THE ARTFUL MORALIST: A STUDY OF SENECA'S EPISTOLARY STYLE

ALL the extant letters of Seneca are addressed to a single correspondent, Lucilius. They are among the latest of his writings and are entirely taken up with the discussion of philosophical questions, principally to do with Ethics—hence the title *Epistulae Morales*. The 115th letter could, one supposes, be taken to exemplify this particular kind of epistolary composition at its best. The object of the following discussion is twofold: first by a detailed analysis of the letter itself to establish precisely in what its distinctive literary excellence consists, and secondly by attending to its more representative qualities to form a clearer view of the genre to which it belongs.

As usual, Seneca plunges straight into the serious discussion without any introductory small talk or the exchange of pleasantries that one might expect in a communication to a close friend:

> Nimis anxium esse te circa uerba et compositionem, mi Lucili, nolo; habeo maiora quae cures.

Right at the start he establishes his role towards Lucilius and hence towards the general reader. It is an intimate one appropriate to the epistolary form, and is communicated throughout by the use of first and second persons. Yet it is not that of an ordinary correspondent addressing an equal but rather of master instructing pupil; hence, for example, *habeo* not *habes*.

The period in which the letter was written is reflected in the phrase *circa uerba*. For this sense of the preposition, perhaps influenced by Greek περί, is not found in literature before Livy but is already well established in the prose of the Elder Pliny and Quintilian.[1] More interesting, however, are the signs even in this apparently simple exposition of the letter's opening theme that we are dealing with a highly wrought and carefully calculated style. Like most writers of an inflected language, in which grammatical relationships do not depend upon word order, Seneca knows how to place his words to achieve maximum effect. The opening and closing positions of the phrase are the peaks of prominence in any language, and the placing of *nimis anxium* and *compositionem* here highlights one of the crucial antitheses of the argument expounded in the first two paragraphs. For an *oratio sollicita* not only reveals a preoccupation with the mere externals of *compositio uerborum*; it is also the symptom of an underlying lack of *compositio animi*. The truly great man *remissius loquitur et securius*.[2] Just how disingenuous Seneca is being here can be further illustrated in the closing

[1] It is found earlier in the legal text *C.I.L.* i. 583. 13. Other Silver Latin usages in the present letter include the comparative *fulgentiorem* (§ 4)—the superlative occurs already at Vell. 2. 39—the agent noun *admirator* (§ 15), also anticipated by Velleius (1. 13), extensions of the prepositional phrase with nominalized neuter adjectives like *ex magnifico placidoque* (§ 3). For a useful account of Senecan idiolect see W. C. Summers, *Select Letters of Seneca* (London, 1913), pp. xlii–xcv.

[2] This theme is recurrent in the later letters, e.g. 100. 4 ff. on the style of the philosopher Fabianus: 'oratio sollicita philosophum non decet', 104. 22: the company of philosophers will teach you better things than 'scite loqui et in oblectationem audientium uerba iactare'. For the decadent preoccupation with *compositio uerborum* see 114. 15–16. Seneca is no less contemptuous of dialectic quibbles, e.g. 45. 8 ff., 102. 20.

cadence of the first sentence: *maiora quae cures*. Ciceronian *clausulae* abound in the letter; the same cretic+spondee rhythm is repeated in *et uelut signes, recta voluntate*, etc., and double cretics are no less frequent: *uirile concinnitas, prudentiaque lucentibus*, etc. Taken by themselves these could be put down as the unconscious residue of an intensive rhetorical education. But there are too many other signs of deliberate *compositio uerborum* in the letter, as we shall see.

> Nosti comptulos iuuenes, barba et coma nitidos de capsula totos; nihil ab illis sperabueris forte, nihil solidum. oratio cultus animi est. si circumtonsa est et fucata et manu facta, ostendit illum quoque non esse sincerum et habere aliquid fracti. non est ornamentum uirile concinnitas.

The exploitation of the ethical and literary connotations of *compositio* is carried on in *nitidos* and *concinnitas*, which in their immediate context—the image of the young dandies—refer to personal adornment, but carry with them relevant overtones from their technical usage in literary theory.[1] Conversely the metaphorical *fucata*, already used of style by Cicero, and the bolder *circumtonsa* are enlivened by the preceding image.

