

NOTES ON SENECA'S LETTERS¹

The following editions are referred to: Muretus (1585); Schweighäuser (1809); Haase (1853); Hense (1898, 1914); Summers (1910); Gummere (1917–25); Préchac (texte) et Noblot (traduction) (1945–64); Reynolds (1965).

Axelson (1933) = *Senecastudien*; Axelson (1939) = *Neue Senecastudien*; Madvig = *Adversaria critica* ii. 466 ff.

11. 5. Non accidit hoc [sc. erubescere] ab infirmitate mentis sed a novitate rei quae inexcitatos...movet naturali in hoc facilitate corporis pronos; nam ut quidam boni sanguinis sunt, ita quidam incitati et mobilis et cito in os prodeuntis.

Blushing is a physical weakness due to one's blood-type; good and bad are equally prone to it.

boni sanguinis 'full-blooded' (Gummere); *boni* 'healthy' (Summers). Neither these nor any other sense which could reasonably be assigned to *boni* will make it provide a satisfactory contrast to *incitati et mobilis*. 'Der normale Zustand des Blutes...kommt hier nicht in Frage; *incitati et mobilis* erfordert die Erwähnung der umgekehrten Abnormität', Axelson (1939, p. 44), who proceeds to point out that the natural Latin word for the opposite abnormality is Haase's *lenti*. Axelson himself admits that the change of *boni* to *lenti* is 'nicht ausserordentlich leicht'; this is an understatement, but the change is objectionable not only for that reason but also because *boni* is required as a nominative plural with *quidam* (both occurrences). Seneca is repeating the point already made in § 1 ('amicus tuus bonae indolis' and 'bonum in adulescente signum') that blushing can be the sign of a good nature;² the emphasis of the sentence falls on the *ita* clause. The right solution is therefore *ut quidam boni <lenti> sanguinis sunt*.

15. 8. Ergo, utcumque tibi impetus animi suaserit, modo vehementius fac vitiis convicium, modo lentius, prout vox te quoque hortabitur †in id latust†; modesta, cum recipies illam revocabisque, descendat, non decidat; †mediatorisui habeat et hoc† indocto et rustico more desaeviat.

In the middle sentence *descendat, non decidat* has been described as 'thoroughly Senecan' (Summers), as indeed it is; but the addition of *modesta* ('under control') to *descendat* adds nothing to the point, and its position at the beginning of the sentence, separated from *descendat* by the *cum* clause, is displeasing. Surely Madvig was right in putting a full stop at *hortabitur* (excellent clausula), and in taking *modesta* with what precedes, which he emended to *in elatis*; this makes a good contrast to *descendat*, although it should possibly be made a clause in its own right by the insertion of a verb, e.g. *in elatis <sit> modesta* or *modesta <sit>* (both good clausulae).

In the last sentence all the proposals along the lines of *media(m) oris vi(m)* or *via* should be scrapped in favour of something like the most recent suggestions reported by Reynolds, *nec vindemiatoris* (or *viatoris*) *vim habeat nec*. But the noun, I suggest, was certainly not *vindemiator* nor even *viator* but <no>*menclator*, which is regularly corrupted to *nomendator*.

22. 13. Iam inprimebam epistulae signum: resolvenda est, ut cum sollempni ad te munusculo veniat et aliquam magnificam vocem ferat secum. ... 'cuius?' inquis. Epicuri; adhuc enim alienas †sarcinas adoro†.

¹ I am very grateful to Professor R. G. M. Nisbet for commenting on the suggestions made in this article.

² Cicero makes a similar point about a quick but easily pacified temper at *Att.* 1. 17. 4, 'esse hanc agilitatem...mollitiamque naturae plerumque bonitatis'.

The only helpful discussion of this much-emended passage is that of Axelson (1933, pp. 106 ff.), who proposes *arculas advoco*. I regard *arculas* as certain; in its favour Axelson quotes 26. 8 (in a similar context, introducing a quotation from Epicurus) 'scis cuius arca utar'. He could have reinforced his case by pointing out (a) that this diminutive is used by Seneca elsewhere (*Ep.* 92. 13, *Dial.* 9. 1. 5); (b) that the corruption of *arculas* to *sarcinas* was all the easier because of the occurrence of *sarcinis* in the immediately preceding context.

