coactas, | cum furor haut dubius, cum sit manifesta  
phrenesis, | ut locuples moriaris, egentis vivere fato? | interea, pleno cum turget sacculus ore,  
| crescit amor nummi quantum ipsa pecunia crevit, | [et minus hanc optat qui non habet. ergo  
paratur] | altera villa tibi, cum rus non sufficit unum | et proferre libet finis maiorque videtur  
| et melior vicina seges; mercaris et hanc et | arbusta et densa montem qui canet oliva.

Compare some examples from Greek sources, which are similar in sentiment, but only  
insofar as they disparage personal wealth or money.

B. *i.* 159–62:

φαιμί καὶ φάσω μέγιστον | κῦδος ἔχειν ἀρετάν· πλοῦ- | τος δὲ καὶ δειλοῖσιν ἀνθρώπων ὀμιλεῖ, | ἐθέλει δ' αὔξειν φρένας ἀνδρός·

E. *Ph.* 597:

εἰσορῶ· δειλὸν δ' ὁ πλοῦτος καὶ φιλόψυχον κακόν.

Ar. *Pl.* 193–7:

σοῦ δ' ἐγένετ' οὐδεὶς μεστὸς οὐδεπώποτε. | ἀλλ' ἦν τάλαντά τις λάβη τριακαίδεκα, | πολὺ μᾶλλον ἐπιθυμῆί λαβεῖν ἑκκαίδεκα· | κἂν ταῦθ' ἀνύσῃται, τετταράκοντα βούλεται, | ἢ φησὶν οὐ βιωτὸν αὐτῷ τὸν βίον.

Pl. *Lg.* 743a:

πλουσίους δ' αὖ σφόδρα καὶ ἀγαθοὺς ἀδύνατον, οὓς γε δὴ πλουσίους οἱ πολλοὶ καταλέγουσι· λέγουσι δὲ τοὺς κεκτημένους ἐν ὀλίγοις τῶν ἀνθρώπων πλείστου νομίσματος ἄξια κτήματα, ἃ καὶ κακὸς τις κεκτητῆς ἄν.

Men. *Kol.* 43–5:

οὐθεὶς ἐπλούτησεν ταχέως δίκαιος ὢν· | ὁ μὲν γὰρ αὐτῷ συλλέγει καὶ φεῖδεται, | ὁ δὲ τὸν πάλαι τηροῦντ' ἐνεδρεύσας πάντ' ἔχει.

#### 14. DANCE, DANCERS, AND BARBERS

Cic. *Deiot.* 28:

quod si saltatorem avum habuisses neque eum virum, unde pudoris pudicitiaeque exempla peterentur, tamen hoc maledictum minime in illam aetatem conveniret.

Cic. *Mur.* 13:

saltatorem appellat L. Murenam Cato. Maledictum est, si vere obicitur, vehementis accusatoris, sin falso, maledici conviciatoris. qua re cum ista sis auctoritate, non debes, M. Cato, adripere maledictum ex trivio aut ex scurrarum aliquo convicio neque temere consullem populi Romani saltatorem vocare, sed circumspicere quibus praeterea vitiis adfectum esse necesse sit eum cui vere istud obici possit. nemo enim fere saltat sobrius, nisi forte insanit, neque in solitudine neque in convivio moderato atque honesto. tempestivi convivi, amoeni loci, multarum deliciarum comes est extrema saltatio.

Cic. *Phil.* 5.15:

atque ego de notis iudicibus dixi; quos minus nostis nolui nominare: saltatores, citharistas, totum denique comissionis Antonianae chorum in tertiam decuriam iudicum scitote esse coniectum.

Cic. *Pis.* 18:

quod si vestem non publico consilio patres conscripti sed privato officio aut misericordia mutavissent, tamen id his non licere per interdicta potestatis tuae crudelitatis erat non ferendae: cum vero id senatus frequens censuisset et omnes ordines reliqui iam ante fecissent, tu, ex tenebrosa propina consul extractus, cum illa saltatrice tonsa senatum populi Romani occasum atque interitum rei publicae lugere vetuisti.

Cic. *Planc.* 87:

at erat mecum cunctus equester ordo: quem quidem in contionibus saltator ille Catilinae consul proscriptionis denuntiatione terrebat. at tota Italia convenerat: cui quidem belli intestini et vastitatis metus inferebatur.

Cic. *Off.* I.150:

minimeque artes eae probandae quae ministrae sunt voluptatum, “cetarii, lanii, coqui, fartores, piscatores,” ut ait Terentius; adde huc, si placet, unguentarios, saltatores totumque ludum talarium.

Cic. *Red. Sen.* 13:

cum vero in circo Flaminio, non a tribuno plebis consul in contionem, sed a latrone archipirata productus esset, primum processit qua auctoritate vir! vini, somni, stupri plenus, madenti coma, composito capillo, gravibus oculis, fluentibus buccis, pressa voce et temulenta: quod in cives indemnatos esset animadversum, id sibi dixit gravis auctor vehementissime displicere. ubi nobis haec auctoritas tam diu tanta latuit? cur in lustris et helluationibus huius calamistrati saltatoris tam eximia virtus tam diu cessavit?