Circumtonsus occurs in its literal sense 'with one's hair all trimmed' in a fragment of Varro and in Petronius; so it may well have had a colloquial flavour at this date, as *comptulos*[2] and *capsula* probably did too. Colloquialism in formal literature was frowned upon by the theorists.[3] But there were certain literary genres that were granted special licence in this respect and so provided a transitional register between the *sermo cottidianus* and formal literature: comedy, satire, the *nugae* of personal lyric, and of course the epistle, which *cottidianis uerbis texere solemus* (Cic. *Fam.* 9. 21).[4]

One of the chief sources of the rich texture of Senecan Latin is the constant exploration of the various metaphorical potentialities of the vocabulary.[5] We have already seen an example in *compositio, nitidos*, etc., but it is there even in a phrase like 'ut illa . . . magis adplices tibi et uelut signes' in § 1: 'that you may apply them to yourself and as it were stamp them on you'. For the metaphoric use of the latter verb has the effect of reviving the original metaphor of *adplicare* 'to fold against', 'press on to'.[6] A striking instance occurs in the phrase

[1] For *nitidus* of polished style see Cic. *de Or.* 1. 81, Quint. 8. 3. 18; for *concinnitas* similarly see Cic. *Or.* 149.

[2] Buecheler's sure restoration for MS. *complutos*. The word is rare; *comptula* is glossed as *apte ornata uel decora* in *C.G.L.* v. 56. 24. No contempt is presumably intended in the phrase *lampenam comtulam* in *Anth. Lat.* (Riese) 19. 12, but the adj. is clearly derogatory in *lasciui et comptuli iuuenes* at Jerome, *Epist.* 128. 4, p. 964. The diminutive suffix is typical of the colloquial tendency to replace simple words by originally more emotive synonyms. Its currency in Vulgar Latin is reflected by such Romance forms as *soleille, vitello, bello* (adj.).

[3] e.g. Cic. *Brut.* 261, *de Or.* 3. 150, Sen. Rhet. *Contr.* 4 pr. 9, 7 pr. 3, Quint. 8. 3. 16 ff., 12. 10. 40.

[4] Thus *imponimus* in § 9 'we impose upon' may once have been colloquial. This use of the verb is admitted by Cicero into his letters but never into his formal prose writings. It does occur, however, in Nep. *Eum.* 5. 7 and Sen. *Contr.* 7. 4. 10, and so became established in the literary register.

[5] Though Seneca censures Maecenas' excessive use of figurative language in 114. 5, he explicitly defends the use of poetic devices like metaphor and simile in prose writing, 'ut imbecillitatis nostrae adminicula sint et ut dicentem et audientem in rem praesentem adducant' (59. 6). For detailed but uncritical surveys of this aspect of Senecan style see D. Steyns, *Étude sur les Métaphores et les Comparaisons dans les Œuvres en Prose de Sénèque le Philosophe* (Gand, 1907), C. S. Smith, *Metaphor and Comparison in the Epistulae ad Lucilium of L. Annaeus Seneca* (Baltimore, 1910).

[6] Seneca is fond of revitalizing old metaphors by association with novel but appropriate metaphoric contexts, e.g. *nodus*,

'oratio cultus animi est'. The immediate sense 'external decoration of the mind' is dictated by the preceding images of personal adornment. Yet *cultus animi* in itself would naturally mean 'cultivation of the mind' (cf. Cic. *Fin.* 5. 54). So there may well be an allusion to the major theme of the preceding letter, 'talis hominibus fuit oratio qualis uita'. A meretricious style is not merely a superficial covering to the mind; it reflects its corrupting influence as well. One last example: the phrase 'oculis . . . uiuido igne flagrantibus' in § 4. The metaphor is descriptively effective, but as part of the portrait of the *sapiens* it is impossible not to detect an allusion to the Stoic doctrine of the *ignis uitalis*, that pure 'creative' fire the possession of which enables a man to live the life of reason.[1]

In fact the distinctive quality of Seneca's metaphors is his ability to utilize the semantic associations of both tenor and vehicle[2] simultaneously.

From the Sage's disdain of style the author passes on to an exhortation to examine the essential character of the Sage himself. The whole description (§§ 3–5) is highly emotional, with its urgent exclamations and excited rhetorical questions. The plain phrases with which the Sage is introduced, *magnus ille* and *animum boni uiri*, recall both the Stoic view of the *uir magnus* who cannot exist 'sine aliquo adflatu diuino' (Cic. *N.D.* 2. 167) and the Roman ideal of the *uir bonus*, which so often figures in Cicero's speeches (e.g. *Sest.* 137), and even more the synthesis of the two concepts in the 'rector rei publicae, bonus et sapiens' of Cicero's *de Re Publica* (2. 51). The Roman ethical values *iustitia*, *fortitudo*, *temperantia*, *prudentia* are all explicitly mentioned here, and the conjunction of Greek and Roman ideals is implicit in the series of phrases, amounting almost to oxymorons, by which the Sage is described: 'prouidentia cum elegantia, cum gratia auctoritas'. This combination of urbane culture and practical political virtues is summed up in the Greco-Roman concept of *humanitas*,[3] exhibited here in a typically Senecan paradox 'in homine rarum humanitas bonum'.