Axelson's *advoco*, however, is much less convincing. The truth, I think, is suggested by 8. 7 (also in a similar context, introducing a quotation from Epicurus) 'adhuc Epicurum compilamus'.³ What is required is a verb meaning 'steal from', 'plunder', i.e. <pr>*aedor*. The resulting clausula is of Axelson's Type I.

26. 8. Desinere iam volebam et manus spectabat ad clausulam, sed conficienda sunt †sacra† et huic epistulae viaticum dandum est.

Madvig's *aera* has won some approval; even Axelson (1939, p. 141, n. 9) thought it probable. I agree with D. R. Shackleton Bailey⁴ that it is not convincing; my main objection is that *aera*, 'sums of money', is an undesirable anticipation of *viaticum*, 'travelling-money'.

Seneca ends each of Letters 1–29 with a quotation (usually from Epicurus) which he calls a payment or present to Lucilius; without such a quotation the letter is not complete. Perhaps then s<p>*atia*, a metaphor from the racecourse, 'the laps must be completed'; *spatium conficere* is a regular expression. The corruption of *spatia* to *sacra* has almost certainly occurred at [Quint.], *Decl.* 1. 13 (p. 15. 15 Lehnert).

32. 3. ...subinde considera quam pulchra res sit consummare vitam ante mortem, deinde expectare securum reliquam temporis sui partem, †nihil sibi, in possessione beatae vitae positum, quae beator non fit si longior.

The best suggestion is Gummere's, that a word like *adrogantem* has dropped out before *nihil*. Certainly the omission, after *partem*, of a participle ending in *tem* is plausible, but there are many possibilities, e.g. *desiderantem*, *optantem*, *cupientem*, *postulantem*. The following phrase (which might well be suspected) has a parallel at *Dial.* 3. 7. 2 'cum se in possessione posuerunt'.

34. 3. Ego, cum vidissem indolem tuam, inieci manum, exhortatus sum, addidi stimulos nec lente ire passus sum sed subinde incitavi; et nunc idem facio, sed iam currentem hortor et invicem hortantem. 'quid †aliud?' inquis; 'adhuc volo.' in hoc [sc. velle] plurimum est; ... pars magna bonitatis est velle fieri bonum.

Some infelicitous suggestions (see Reynolds's apparatus) have been made for the obelized passage. Even the very tentative suggestion made by Axelson (1939, pp. 172 f.), of *illud* for *aliud*, carries no conviction. The most helpful note is that of Madvig: 'apparet Lucilium modeste laudem deprecatum esse cum diceret se adhuc velle tantum,⁵ non perfecisse quod vellet'. I suggest that for *quid aliud*? we might read *quid laud<as>?*

40. 2. [Serapio philosophus] solet magno cursu verba convellere, quae non effundit †ima† sed premit et urguet; plura enim veniunt quam quibus vox una sufficiat.

Nothing worthy of mention (apart from deletion) has been proposed for the corrupt *ima*. Perhaps an adverb is wanted like <sens>*im*; cf. Cicero, *Phil.* 2. 42 'ille sensim dicebat quod causae prodesset, tu cursim dicis aliena'.

³ *compilamus* is a convincing emendation of *complicamus*.

⁴ *CQ* n.s. 20 (1970), 351.

⁵ For the omission of *tantum* with *volo* see Axelson (1933, pp. 62 ff.).

49. 4. *Modo te prosecutus sum; et tamen hoc 'modo' aetatis nostrae bona portio est, cuius brevitatem aliquando †futam† cogitemus. non solebat mihi tam velox tempus videri; nunc incredibilis cursus apparet, sive quia admoveri lineas sentio sive quia adtendere coepi et computare damnum meum.*

It is easy to emend *futam*: read *fu<gi>turam*, in the sense of *effugituram*.

The plural *lineas* (of death) is unexpected; cf. Horace, *Ep.* 1. 16. 79 '*mors ultima linea rerum est*'. Perhaps the final letter has come from *sentio* and we should read either *lineam* or (as apparently Schweighäuser proposed) the dative *lineae*.

52. 12. *Intersit aliquid inter clamorem theatri et scholae: est aliqua et laudandi †licentia†.*

If Koch's *decentia* is rejected as a Ciceronian nonce-word (*Nat. D.* 2. 145) which does not occur again until late Latin, the next best alternative is not the very tentative suggestion of Axelson (1939, p. 5) *elegantia* but (I suggest) *<re>ticentia*.