Sen. *Dial.* X.12.3:

quid? illos otiosos vocas, quibus apud tonsorem multae horae transmittuntur, dum decerpitur, si quid proxima nocte subcrevit, dum de singulis capillis in consilium itur, dum aut disiecta coma restituitur aut deficiens hinc atque illinc in frontem compellitur? quomodo irascuntur, si tonsor paulo neglegentior fuit, tamquam virum tonderet! quomodo excandescunt, si quid ex iuba sua decisum est, si quid extra ordinem iacuit, nisi omnia in anulos suos reciderunt! quis est istorum qui non malit rem publicam turbari quam comam suam? qui non sollicitior sit de capitis sui decore quam de salute? qui non comptior esse malit quam honestior? hos tu otiosos vocas inter pectinem speculumque occupatos?

Plut. *Mor.* 508f–509b:

οἱ δὲ πλείστοι τῶν ἀδολέσχων οὐδ' αἰτίαν ἔχοντες ἀπολλύουσιν αὐτούς. οἷον ἐν κουρείῳ τινὶ λόγων γινομένων περὶ τῆς Διονυσίου τυραννίδος, ὡς ἀδαμαντίνη καὶ ἄρρηκτός ἐστι, γελάσας ὁ κουρέυς, “ταῦθ' ὑμᾶς,” ἔφη, “περὶ Διονυσίου λέγειν, οὐ ἐγὼ παρ' ἡμέρας ὀλίγας ἐπὶ τοῦ τραχήλου τὸ ξυρὸν ἔχω.” ταῦτ' ἀκούσας ὁ Διονύσιος ἀνεσταύρωσεν αὐτόν. Ἐπιεικῶς δὲ λάλον ἐστὶ τὸ τῶν κουρέων γένος· οἱ γὰρ ἀδολεσχότατοι προσρέουσι καὶ προσκαθίζουσιν, ὥστ' αὐτοὺς ἀναπίμπλασθαι τῆς συνηθείας. χαριέντως γοῦν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀρχέλαος ἀδολέσχου κουρέως περιβαλόντος αὐτῷ τὸ ὠμόλιον καὶ πυθομένου, “πῶς σε κείρω, βασιλεῦ;” “σιωπῶν,” ἔφη. κουρέυς δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐν Σικελίᾳ τῶν Ἀθηναίων μεγάλην κακοπραγίαν ἀπήγγελε πρῶτος, ἐν Πειραιεὶ πυθόμενος οἰκέτου τινὸς τῶν ἀποδεδρακότων ἐκεῖθεν. εἶτ' ἀφείς τὸ ἐργαστήριον εἰς ἄστυ συνέτεινε δρόμῳ.

Plut. *Nic.* 30.1:

Ἀθηναῖοις δὲ φασὶ τὴν συμφορὰν οὐχ ἦκιστα διὰ τὸν ἄγγελον ἄπιστον γενέσθαι. ξένος γάρ τις, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἀποβὰς εἰς Πειραιᾶ καὶ καθίσας ἐπὶ κουρείῳ, ὡς ἐγνωκότων ἤδη τῶν Ἀθηναίων λόγους ἐποιεῖτο περὶ τῶν γεγονότων. ὁ δὲ κουρέυς ἀκούσας, πρὶν ἄλλους πυνθάνεσθαι, δρόμῳ συντείνας εἰς τὸ ἄστυ καὶ προσβαλὼν τοῖς ἀρχουσιν εὐθὺς κατ' ἀγορὰν ἐνέβαλε τὸν λόγον. ἐκπλήξεως δὲ καὶ ταραχῆς, ὡς εἰκός, γενομένης, οἱ μὲν ἄρχοντες ἐκκλησίαν συναγαγόντες εἰσήγαγον τὸν ἄνθρωπον· ὡς δ' ἐρωτώμενος παρ' οὗ πύθοιτο σαφὲς οὐδὲν εἶχε φράζειν, δόξας λογοποιὸς εἶναι καὶ ταραττεῖν τὴν πόλιν, εἰς τὸν τροχὸν καταθεθεὶς ἐστρεβλοῦτο πολλὸν χρόνον, ἕως ἐπήλθον οἱ τὸ πᾶν κακόν, ὡς εἶχεν, ἀπαγγέλλοντες. οὕτω μάλιστα ὁ Νικίας ἐπιστεύθη παθῶν ἢ πολλάκις αὐτοῖς προεῖπεν.

Macr. *III.* 14.4–11:

dic enim, Hore, qui antiquitatem nobis obicis, ante cuius triclinium modo saltatricem vel saltatorem te vidisse meministi? at inter illos saltatio certatim vel ab honestis adpetebatur...

## 15. FATHER-CHILD RESEMBLANCE

Commonly understood as a favorable sign of paternity:

Hes. *Op.* 225–35:

οἱ δὲ δίκας ξείνοισι καὶ ἐνδήμοισι διδοῦσιν | ἰθείας καὶ μὴ τι παρεκβαίνουσι δικαίου, | τοῖσι τέθηλε πόλις, λαοὶ δ' ἀνθέουσιν ἐν αὐτῇ· | ... | τίκτουσιν δὲ γυναικες εὐκότα τέκνα γονεῦσιν·

Thphr. *Char.* 5.5:

καὶ κεκλημένος δὲ ἐπὶ δεῖπνον κελεῦσαι καλέσαι τὰ παιδιά τὸν ἐστιῶντα, καὶ εἰσιόντα φῆσαι σύκου ὁμοιότερα εἶναι τῷ πατρὶ, καὶ προσαγόμενος φιλήσαι καὶ παρ' αὐτὸν καθίσασθαι κ.τ.λ.