The ecstatic veneration of the *sapiens*, recalling Lucretius' eulogies of Epicurus as well as similar passages elsewhere in the letters, e.g. 41. 3–4, and 108. 13 ff. on Attalus, is developed through a series of religious terms, *sanctam*, *uenerabilem*, *numinis*, and an allusion to a traditional religious taboo in the phrase *fas sit uidisse*.[4] The hyperbole can of course be justified in strict logic by the Stoic doctrine (cf. 50. 5 ff.) that the *sapiens*, living his life *conuenienter naturae*, exhibits man's capacity to approach the life of the gods. But the exposition here is far removed from the logical level. The climactic rhetorical question is elaborated in a complex periodic sentence:

> Si quis uiderit hanc faciem altiorem fulgentioremque quam cerni inter humana consueuit, nonne, uelut numinis occursu opstupefactus, resistat et

dissoluere in 45. 5: 'nectimus nodos et ambiguam significationem uerbis inligamus ac deinde dissoluimus', or *fluctuans* in 104. 22: 'huius uitae fluctuantis et turbidae portus'. Sometimes the effect is close to punning; e.g. 11. 10: 'nisi ad regulam praua non corriges'.

[1] Relevant too is the comparison of the Sage to 'lumen in tenebris' at 120. 13.

[2] For these useful technical terms see I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York, 1936), pp. 96–7.

[3] On *humanitas* see the interesting discussion in Aul. Gell. *N.A.* 13. 17.

[4] Cf. Proculus' words describing his vision of Romulus after his assumption into heaven, 'cum perfusus horrore uenerabundus adstitissem, petens ut contra intueri fas esset' (Livy 1. 16), and the phrase in the Einsiedeln Eclogue 1. 26: 'fas mihi sit uidisse deos.' The idea is parodied in Hor. *S.* 2. 4. 91 ff.

ut fas sit uidisse tacitus precetur; tum, euocante ipsa uoltus benignitate productus, adoret et supplicet et, diu contemplatus multum exstantem superque mensuram solitorum inter nos aspici elatam, oculis mite quiddam sed nihilominus uiuido igne flagrantibus, tunc deinde illam Vergili nostri uocem uerens atque attonitus emittat?

Within the tripartite structure defined by *nonne . . . tum . . . tunc* the organization is tightly controlled by the participial phrases. The extension of participial constructions, very much a feature of Silver Latin prose style, is probably due to Greek influence; for the relative poverty of the Latin participial system suggests that the motivation cannot have been native in origin. In the present letter we can point to 'etiam obrutam corpore etiam paupertate opposita' (§ 6), where the combination of attributive participle and ablative absolute recalls similar uses of Greek καίπερ. In the same way we find a more frequent use of the future participle in attributive function, like *transituri* (§ 10) 'capable of passing over' and *petituri* (§ 17) 'on the point of seeking'.[1] In the periodic structure generally the substitution of participial phrases for clauses often leaves the non-temporal relations—of cause, concession, condition, etc.—between the constituent parts imprecise or even ambiguous. But the gain in conciseness is great; in fact this use of participles is one of the major contributaries to the terse compression of the Silver style. Another important effect is well illustrated in this particular sentence. By presenting a series of actions and experiences in static form, the participles throw the finite verbs into sharper relief, so that the dynamics of the sentence are all concentrated in *uiderit, consueuit, resistat, precetur, adoret, supplicet,* and the long-delayed *emittat,* which are thus all aptly emphasized.