53. 9. *Exercet philosophia regnum suum: dat tempus, non accipit; non est res subsiciva, ordinaria est; domina est, adest et iubet.*

So the passage should be punctuated. The usual punctuation (heavier stop after *subsiciva*) obscures the opposition (see *TLL* ix. 2. 933. 47 ff.) between *ordinaria* and *subsiciva*.

Summers explains *adeest* as 'comes (without a summons)' whereas 'the other things are to come when bidden'. The word still seems weak after *domina est*, and perhaps we should read *domina [est] adest et iubet*.

65. 15. '*Quid te*' inquis '*delectat tempus inter ista contere, quae tibi nullum adfectum eripiunt, nullam cupiditatem abigunt?*' ego quidem †peiora† illa ago ac tracto quibus pacatur animus.

Several neuter adjectives have been suggested: *priora*, *potiora*, *propiora*, *superiora*. The one which has not received its due is Chatelain's *<am>pliora*; not only is it palaeographically easy (after *quidem*) but this substantival neuter is used elsewhere (68. 2 and 73. 4) by Seneca in the sense required here, 'higher things', i.e. philosophical questions. (At §18 of our letter this is expressed by *sublimia*; the following *ampliora* is contrasted with *mortalia*.)

69. 4. *Avaritia pecuniam promittit, luxuria multas ac varias voluptates, ambitio purpuram et plausum et ex hoc potentiam et quidquid <potest> potentia.*

The supplement *potest* is found in one Paris manuscript after *potentia*. Although it has no authority, it seems to have been adopted by all editors either in that position or (after Hense) in front of *potentia*. However other supplements are just as possible, e.g. *quidquid <parit> potentia*.

80. 1. *Nemo inrumpet, nemo cogitationem meam inpediet, quae hac ipsa fiducia procedit audacius. non crepabit subinde ostium, non adlevabitur velum; licebit †uno† vadere, quod magis necessarium est per se eunti et suam sequenti viam.*

Hense's *tuto* is on the right lines, but preferable (I think) would be *<sec>uro*, which follows appropriately on *hac ipsa fiducia*; this noun is found in the same context as *securus* at 97. 13 (if the usual supplement is right) and 105. 8. Seneca is fond of the adverb *secure*, but the manuscript reading here favours the dative of the adjective.

87. 1. *Naufragium antequam navem ascenderem feci. quomodo acciderit non adicio, ne et hoc putes inter Stoica paradoxa ponendum.*

Editors continue to print *non adicio*, despite Summers's protest. The first sentence is a paradox, and will continue to be one unless it is explained to Lucilius; in fact it is explained in the rest of the letter. Therefore *non adicio* gives the opposite of the sense

required, which is 'I shall now add'. But Summers's *nunc* (for *non*), easy as it is palaeographically, is not the answer: read <quare> (or <cur>) *non adicio*, and punctuate as a question, comparing 95. 42 'mullum ingentis formae – quare autem non pondus adicio...?'

87. 2–3. Cum paucissimis servis, ... sine ullis rebus nisi quae corpore nostro continebantur, ego et Maximus meus biduum iam beatissimum agimus. ... de prandio nihil detrahi potuit; paratum fuit non magis hora†, nusquam sine caricis, numquam sine pugillaribus; illae [sc. caricae], si panem habeo, pro pulmentario sunt, si non habeo, pro pane.

Reynolds alone of modern editors obelizes as above; all others take *paratum* etc. to mean that lunch 'took not more than an hour to prepare' (Gummere), 'les apprêts ont pris moins d'une heure' (Noblot). To this translation there are three objections, already set out by H. Georgii:⁶

(1) Latin does not use *magis* in the sense of *amplius*;

(2) a picnic lunch of bread and figs, so far from taking 'not more than an hour', would take no time at all to prepare;

(3) *paratum fuit* means 'was ready', not 'was made ready'.

In the words which immediately follow the obelized passage there are two noteworthy features: the variation in *nusquam*⁷ ... *numquam* is slightly surprising, but much more so is the intrusion of *pugillares* (as though they constituted part of the lunch) between two mentions of figs. These features would be more natural in a quotation from, or a reference to, somebody else who was (a) a writer, (b) fond of eating figs. Such a one was Matris of Thebes (or of Athens?), a writer of hymns who, throughout his life, ate nothing but figs and drank nothing but water; see *RE* xiv. 2287 (esp. 2289. 14 ff.). Matris is mentioned also (if an emendation of A. Dieterich is accepted) by Cicero, *Fam.* 9. 16. 8 (see Shackleton Bailey ad loc.). In our passage I suggest that *Matris* is concealed under *magis*, which is very liable to be substituted by scribes for any word which resembles it (e.g. for *magni(s)* at 49. 6 and 71. 33; for *malus* at 76. 12). The negative *non* can easily be replaced by *nobis* (for the confusion of *nos* or *nobis* and *non* cf. 49. 2, 71. 19(?), 95. 65, 97. 9, 116. 5). For *hora* I suggest *more* (used at 15. 8 and 74. 4) or <in> *morem* (used at 40. 2); the latter produces the better clausula.