Catul. 61.214–8:

sit suo similis patri | Manlio et facile insciis | noscitur ab omnibus | et pudicitiam suae | matris indicet ore.

Hor. *Carm.* IV.5.23:

tutus bos etenim rura perambulat, | nutrit rura Ceres almaque Faustitas, | pacatum volitant per mare navitae, | culpari metuit fides, | nullis polluitur casta domus stupris, | mos et lex maculosum edomuit nefas, | laudantur simili prole puerperae, | culpam poena premit comes.

IGRRP IV, 507.b1–13:

χαῖρε, γύναι Πάνθεια παρ' ἀνέρος, ὃς μετὰ μοῖραν | σὴν ὄλοοῦ θανάτου πένθος ἄλαστον ἔχω. / οὐ γάρ πω τοίην ἀλοχον ζυγίην <ν> ἶδεν Ἥρη | εἶδος καὶ πινυτήν ἠδὲ σαοφροσύνην. / αὐτῇ μοι καὶ παῖδας ἐγείναο πάντας ὁμοίους, / αὐτῇ καὶ γαμέτου κήδεο καὶ τεκέων | καὶ βιοτῆς οἶακα καθευθύνεσκες ἐν οἴκῳ | καὶ κλέος ὑψώσας ξυνὸν ἠγορήεις, / οὐδὲ γυν(ή) περ ἐοῦσα ἐμῆς ἀπολείπειο τέχνης.

Mart. VI.27.3–4:

bis vicine Nepos — nam tu quoque proxima Florae | incolis et veteres tu quoque Ficelias — | est tibi, quae patria signatur imagine vultus, | testis maternae nata pudicitiae.

Conversely, dissimilarity raised suspicion: Aeschin. 3.111; Theoc. 17.43 f.; Lucill. 11.215; Mart. IV.39.

## 16. THE IMPRESSIONABILITY OF CHILDREN

Although there is much crossover and commonality with Catalog 11, on nature and nurture, the following regard more external than internal factors on child's development.

Hor. *S.* I.4.105–11:

insuevit pater optimus hoc me, | ut fugerem exemplis vitiorum quaeque notando. | cum me hortaretur, parce frugaliter atque | viverem uti contentus eo, quod mi ipse parasset: | “nonne vides, Albi ut male vivat filius, utque | Baius inops? magnum documentum, ne patriam rem | perdere quis velit” &c.

Pers. 5.30–40:

cum primum pavido custos mihi purpura cessit | bullaque subcinctis Laribus donata pependit, | cum blandi comites totaque inpune Subura | permisit sparsisse oculos iam candidus umbo, | cumque iter ambiguum est et vitae nescius error | diducit trepidas ramosa in compita mentes, | me tibi supposui. teneros tu suscipis annos | Socratico, Cornute, sinu. tum fallere sollers |

adposita intortos extendit regula mores | et premitur ratione animus vincique laborat |  
artificemque tuo ducit sub pollice voltum.

Quint. *Inst.* I.1.4–11:

ante omnia ne sit vitiosus sermo nutricibus: quas, si fieri posset, sapientes Chrysippus optavit, certe quantum res pateretur optimas eligi voluit. et morum quidem in his haud dubie prior ratio est, recte tamen etiam loquantur. has primum audiet puer, harum verba effingere imitando conabitur, et natura tenacissimi sumus eorum quae rudibus animis percepimus: ut sapor quo nova <vasa> inbuas durat, nec lanarum colores quibus simplex ille candor mutatus est elui possunt...

Quint. *Inst.* I.3.12 f.

mores quoque se inter ludendum simplicius detegunt: modo nulla videatur aetas tam infirma quae non protinus quid rectum pravumque sit discat, tum vel maxime formanda cum simulandi nescia est et praecipientibus facillime cedit; frangas enim citius quam corrigas quae in pravum induruerunt...

Juv. 14.44–9:

nil dictu foedum visuque haec limina tangat | intra quae pater est. procul, a procul ite, puellae  
| lenonum et cantus pernoctantis parasiti. | maxima debetur puero reverentia. si quid | turpe paras, ne tu teneros contempseris annos, | sed peccaturo obstet tibi filius infans.

Plin. *Ep.* III.3.4:

iam studia eius extra limen proferenda sunt, iam circumspiciendus rhetor Latinus, cuius scholae severitas pudor in primis castitas constet. adest enim adulescenti nostro cum ceteris naturae fortunaeque dotibus eximia corporis pulchritudo, cui in hoc lubrico aetatis non praeceptor modo sed custos etiam rectorque quaerendus est.

Plut. *Mor.* 4B–C:

τὸ δὲ πάντων μέγιστον καὶ κυριώτατον τῶν εἰρημένων ἔρχομαι φράσω. διδασκάλους γὰρ ἐμπειρίαις ἄριστοι· πηγὴ γὰρ καὶ ρίζα καλοκαγαθίας τὸ νομίμου τυχεῖν παιδείας. καὶ καθάπερ τὰς χάρακας οἱ γεωργοὶ τοῖς φυτοῖς παρατιθέασιν, οὕτως οἱ νόμμοι τῶν διδασκάλων ἐμμελεῖς τὰς ὑποθήκας καὶ παραινέσεις παραπηγνύουσι τοῖς νέοις, ὡς ὀρθὰ τούτων βλαστάνη τὰ ἤθη.