After a Vergilian quotation, to which we shall return shortly, Seneca concludes this section with a definition of true piety and worship: 'colitur autem non taurorum opimis corporibus contrucidatis nec auro argentoque suspenso nec in thesauros stipe infusa sed pia et recta uoluntate.' The emphatic placing of *colitur* threatens a diminuendo in the rest of the sentence, but the tension is maintained by the sequence of negative phrases, depicting the conventional postures of piety in a succession of images reminiscent of Lucretius or Juvenal, and resolved in the climactic *sed pia et recta uoluntate*[2] with its dignified *clausula.*

An author who in his travels was always on the look-out for didactic images, as he explicitly reveals in 55. 3 (on Vatia's villa), will clearly not have neglected the illustrations provided by his reading. Indeed he himself says (84. 5) 'apes debemus imitari et quaecumque ex diuersa lectione congessimus separare'. He often quotes not only from earlier philosophers, as, e.g., from Ariston later in the present letter, but also from the poets.[3] Superficially one is reminded of Cicero's fondness for quotation in his letters, especially to Atticus. Sometimes Cicero finds in the phrases cited an impressive statement of what he himself has in mind, as in the Terentian quotation in *Att.* 2. 19. 1. (Parallels for

[1] The usage is rare in republican Latin, e.g. Cic. *Ver.* 1. 56, Sall. *Iug.* 35. 10, and becomes frequent only with Livy (3. 60. 8, 6. 22. 9, etc.), who in this as in many Silver developments is an important formative influence.

[2] In 95. 48–50 there is a similar progression from the images of conventional piety, through the discussion of true *deorum cultus,* to the simple statement that 'satis illos coluit quisquis imitatus est'.

[3] e.g. Publilius Syrus and the comic poets in 8. 9–10, Lucilius in 24. 21, Euripides in 49. 12 Lucretius in 95. 11, Horace in 119. 13.

this procedure are found of course in the speeches, e.g. the Accian excerpts in *Sest.* 102.) More often Cicero's quotations are a means of obliquely reporting recent events and at the same time making a witty or satiric comment upon them, as in the excerpts from Ennius and Diphilus later in the same letter. More akin to Seneca's practice, however, is the use made by earlier moralists and philosophers of poetic quotations, sometimes lifted misleadingly out of their contexts to provide support for their doctrines.[1] In 108. 9 Seneca himself notes the benefits that accrue 'cum salutaribus praeceptis uersus inseruntur efficacius eadem illa demissuri in animum imperitorum'. The implication here of the relative status of philosophical and poetic discourse, which would have won Plato's approval, is relevant to the attack on poets later in the present letter.

The poet whom he quotes most often is Vergil, *maximus uates* (*de Breu. Vit.* 9. 2), *uir disertissimus* (*de Otio* 1. 4). Sometimes it is merely for an arresting image, like the receding shores in 70. 2 from *Aen.* 3. 72, or for the powerful expression of a moral commonplace; e.g. in 18. 12 on Stoic poverty Evander's 'aude, hospes, contemnere opes . . .' from *Aen.* 8. 364–5 and in 101. 4 on the futility of planning ahead Meliboeus' 'insere nunc, Meliboee, piros, pone ordine uites' from *Buc.* 1. 73, where the bitterness of the context is especially relevant. In 41. 2: 'in uno quoque uirorum bonorum "quis deus incertum est, habitat deus" ' the quotation, *Aen.* 8. 352, is contextually apt in itself, but it is possible that the preceding line of the poem 'hoc nemus, hunc, inquit, frondoso uertice collem' has motivated the forest imagery from which Seneca goes on to develop the idea of *religio*: 'si tibi occurrerit uetustis arboribus et solitam altitudinem egressis frequens lucus et conspectum caeli ramorum aliorum alios protegentium umbra submouens . . .'

Now and again the Vergilian allusion has a more complex relation to Seneca's argument. In 12. 9 the exhortation to regard each day as one's last is illustrated by the absurd figure of the sensualist Pacuvius—'sic in cubiculum ferebatur a cena ut inter plausus exoletorum hoc ad symphoniam caneretur "βεβίωται, βεβίωται". nullo non se die extulit.' Pure Petronius or Juvenal! 'hoc', Seneca continues, 'quod ille ex mala conscientia faciebat nos ex bona faciamus et in somnum ituri laeti hilaresque dicamus "uixi et quem dederat cursum fortuna peregi".' The words are from Dido's last soliloquy, in *Aen.* 4. 653. The *exempla* of Pacuvius and Dido together form a kind of *a fortiori* argument. What Dido could say in the face of tragic catastrophe we can say more joyfully, but with a cheerfulness that comes from causes less depraved than Pacuvius'.

