

SENECA, *EPISTULAE MORALES* 12.5: RULERS AND ROOFS

Recent editors have Seneca saying of old age, *illam (aetatem) quoque in extrema tegula stantem iudico habere suas voluptates*, that is, old age is like standing at the edge of a roof. This seems fine. But Erasmus had an exemplar (or exemplars) that read *regula* and so he printed in his edition of 1515.¹ Indeed, in Gruter's note at 12.5 in Muretus' 1593 edition (p. 583), he observed that all his manuscripts read *regula*. Lipsius in the fourth edition of his Seneca (1652) commented, *sed ego veterem lectionem praeferam, quae est regula* (p. 405).² But in his edition of 1529 [1541], Erasmus marked *regula* with a crux and added a marginal comment *al. tegula*. But *regula* gives little obvious sense and scholars have debated what this might mean. The prevalent defence of *regula* has been to take the word as referring to the bar that marked the end of a race. There is however no evidence for such a use of *regula*; it is used of the starting bar (Stat. *Theb.* 6.593; Seneca uses *linea* as the finish-line: *Ep.* 49.4). If then *tegula* is to be considered correct, how did *regula* come to be in its place in some early manuscripts? To be sure, paleographically the error is easy to understand. But I suspect that there is more to it. The Christian scribe who first miscopied the word as *regula* had in his mind Monnica's famous and strange dream in Augustine's *Confessions* (3.11), where she sees herself (and her son) *in regula stantem*.³

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¹ The 1503 Venice edition of Seneca (*Omnia Opera*) also reads *regula*.

² I am unsure whether any extant manuscripts read *regula*. Hense's apparatus (1898) indicates that Parisinus 8540 does and Reynold's apparatus may imply the same. But Beltrami says it has *tegula*. Lipsius also writes that Cassiodorus quoted the verse with *regula*. I find no evidence that he did so.

³ Scholars debate exactly what Augustine means here. We should of course remember that this is a dream and stranger things than 'standing on a ruler' occur in dreams.

A NOTE ON SENECA, *QUAESTIONES NATURALES* 6.1.5

Seneca discusses the peculiar terror of earthquakes: what hiding place can we hope for, if the earth itself is not secure?

quam latebram prospicimus, quod auxilium, si orbis ipse rimas agitat, si hoc, quod nos tuetur ac sustinet . . . , quod fundamentum quidam mundi esse dixerunt, discedit ac titubatur?

rimas Z: ruinas Ψ agitat ρ : agitet Z $\delta\theta v$ si² Ψ : om. Z

This is the text and apparatus of Hine's edition.¹ The manuscript tradition has two branches; at this point in the text Z is the only representative of one, while the families δ , θ , and π (of which ρ and v are descendants) make up the other (Ψ). Previous editors had preferred *ruinas agitat*, which Hine rejects;² he compares the well-attested phrase *rimas agere* ('to crack, to form cracks'), which Seneca himself

¹ H. M. Hine (ed.), *L. Annaeus Seneca, Naturalium Quaestionum libros*, (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1996).

² H. M. Hine, *Studies in the Text of Seneca's Naturales Quaestiones* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1996), 91–2. To Hine's doubts about the latinity of the phrase, one might add that *ruina* occurs a few lines earlier in the text, so that it would be in the mind of the copyist.