Plut. *Mor.* 9D:

ἄξιον δ' ἐπιτιμῶν τῶν πατέρων ἐνίοις, οἵτινες παιδαγωγοῖς καὶ διδασκάλους ἐπιτρέψαντες τοὺς υἱεῖς αὐτοῖ τῆς τούτων μαθήσεως οὐτ' αὐτόπται γίνονται τὸ παράπαν οὐτ' αὐτήκοοι, πλείστον τοῦ δέοντος ἀμαρτάνοντες. αὐτοὺς γὰρ παρ' ὀλίγας ἡμέρας δεῖ δοκιμασίαν λαμβάνειν τῶν παιδῶν, ἀλλὰ μὴ τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχειν ἐν μισθωτοῦ διαθέσει· καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι πλείονα ποιήσονται τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν τῶν παιδῶν, μέλλοντες ἐκάστοτε δίδοναι τὰς εὐθύνas.

# D. PATAVIUM

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## 17. PATAVINITAS

*Patavinitas*: a brickbat Asinius Pollio lodged at Livy (Quint. *Inst.* 1.5.56, cf. VIII.1.2 f.). But also note that Pollio was a captious pedant (Quint. *Inst.* IX.3.14; Suet. *Caes.* 56.4, *Gram.* 10.1; Gel X.26.1–5).

The word itself, *Patavinitas*, is left unqualified in Quintilian, which has left scholars with various interpretations to choose from. The following is not a comprehensive selection.

E. Norden, *Die antike Kunstprosa* (Leipzig, 1898) 238

Über die von Asinius Pollio gerügte *Patavinitas* wurden in früheren Jahrhunderten große Abhandlungen geschrieben, vor allem die genannte des Polyhistor Morhof. Wir wissen gar nichts darüber, begreifen aber, daß ein Mann, dem Cicero so unsympathisch war und der offenbar zur Partei der extremen Atticisten gehörte, an der livianischen *ubertas* keinen Gefallen finden konnte... Jedenfalls bedurfte es, um das an Livius zu erkennen, jenes hypersensiblen *μυκτῆρ*, an den Pollio mit großer Impertinenz einen nach dem andern aufhängte.

J. Whatmough, *HSPb* XLIV (1933), 97

In a previous paper on a different topic, I threw out in passing the suggestion that Livy's 'Patavinity' was of the same order as the barbarisms of Tinca Placentinus (Quint., *Inst. Or.* 1.5.12), 'si reprehendenti Hortensio credimus.' The suggestion was prompted, if not confirmed, by the noteworthy facts that Quintilian has recorded for us Hortensius' censure of Tinca and Pollio's censure of Livy in the self-same chapter of the *Inst. Or.* (1.5), using the same term of both critics (*reprehendere*), and discussing the same topics in both bases, the philological side of grammar, and that both Tinca and Livy were *Cisalpini*... Nevertheless, it had been obvious to me, especially as I read chapter five in the first book of the *Inst. Or.*, that to know what 'Patavinity' was, we must try to learn from whatever evidence is available just what were the peculiarities of the Patavian or of the Venetic pronunciation of Latin, even of educated speakers, in (say) the last century of the Republic and the first century of our era.

R. Syme, *The Roman revolution* (Oxford, 1939), 485 f.

The original sin of Livy is darker and more detestable. The word 'Patavinitas' sums up, elegantly and finally, the whole moral and romantic view of history. Pollio knew what history was. It was not like Livy.

L. A. MacKay, *CPb* XXXVIII (1943), 45

Is it possible to form any conception of what the adjective *Patavinus* might suggest to Pollio's contemporaries? If we bear in mind that Pollio was an acknowledged wit, a merciless and sharp-tongued critic, and must have disapproved of the very *lactea ubertas* of Livy's style, we may get an indication of what he meant from Martial xiv. 143[:] *Vellera consumunt Patavinae multa trilices et pingues tunicas serra secare potest*. Livy's style, I suggest, was to Pollio's taste as thick and fuzzy as the familiar woolen stuffs of his native town... That Quintilian missed the point is no insuperable objection, for Quintilian, with all his merits, was not what anyone would call a wit.

J. Whatmough, *CPb* XXXVIII (1943), 205

Mr. MacKay suggests that *Patavinitas* was a matter of style and further that this style was comparable to the thick and woolly *trilices Patavinae*. In that case I must ask what Praenestine garments were like, for the accusation brought against Vettius by Lucilius was of the kind *quemadmodum Pollio reprehendit in Liuio Patavinitatem*; it was, in short, what we might justly call "Praenestinitas"... No, Pollio accused Livy of a lapse into dialect, that is all.

A. H. Travis, *CPb* XLVIII (1953), 175

In his province Brutus will hear some words not standard at Rome, but among the orators this will not be an important consideration since study can eliminate such words...What Brutus will miss among the orators of his province is *urbanitas* in the way they speak their words; that is what Pollio found wrong with Livy's pronunciation, labeling with his incisive wit what he did hear as *Patavinitas*.

R. Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958), 202 n. 8, 617

That defect, which Quintilian interpreted as the use of local or dialect words (I. 5. 56; VIII. 1. 3), is perhaps something worse, and deeper, to be divined by what is known about Patavium and about the man who made the remark (Asinius Pollio).