In 28. 2–3 the theme of 'caelum non animum mutant', introduced once again by the image of the receding shore from *Aen.* 3. 72, is illustrated first by a Socratic *chria*:[2] 'quid miraris nihil tibi peregrinationes prodesse cum te

[1] e.g. Pindar in Pl. *Rep.* 331 a, Hesiod in Ar. *N.E.* 1. 4. 1095[b], Theognis and Sophocles in the diatribes of Teles p. 45. 7, p. 47. 7 Hense. Cicero's fondness for quotation in his philosophical works, e.g. *T.D.* 3 *passim*, may be influenced by Plato, but was in any case a feature of his writing at all stylistic levels. For a discussion of Seneca's Vergilian quotations on somewhat similar lines to what follows see W. S. Maguinness, *Hermath.* lxxxviii (1956), 81–98, 'Seneca and the Poets', esp. 94 ff.

[2] Though a familiar exercise of rhetorical education (cf. 33. 7, Quint. 1. 9. 3 ff.) the *chria* had much in common with the *thesis* of the philosophical schools. Instances abound in the letters, e.g. Hecaton's 'desines timere, si sperare desieris' (5. 7–9), Heraclitus' 'unus dies par omni est' (12. 7–8), and the 'thought for the day' with which many of the earlier letters conclude. A more elaborate example is the Panaetius passage in 116. 5–8.

circumferas? premit te eadem causa quae expulit.' Then comes the image from *Aen.* 6. 78–9 of the Sibyl wrestling with the divine possession: 'bacchatur uates, magnum si pectore possit / excussisse deum.' At first sight this seems inappropriate to the predicament of one trying to escape from himself, but it is clear from the metaphors employed in the surrounding context of the letter, *discussisti tristitiam* and *aegrum enim concutis*, that the tensions and anxieties that crave a change of scene are regarded as unnatural states alien to the true self.

Returning to the present passage: the original context in Vergil (*Aen.* 1. 327–34) is highly relevant. The hero, shipwrecked and isolated, is confronted by his mother, whom he does not recognize in her disguise:

> O quam te memorem, uirgo? namque haut tibi uoltus
> mortalis nec uox hominem sonat. *O dea certa*
> *—an Phoebi soror? an Nympharum sanguinis una?—*
> sis felix nostrumque leues quaecumque laborem
> *et quo sub caelo tandem, quibus orbis in oras*
> *iactemur doceas. ignari hominumque locorumque*
> *erramus uento huc uastis et fluctibus acti.*
> *multa tibi ante aras nostra cadet hostia dextra.*

Aeneas' plight in fact serves as a symbol of the human predicament: shaken by life's *tempestates*, men must recognize divinity in the *sapiens* and as humble suppliants seek his help and guidance.[1]

After this highly emotional section comes a return to the expository style of the opening sentences of the letter. A more conversational tone is indicated by the repeated *inquam* and the mildly colloquial flavour of *obstrigillare* and *ueternus*.[2] Both words typically contribute to a sequence of vivid metaphors. We are prevented, says Seneca, from perceiving real human worth by the fact that 'multa obstrigillant et aciem nostram aut splendore nimio repercutiunt aut obscuro retinent'. Yet we must be able to discern the beauty of a virtuous soul hidden in poverty, and also the 'malitiam et aerumnosi animi ueternum' that lurk behind a prosperous exterior, even though 'intuentem . . . falsa lux uerberet'.[3] Once again Seneca has skilfully revitalized an old metaphor. *acies animi* is Ciceronian (cf. *Sen.* 83) and a mental reference for *acies* occurs as early as Plautus (*Mil.* 1028); but by exploiting the metaphoric contrast of

Among other such influences from the rhetorical schools may be noted the *suasoria* to Cato on the choice between philosophy and politics in 14. 12 ff.

[1] For the storms of fortune see § 18 of the present letter, 98. 7, and 104. 22. Philosophy 'sedet ad gubernaculum et per ancipitia fluctuantium derigit cursum' (16. 3); it has helped Bassus to hold the storm-damaged ship of life on its course (30. 3); we must set our sights on the *summum bonum* just as 'nauigantibus ad aliquod sidus derigendus est cursus' (95. 45).

[2] The verb, which has the appearance of a popular formation, is glossed by Nonius, 147. 8, as *obstare* and quoted by him from Ennius (*Sat.* 5 Vahlen) and Varro. It may be related to *obstrigillus* 'sandal' which is post-classical (Isid. *Or.* 19. 34). *ueternus* seems generally to be avoided in formal prose and the higher genres of poetry (rare exceptions are Vg. *G.* 1. 124, where it has its commonest sense 'sloth', and Stat. *Theb.* 6. 94, where, almost uniquely, it has its original sense 'antiquity, old age'). In the present sense 'dirt' it is also found in Colum. 4. 24. 6.