The final result is *paratum fuit nobis Matris <in> morem*, 'we had made provision for ourselves after the style of Matris, "nowhere without figs, never without a notebook"'.

93. 11. 'Non tam multis vixit annis quam potuit.' et paucorum versuum liber est et quidem laudandus atque utilis: annales Tanusii scis quam ponderosi sint et quid vocentur. [hoc est, vita quorundam longa est quod Tanusii sequitur annales.]

I have repunctuated the last sentence and replaced *longa et* by *longa est*; as usually printed it is awkwardly and obscurely expressed. In any case it adds nothing to the sense; I should delete it as a gloss.

105. 6. Habet unus quisque aliquem cui tantum credat quantum ipsi creditum est; ut ['although'] garrulitatem suam custodiat et contentus sit unius auribus, populum faciet; sic quod modo secretum erat rumor est.

In his discussion of this passage Axelson (1939, p. 16, n. 27) withdraws his former suggestion of (*pro*)*palam* for *populum* and argues convincingly that the genuineness of *populum* is guaranteed by the contrast with *unius*. But he still finds *populum faciet* unconvincing, as indeed it is for three reasons.

⁶ *Philol.* 84 (1929), 91 f.

⁷ It is very improbable that *nusquam* is a corruption of *numquam*; see Axelson (1939, p. 222).

(1) Presumably the meaning should be 'he will create a large public' or 'he will make this individual into a whole crowd'. This seems impossible to get from the Latin.

(2) Even if it were possible, it would be an undesirable anticipation of 'quod modo secretum erat rumor est'.

(3) The dactylic clausula is suspicious.

Since Axelsson's treatment of the passage only one suggestion has been made: Préchac prints *populum faciet* <*certiorem*>. This is too banal for serious consideration, but a lacuna nevertheless seems the most promising solution. I suggest *populum* <*conscium*> *faciet*, 'he will share his secret with the general public'; this leads up to, but does not anticipate, what follows.

105. 8. Tutum aliqua res in mala conscientia praestat, nulla securum; putat enim se, etiam si non deprenditur, posse deprenderi, et inter somnos movetur et quotiens alicuius scelus loquitur de suo cogitat.

'Whenever he speaks of another man's crime he thinks about his own.' Should the sense be rather 'whenever he *hears talk of* another man's crime'? This would be easy to obtain: read *quotiens* <*aliquis*> *alicuius*.

109. 16. Aiunt homines plus in alieno negotio videre finitio†. hoc illis evenit quos amor sui excaecat etc.

Reynolds convincingly disposes of the usual emendation *vitio* (taken with what follows).⁸ *initio* may be no more than a corruption (due to a contraction) of a repeated *negotio*; indeed, it is quite possible that the word should stand after, instead of before, *videre*, since this gives a better clausula. For other examples of dittography in the manuscripts of Seneca see Kronenberg, *CQ* 1 (1907), 210 ff.

120. 20. Maximum indicium est malae mentis fluctuatio et inter simulationem virtutum amoremque vitiorum adsidua iactatio. [is] 'habebat saepe ducentos' etc. [Horace, *Sat.* 1. 3. 11 ff.]

'Die Verbesserung des verderbten *is* steht noch aus, und auch ich weiss mit dieser rätselhaften Korruptel nichts anzufangen. Das Wort mit Muretus einfach zu tilgen, empfiehlt sich nicht, und von den Konjekturen... leuchtet keine ein', Axelsson (1933, p. 113). Perhaps the word should be neither deleted nor emended but just included in the quotation from Horace; it would be quite in the Horatian manner (cf. *Sat.* 1. 9. 18). Such inaccuracies in Seneca's quotations are found elsewhere, e.g. in the fourth line of this very quotation.

Aberdeen

W. S. WATT

⁸ *The Medieval Tradition of Seneca's Letters*, p. 146.