That is not to deny the survival of local divergences north of the Po, or elsewhere in Italy, still less to depreciate the force of local patriotisms. There was something in Livy that could be opprobriously designated as 'Patavinitas'. How much the inner 'Patavinitas' of the historian had to do with race or religion is another matter.

G. A. Kennedy, *The art of rhetoric in the Roman world* (Princeton, 1972), 307

Pollio's style was certainly plain and probably to be associated with the neo-Atticist movement. His famous criticism of Livy for *Patavinitas* (Quint. 8.1.3) suggests an opposing value for *Latinitas*.

P. M. Keegan, "Seen, not heard: *feminea lingua* in Ovid's *Fasti* and the critical gaze", 146. In *Ovid's Fasti: historical readings at its bimillennium*. Edited by G. Herber-Brown. (Oxford, 2002)

Ovid treads a similar path to Livy's variant, and follows the *patavinitas* of his retelling (if not in style or tone, then certainly in sequence and content).

J. N. Adams, *The regional diversification of Latin* (Cambridge, 2007), 152 f.

Any suggestion that *Patauinitas* had a non-linguistic meaning (as for example that it referred to some moral characteristic of the Paduans) is also unconvincing. *Patauinitas* was coined on the analogy of *Latinitas* 'correct Latin', and it cannot but imply deviation from correctness. It occurs in linguistic contexts in Quintilian...Pollio probably made a vague charge of provincialism against Livy without going into detail, and Quintilian was not sure exactly what was meant.

J. Muñiz Coello, *Klio* XCI (2009), 141

En aquella noción oscura y vaga, su autor pudo condensar otros significados. *Patavinitas*, como término derivado que recoge el singular uso de una lengua, pero también referido a la idiosincrasia de ese pueblo, el peculiar – desde el punto de vista del que analiza – comportamiento colectivo de sus ciudadanos, observado a través de la conducta de una parte de ellos, en el proceso típico de acumulación de prejuicios que llevan a la elaboración de su estereotipo. El término era peyorativo, con él se descalificaba lo leído, y subrayaba la dudosa calidad de una obra que se elaboraba lastrada por la lente distorsionada a través del cual los romanos conocían a aquel municipio del norte.

## 18. PATAVINE Demeanor

Paduans had a reputation for a stern and steely demeanor, much more in tune with the ways of older-school Romans.

Cic. *Phil.* XII.10:

Patavini alios excluserunt, alios eiecerunt missos ab Antonio, pecunia, militibus, et, quod maxime deerat, armis nostros duces adiuverunt. fecerunt idem reliqui, qui quondam in eadem causa erant et propter multorum annorum iniurias alienati a senatu putabantur: quos minime

mirum est communicata cum eis re publica fidelis <esse>, qui etiam expertes eius fidem suam semper praestiterunt.

Mart. XI.16.7–10:

tu quoque nequitias nostri lususque libelli | uda, puella, leges, sis Patavina licet. | erubuit po-  
suitque meum Lucretia librum, | sed coram Bruto; Brute, recede: leget.

Plin. *Ep.* I.14.6:

habet aviam maternam Serranam Proculam e municipio Patavio. nosti loci mores: Serrana  
tamen Patavinis quoque severitatis exemplum est.

Macr. I.11.22:

Asinio etiam Pollione acerbè cogente Patavinos ut pecuniam et arma conferrent dominisque  
ob hoc latentibus, praemio servis cum libertate proposito qui dominos suos proderent, con-  
stat servorum nullum victum praemio dominum prodidisse.

Such characterizations of an entire group of people are not uncommon. The Sabines, for an example of a whole people, were a stalwart group (Cic. *Vat.* 15, 36; Liv. I.18.4; Ov. *Am.* III.8.61) with high moral standards (Cic. *Lig.* 11, 32; Juv. 10.298). Such demographic stereotypes are still common enough today—Los Angelenos are health and fitness nuts, New Yorkers are rude, Parisians are snobs—but aside from something one might say about the Swiss, it seems rather more difficult to find a moral comment about geographically specific group of people.

# E. GREEK SPEAKING ROMANS

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## 19. GREEK SPEAKERS IN CICERO'S *BRUTUS*

### (i) Born before the Third Macedonian War:

(1) C. Sulpicius Gallus (*cos.* 166)

“qui maxume omnium nobilium Graecis litteris studuit” (78).

(2) Postumius Albinus (*cos.* 151)

“is qui Graece scripsit historiam, qui consul cum L. Lucullo fuit, et litteratus et disertus fuit” (81).

(3) Scipio Aemilianus (*cos.* 147)

“is qui hunc minorem Scipionem a Paulo adoptavit, si corpore valisset, in primis habitus esset disertus; indicant cum oratiunculae tum historia quaedam Graeca scripta dulcissime” (77).

(4) D. Brutus (*cos.* 138)

“vester etiam D. Brutus M. filius, ut ex familiari eius L. Accio poeta sum audire solitus, et dicere non inculte solebat et erat cum litteris Latinis tum etiam Graecis, ut temporibus illis, eruditus” (107).

(5) Ti. Gracchus (*tr. pl.* 133)

“erat isdem temporibus Ti. Gracchus P. f., qui bis consul et censor fuit, cuius est oratio Graeca apud Rhodios; quem civem cum gravem tum etiam eloquentem constat fuisse” (79).