[3] For the dirt that accompanies sloth cf. *robigo animorum* in 95. 36. For *falsa lux* cf. the contrast between *huius uitae fulgor* and the life of the philosopher *suo lumine illustris* in 21. 2. The doctrines that moral defects are a form of blindness and philosophers are rich even in poverty are Senecan commonplaces; e.g. 50. 3, 109. 16, 120. 17–18 and 20. 10, 41. 6, 76. 31.

mental vision and blindness he is able to develop the traditional analogy, as old as Plato, between philosophers' and physicians' remedies.[1]

The inability to see beyond a glittering exterior leads back to the opening theme of preoccupation with superficiality. The comparison with children[2] 'quibus omne ludicrum in pretio est' leads to a *chria* of the third-century Stoic philosopher Ariston:[3]

> quid ergo inter nos et illos interest, ut Ariston ait, nisi quod nos circa tabulas et statuas insanimus carius inepti?

The significance of the *chria* is developed with all the resources of Senecan rhetoric and imagery.[4] The unflattering possibilities in the comparison to children are brought out at every point. Children's necklaces are 'paruo aere empta'; we adults 'insanimus carius inepti'. The last phrase is a fine instance of Silver compression: 'purchasing our silliness more dearly'; while *insanimus* not only enriches a racy colloquialism, ' to be mad over something', by evoking the Stoic antithesis of *insania* and *sapientia* but when taken with the ambiguous *circa* (= 'around' and 'concerning')[5] also evokes a visual image of doting enthusiasm. Children are delighted by 'reperti in litore calculi leues et aliquid habentes uarietatis', we by 'ingentium maculae columnarum, siue ex Aegyptiis harenis siue ex Africae solitudinibus aduectae porticum aliquam uel capacem populi cenationem ferunt'. The choice of the genitival phrase here instead of the straightforward 'ingentes columnae maculatae' shifts the emphasis from the bulky columns themselves to the *maculae*, a word whose normally pejorative connotations heighten the contemptuous tone[6] of the description. The long-drawn *solitudinibus*[7] aptly suggests the long trek to the desert vastnesses at the end of the earth that our extravagance demands, while *capacem populi cenationem* 'a dining-hall capable of holding the entire population' has all the impact of a Juvenalian hyperbole.

[1] The analogy itself is elaborated in 64. 8, 94. 17 ff., 95. 20 ff., and 75 *passim*.

[2] The unphilosophic life is likened to childhood in 4. 2; cf. 99. 27, 104. 13; the philosopher is *humani generis paedagogus* in 89. 13.

[3] He rejected the logical and metaphysical doctrines of his master Zeno, and his ethical teaching had a distinctly Cynic flavour (Diog. L. 7. 160–2). Strabo, 10. 5. 6, even calls him *ὁ τοῦ Βορυσθενίτου Βίωνος ζηλώτης*. Although only the letters to Cleanthes were indisputably genuine (Diog. 7. 163), other works were commonly attributed to him (see Cic. *Sen.* 3) and he is often cited by Cicero (*Fin.* 2. 43, *Ac.* 2. 130) and Seneca (36. 3, 89.13 [see n. 2], 94. 1).

[4] Like many of Seneca's vivid word-pictures this recalls Juvenal; cf. 47. 2–8 on the master and his slaves, 78. 23–4 on the sick gourmet, 84. 12 on the morning *salutatio*. Indeed his flair for making a didactic point through a contrasted pair of images, like Tubero's earthenware outlasting other men's gold and silver in 95. 72–3 is very much in the tradition of Latin satire.

[5] Cf. p. 276 above. Elsewhere Seneca has *insanire* with *in*+acc. (94. 71; cf. Hor. *S.* 1. 2. 49) or *propter* (81. 27).

[6] Juvenal employs this grammatical variation to similar effect in *Sat.* 1. 10–11: 'unde alius furtiuae deuehat aurum / pelliculae'. The replacement of *auream pelliculam* (the choice of the diminutive is of course contemptuous) by this phrase with *aurum* in the head position and the hypallage of the derogatory *furtiuae* combine to change the heroic quest by the Argonauts into a squalid pursuit of filthy lucre.

[7] The transfer of abstract nouns to concrete or specific function was common in Latin at all times, e.g. *compositio* originally 'the act of putting together', *oratio* 'the act of pleading'. It is most clearly discerned in plurals like *solitudines* and *sollicitudines* in the present letter, both of which are already established in Ciceronian Latin. *Cenatio* is not found at all before Seneca and Petronius, who both use it only in its transferred meaning.