“fuit Gracchus diligentia Corneliae matris a puero doctus et Graecis litteris eruditus. nam semper habuit exquisitos e Graecia magistros, in eis iam adulescens Diophanem Mytilenaeum Graeciae temporibus illis disertissimum” (104).

### (ii) Born after the Third Macedonian War:

(7) P. Rutilius Rufus (*cos.* 105)

“sunt eius orationes ieiunae; multa praeclara de iure; doctus vir et Graecis litteris eruditus, Panaeti auditor, prope perfectus in Stoicis” (114).

(8) T. Albucius (*pr.* 105)

“doctus etiam Graecis T. Albucius vel potius paene Graecus. loquor, ut opinor; sed licet ex orationibus iudicare. fuit autem Athenis adulescens, perfectus Epicureus evaserat, minime aptum ad dicendum genus” (131).

(9) M. Gratidius (d. 102)

“doctus autem Graecis litteris propinquus noster, factus ad dicendum, M. Gratidius M. Antoni perfamiliaris” (168).

(10) L. Philippus (*cos.* 91)

“summa libertas in oratione, multae facetiae; satis creber in reperiendis, solutus in explicandis sententiis; erat etiam in primis, ut temporibus illis, Graecis doctrinis institutus, in altercando cum aliquo aculeo et maledicto facetus” (173).

- (11) C. Marcus Censorinus (d. 82)  
“C. Censorinus Graecis litteris satis doctus, quod proposuerat explicans expedite, non invenustus actor sed iners et inimicus fori” (237).
- (12) Q. Valerius Soranus (d. 82)  
“Q. D. Valerii Sorani, vicini et familiares mei, non tam in dicendo admirabiles quam docti et Graecis litteris et Latinis” (169).
- (13) D. Brutus (*cos.* 77)  
“multum etiam in causis versabatur isdem fere temporibus D. Brutus, is qui consul cum Mamerco fuit, homo et Graecis doctus litteris et Latinis” (175).
- (14) L. Aelius Stilo (d. 74)  
“fuit is omnino vir egregius et eques Romanus cum primis honestus idemque eruditissimus et Graecis litteris et Latinis, antiquitatisque nostrae et in inventis rebus et in actis scriptorumque veterum litterate peritus” (205).
- (15) Q. Hortensius (*cos.* 69)  
“etenim si viveret Q. Hortensius, cetera fortasse desideraret una cum reliquis bonis et fortibus civibus, hunc autem aut praeter ceteros aut cum paucis sustineret dolorem, cum forum populi Romani, quod fuisset quasi theatrum illius ingeni, voce erudita et Romanis Graecisque auribus digna spoliatum atque orbatum videret” (6).
- (16) C. Memmius (*tr. pl.* 66)  
“C. Memmius L. f. perfectus litteris sed Graecis, fastidiosus sane Latinarum, argutus orator verbisque dulcis” (247).
- (17) M. Piso (*cos.* 61)  
“M. Piso quicquid habuit, habuit ex disciplina maximeque ex omnibus qui ante fuerunt Graecis doctrinis” (236).

# F. SENECAN STYLE AND THEMES

## 2 I. RECURRENCES IN PROSE AND TRAGEDY

(1) *Phaed.* 978–80:

“res humanas ordine nullo | Fortuna regit sparsitque manu | munera caeca peiora fovens.”

(1a) *Dial.* VI.10.6:

“in regnum fortunae et quidem durum atque invictum pervenimus, illius arbitrio digna atque indigna passuri. corporibus nostris impotenter, contumeliose, crudeliter abutetur. alios ignibus peruret vel in poenam admotis vel in remedium; alios vinciet: id nunc hosti licebit, nunc civi; alios per incerta nudos maria iactabit et luctatos cum fluctibus ne in harenam quidem aut litus explodet, sed in alicuius immensae ventrem beluae decondet; alios morborum varis generibus emaceratos diu inter vitam mortemque medios detinebit. ut varia et libidinosa mancipiorumque suorum neglegens domina et poenis et muneribus errabit.”

(1b) *Dial.* XI.9.4:

“an hoc te movet, quod videtur ingentibus et cum maxime circumfuis bonis caruisse? cum cogitaveris multa esse, quae perdidit, cogita plura esse, quae non timet. non ira eum torquebit, non morbus affliget, non suspicio lacesset, non edax et inimica semper alienis processibus invidia consecrabitur, non metus sollicitabit, non levitas fortunae cito munera sua transferentis inquietabit.”

(2) *Ag.* 101 f.:

“quidquid in altum Fortuna tulit, | ruitura levat.”

(2a) *Dial.* II.5.4:

“omnis iniuria deminutio eius est in quem incurrit, nec potest quisquam iniuriam accipere sine aliquo detrimento vel dignitatis vel corporis vel rerum extra nos positarum. sapiens autem nihil perdere potest; omnia in se reposuit, nihil fortunae credit, bona sua in solido habet contentus virtute, quae fortuitis non indiget ideoque nec augeri nec minui potest; nam et in summum perducta incrementi non habent locum et nihil eripit fortuna nisi quod dedit.”

(2b) *Dial.* VI.23.3:

“quid? tu, Marcia, cum videres senilem in iuvene prudentiam, victorem omnium voluptatum animum, emendatum, carentem vitio, divitias sine avaritia, honores sine ambitione, voluptates sine luxuria adpetentem, diu tibi putabas illum sospitem posse contingere?”

(3) *Herc. O.* 644–8:

“caespes Tyrio mollior ostro | solet impavidos ducere somnos; | aurea rumpunt texta quietem | vigilesque trahit purpura noctes. | o si pateant pectora ditum!”

(3a) *Ep.* 115.9:

“miramur parietes tenui marmore inductos, cum sciamus, quale sit quod absconditur. oculis nostris inponimus, et cum auro tecta perfudimus, quid aliud quam mendacio gaudemus? scimus enim sub illo auro foeda ligna latitare.”

(3b) *Ep.* 119.11 f.:

“at excaecant populum et in se convertunt opes, si numerati multum ex aliqua domo effertur, si multum auri tecto quoque eius inlinitur, si familia aut corporibus electa aut spectabilis cultu est. omnium istorum felicitas in publicum spectat; ille, quem nos et populo et fortunae subduximus, beatus introsus est.”

(4) *Thy.* 455–8:

“non vertice alti montis impositam domum | et imminentem civitas humilis tremit, | nec  
fulget altis splendidum tectis ebur, | somnosque non defendit excubitor meos.”

(4a) *Ben.* IV.6.2:

“si domus tibi donetur, in qua marmoris aliquid resplendeat et tectum nitidius auro aut  
coloribus sparsum, non mediocre munus vocabis. ingens tibi domicilium sine ullo incendii  
aut ruinae metu struxit, in quo vides non tenues crustas et ipsa, qua secantur, lamna  
graciliores, sed integras lapidis pretiosissimi moles, sed totas variae distinctaeque materiae,  
cuius tu parvula frustra miraris, tectum vero aliter nocte, aliter interdiu fulgens: negas te  
ullum munus accepisse?”

(4b) *Dial.* IX.1.8:

“cum bene ista placuerunt, praestringit animum apparatus alicuius paedagogii, diligentius  
quam in tralatu vestita et auro culta mancipia et agmen servorum nitentium; iam domus  
etiam qua calcatur pretiosa et divitiis per omnes angulos dissipatis tecta ipsa fulgentia et  
adsectator comesque patrimoniorum pereuntium populus.”

(4c) *Dial.* XII.10.7:

“scilicet maiores nostri, quorum virtus etiam nunc vitia nostra sustentat, infelices erant, qui  
sibi manu sua parabant cibum, quibus terra cubile erat, quorum tecta nondum auro  
fulgebant, quorum templa nondum gemmis nitabant. itaque tunc per fictiles deos religiose  
iurabatur; qui illos invocaverant, ad hostem morituri, ne fallerent, redibant.”

(4d) *Ep.* 114.9:

“quod vitium hominis esse interdum, interdum temporis solet. ubi luxuriam late felicitas  
fudit, cultus primum corporum esse diligentior incipit. deinde suppellectili laboratur. deinde  
in ipsas domos impenditur cura, ut in laxitatem ruris excurrant, ut parietes advectis trans  
maria marmoribus fulgeant, ut tecta varientur auro, ut lacunaribus pavimentorum respondeat  
nitor. deinde ad cenas lautitia transfertur, et illic commendatio ex novitate et soliti ordinis  
commutatione captatur, ut ea, quae includere solent cenam, prima ponantur, ut quae  
advenientibus dabantur, exeuntibus dentur.”

## 2.2. ARCHAISING FORMS OF *ESSE* IN SENECA'S PROSE

### *De beneficiis*

(1) IV.38.2: “i, ostende, quam sacra res sit mensa hospitalis; praebe in facie tua legendum  
istuc decretum, quo cavetur, ne miseros tecto iuvare capital sit.”

(2) VI.6.1: “quae proposuisti, mi Liberalis, exempla certis legibus continentur, quas necesse  
est sequi. lex legi non miscetur, utraque sua via it.”

(3) VI.35.5: “at quid interest, utrum vox ista sit voti tui an vis? aliquid enim horum optas. i  
nunc et hoc esse grati puta, quod ne ingratus quidem faceret, qui modo non usque in odium,  
sed tantum usque ad infitiationem beneficii perveniret!”

### *Dialogi*

(4) I.5.11: “humilis et inertis est tuta sectari; per alta virtus it.”

(5) II.14.4: “non respicit, quid homines turpe iudicent aut miserum, non it qua populus, sed  
ut sidera contrarium mundo iter intendunt, ita hic adversus opinionem omnium vadit.”

(6) V.3.3: “sanum hunc aliquis vocat, qui velut tempestate correptus non it sed agitur et  
furenti malo servit...?”

(7) VI.15.4: “sed videlicet it in orbem ista tempestas et sine dilectu vastat omnia agitque ut sua. iube singulos conferre rationem; nulli contigit impune nasci.”

(8) X.12.8: “i nunc et mimos multa mentiri ad exprobrandam luxuriam puta.”

(9) XII.6.8: “i nunc et humanum animum ex isdem, quibus divina constant, seminibus compositum moleste ferre transitum ac migrationem puta, cum dei natura adsidua et citatissima commutatione vel delectet se vel conservet.”

(10) XII.10.10: “i nunc et puta pecuniae modum ad rem pertinere, non animi.”

(11) XII.11.7: “ideoque nec exulare umquam potest, liber et deis cognatus et omni mundo omnique aevo par; nam cogitatio eius circa omne caelum it, in omne praeteritum futurumque tempus immittitur.”

### *Epistulae morales*

(12) 18.3: “certissimum enim argumentum firmitatis suae capit, si ad blanda et in luxuriam trahentia nec it nec abducitur.”