Ostentatious luxury is often attacked in the letters,[1] but here the contrast is expressly between the superficial splendour and the rottenness beneath. The image thus becomes a symbol of the 'malitiam et aerumnosi animi ueternum' that lurked beneath the 'diuitiarum radiantium splendor' (§ 7).[2] The explicit transition to the earlier theme is neatly effected:

> miramur parietes tenui marmore inductos, cum sciamus quale sit quod absconditur. oculis nostris imponimus, et cum auro tecta perfudimus, quid aliud quam mendacio gaudemus? scimus enim sub illo auro foeda ligna latitare. nec tantum parietibus aut lacunaribus ornamentum tenue praetenditur.

The moral overtones of *absconditur*, *imponimus*, *mendacio*, *foeda*, *praetenditur*, perhaps even *latitare* (cf. *latitatio*, of concealing or absconding, in legal language), prepare us for the brilliant complementary metaphors:

> omnium istorum quos incedere altos uides bratteata felicitas est. inspice et scies sub ista tenui membrana dignitatis quantum mali iaceat,

where *bratteata*[3] and *membrana* recall 'auro tecta perfudimus' and 'parietes tenui marmore inductos' in the picture of architectural ostentation which we have just witnessed.[4]

The discussion now broadens out from the theme of hollow ostentation to one of Seneca's favourite targets, greed and ambition,[5] already prepared by 'diuitiarum . . . splendor' and 'honorum . . . potestatium falsa lux' in § 7. The treatment is highly rhetorical:

> haec ipsa res, quae tot magistratus, tot iudices detinet, quae et magistratus et iudices facit, pecunia, ex quo in honore esse coepit, uerus rerum honor cecidit mercatoresque et uenales in uicem facti quaerimus non quale sit quidque sed quanti.

We note here the way Seneca holds the initial *haec ipsa res* in suspense across the intervening relative clauses till *pecunia*, which he then surprises us by revealing is not after all the subject of the principal clause; and the skilful way in which the climax is presented, with its brutally simple down-to-earth words and emphatic *qu-* alliteration. The overtones of *uenales* are interesting: men are prepared to trade even their *libertas* for money, becoming *uenales* in a more technical sense 'slaves', in contrast to the *sapiens* who is truly free, *securus sui*

[1] A famous example occurs in 90. 9–18.

[2] The contrast between ostentatious wealth, with 'columnas ultima recisas / Africa', and the inner contentment that comes from 'fides et ingeni / benigna uena' (Hor. *C.* 2. 18) was of course a moral commonplace.

[3] Not recorded at all before Seneca, the word occurs, again metaphorically and contemptuously, in 41. 6. For the metaphor itself cf. 'non est ista solida et sincera felicitas; crusta est et quidem tenuis' (*de Prouid.* 6. 4).

[4] The careful way in which each visual detail is exploited metaphorically is typical of the Senecan technique. In 12. 1–3, when his crumbling country estate is an 'argumentum senectutis meae', the details selected progress from the inanimate, 'putria aetatis meae saxa', to the vegetative, the planes leafless and gnarled with their 'tristes et squalidi trunci', to the human, his manager's son who had once been his pet slave and is now 'decrepitus, merito ad ostium admotus'. The coarse picture of the toothless old dotard seems callous until we realize that Seneca sees in him a reflection of himself.

[5] Cf. 17 passim, 87. 23 ff., 94. 60 ff., 108. 11 ff., 110. 14 ff.

possessor.[1] The rhetorical tone is continued in 'ad mercedem pii sumus, ad mercedem impii' and in the crescendo of the triple 'hoc suspiciunt, hos suis optant, hoc dis . . . consecrant'. The imagery of false piety in § 5 'auro argentoque suspenso, in thesauros stipe infusa' is thus recalled, and the concluding description of poverty as 'contempta diuitibus, inuisa pauperibus' contrasts with the exhortation in § 6 to recognize the beauty of virtue 'etiam paupertate opposita'.

The attack on poets for inflaming men's greed for gold reminds us of the strictures of Plato and Epicurus on the immoral influence of poetry. It is significant that Seneca chooses his examples this time not from Vergil but from Ovid. The image of the golden palace of the Sun (*Met.* 2. 1–2) 'sublimibus alta columnis / clara micante auro' recalls 'ingentes columnae' and 'auro tecta perfudimus' from the passage on ostentation in § 8, while the gold and silver of the firmament (*Met.* 2. 107–8) contrast with the famous passage in an earlier letter (94. 56–7), in which providential Nature 'pedibus aurum argentumque subiecit calcandumque ac premendum dedit quicquid est propter quod calcamur ac premimur. illa uoltus nostros erexit ad caelum et quicquid magnificum mirumque fecerat uideri a suspicientibus uoluit.' Both the Ovidian quotations come from the story of Phaethon, a cautionary tale of the catastrophic results of ambition, which is itself apposite to Seneca's present moralizing.