(13) 82.2: “i, qua ire coepisti et in isto te vitae habitu conpone placide, non molliter.”

(14) 88.38: “i nunc et longam esse vitam nega!”

(15) 93.12: “mors per omnes it; qui occidit, consequitur occisum.”

(16) 94.63: “iam etiam a Dareo liberae nationes iugum accipiunt: it tamen ultra oceanum solemque, indignatur ab Herculis Liberique vestigiis victoriam flectere, ipsi naturae vim parat.”

### *Naturales quaestiones*

(17) I.16.3: “i nunc et dic speculum munditiarum causa repertum.”

(18) VI.17.1: “nam, quamdiu non impeditur, it placide.”

(19) VII.23.1: “etiamnunc ignis aut it quo illum natura sua ducit, id est sursum, aut eo quo trahit materia cui adhaesit et quam depascitur.”

(20) VII.29.2: “‘Sed maiore’, inquis, ‘ambitu circuit nec tardius it quam ceterae sed longius.’”

## 23. BODILY HARM IN PROSE

Not an exhaustive catalog of all instances of torture, injury, mutilation, or other types of physical trauma in Seneca’s works, but examples enough to make the general point that these practices were something of a persistent interest with Seneca.

### Flagellation

*Dial.* III.16.5; *Ep.* 85.27.

### Branding

*Dial.* V.3.6; *Ep.* 4.4, 7.5, 78.19.

### Cremation

*Ben.* IV.2.1.6, VII.19.8; *Cl.* II.4.1; *Dial.* VI.17.5; *Ep.* 14.4, 24.13, 66.18, 67.3, 78.19, 85.26, 88.29; *NQ* IV pr. 17.

### Racking

*Ben.* IV.2.1.6; *Cl.* I.13.2; *Dial.* V.3.6, 19.1; *Ep.* 14.5, 66.18, 67.3, 71.21, 78.14.

### Crucifixion

*Cl.* I.23.1, 26.1; *Dial.* I.3.10, III.22, V.3.6, X.19.3; *Ep.* 14.5, 98.12, 101.12–4.

## 24. POETIC ECHOES IN *APOCOLOCYNTOSIS* 4.1

### (i) Phrases

(1) *Sen. Apoc.* 4.1.8:

“mutatur vilis pretioso lana metallo.”

(1a) *Ov. Pont.* III.8.5:

“nec tamen haec loca sunt ullo pretiosa metallo.”

(2) *Sen. Apoc.* 4.1.9:

“aurea formoso descendunt saecula filo.”

(2a) *Lucr.* III.869:

“mortalem vitam mors cum immortalis ademit.

(2b) *Verg. Aen.* VI.792–4:

“Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet | saecula qui rursus Latio regnata per  
arva | Saturno quondam,”

(3) *Sen. Apoc.* 4.1.21–3:

“Phoebus ait ‘vincat mortalis temora vitae | ille mihi similis vultu similisque decore  
| nec cantu nec voce minor.”

(3a) *Verg. G.* 4.326:

“en etiam hunc ipsum vitae mortalis honorem.”

(3b) *Verg. Aen.* X.467 f.:

“stat sua cuique dies, breve et inreparabile tempus | omnibus est vitae.”

(3c) *Ov. Ep.* 20.59:

“et decor et vultus sine rusticitate pudentes.”

(3d) *Ov. Met.* XI.698 f.:

“neque enim de vitae tempore quicquam | non simul egissem.”

(3e) *Ov. Tr.* IV.9.5 f.:

“fac modo te damnes cupiasque eradere vitae | tempora, si possis, Tisiphonaea tuae.”

(3f) *Ov. Tr.* V.10.11 f.:

“an peragunt solitos communia tempora motus, | stantque magis vitae tempora dura  
meae?”

(3g) *Ov. Pont.* II.3.1–4:

“Maxime, qui claris nomen virtutibus aequas | nec sinis ingenium nobilitate premi, |  
culte mihi (quid enim status hic a funere differt?) | supremum vitae tempus adusque  
meae.”

(3h) *Ov. Pont.* II.5.73–5:

“pro quibus ut maneat de quo censeris amicus | comprecor ad vitae tempora summa  
tuae | succedatque suis orbis moderator habenis.”

(3i) *Ov. Pont.* III.2.29 f.:

“fallor et illa meae superabit tempora vitae, | si tamen a memori posteritate legar.”

(ii) Line openings

*Candida de niveo* (5): cf. *Met.* XI.382, “candida de nigris.”

*Nec modus est* (10): *Met.* IX.172.

*Phoebus adest* (15): *Rem.* 705.

*Phoebus ait* (21): *Met.* X.197.

*Ille mihi* (22): *Ep.* I.60, IV.13, *Met.* III.715.

(iii) Line endings

*Stamina fuso* (1, 13): *Ep.* 19.37; *Met.* IV.221.

*Tempora vitae* (2): Verg. *Cat.* 4.1; Tib. III.7.112a; Ov. *Met.* III.469, *Pont.* III.2.29; Man.  
II.839, 850, III.560.

*Ornata capillos* (3): Ov. *Met.* XI.385.

*Pensa ministrat* (16): cf. Prop. III.6.15, “pensa ministrae.”

*Concitat axes* (28): cf. Verg. *Aen.* XII.379, “concitus axis.”

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