The list of quotations from the Greek tragedians that follows looks as if it has been taken straight from a commonplace book;[2] it is presumably intended to emphasize the frequency of the theme of wealth. The concluding extract from Euripides provides the starting-point for another *chria*. The anecdote, underlining the relevance of the dramatic context to the interpretation of the lines 'dabat in illa fabula poenas Bellerophontes quas in sua quisque dat', leads neatly back into the theme that had been interrupted by the attack on the poets: 'nulla enim auaritia sine poena est, quamuis satis sit ipsa poenarum; maiore tormento pecunia possidetur quam quaeritur.'[3] The agitated style of this section, with its imaginary objection in § 17 (a device characteristic of both Hellenistic diatribes and Latin Satire), short exclamatory sentences, and rhetorical questions, recalls the emotional tone of the complementary passage in praise of the *sapiens* (§§ 3–6).

In the final paragraph the themes and variations of the letter are all brought together in the declaration that true happiness can come only from a philosophic attitude to life:[4]

> ad hanc tam solidam felicitatem, quam tempestas nulla concutiat, non

[1] See 12. 9. This Stoic commonplace is often referred to in the letters; e.g. 8. 7: 'hoc enim ipsum philosophiae seruire libertas est'; cf. 47. 17, 65. 21. For *uenales* itself cf. 42. 7: 'ea gratuita uocamus pro quibus nos ipsos impendimus.'

[2] Perhaps even a school text-book. The first, 'sine me uocari pessimum ut diues uocer', is the opening line of an unattributed quotation in Greg. Naz. 2. 210B (Nauck² *Adesp. fr.* 181. 1–3): ἔα με κερσαίνοντα κεκλῆσθαι κακὸν κτλ. The last, 'pecunia, ingens generis humani bonum', etc., is also preserved in Stob. *Flor.* 91. 4, Athen. 4. 159B: ὦ χρυσέ, δεξίωμα κάλλιστον βροτοῖς κτλ., cf. Sext. Emp. 663. Nauck², Eur. *fr.* 324, follows Stobaeus in assigning it to *Danae*, not, as Seneca does, to a play in which Bellerophon is the speaker.

[3] Cf. the thought-for-the-day from Epicurus in 17. 11: 'multis parasse diuitias non finis miseriarum fuit sed mutatio', also 119. 12.

[4] Cf. 45. 9: 'beatum non eum esse quem uolgus appellat ad quem pecunia magna confluxit sed illum cui bonum omne in animo est.'

perducent te apte uerba contexta et oratio fluens leniter. eant ut uolent, dum animo compositio sua constet, dum sit magnus et opinionum securus et ob ipsa quae aliis displicent, sibi placens, qui profectum suum uita aestimet et tantum scire se iudicet quantum non cupit, quantum non timet.

In spite of the rhetorical effect of the doubled *dum* clauses and the final repeated *quantum*, the style is simpler, less highly coloured and less emotional than what has just gone before. Seneca is deliberately ending on a quieter, more plainly didactic note. Yet the numerous echoes of words and phrases from the earlier parts of the letter serve to bring the various themes together. Thus *solidam felicitatem* contrasts with both *nihil solidum* (in § 2, the comparison of literary style with the dandies) and *bratteata felicitas* (in § 9, the comparison of social success with hollow ostentation in architecture). In association with *tempestas solidam* suggests dry land, the destination to which the seafarer will be safely brought (*perducent*) neither by vessels of mere words, however *apte contexta*, nor by the gentle current (*fluens*) of a good style. The elaborate metaphor recalls the context of the Vergilian quotation that concluded the portrait of the *sapiens* in § 5. Moreover 'apte uerba contexta' and 'animo compositio sua constet' take us back to the opening sentences on 'uerba et compositionem'; *magnus* and *securus* echo 'magnus ille . . . loquitur . . . securius' in § 1; and the closing mention of desires and fears recalls the *cupiditas* that is instilled in us from childhood (§ 11) and the *maius tormentum* that the possession of money and power brings with it (§§ 16–17).

The whole letter is tightly organized into a chiastic progression of themes and variations. Against the superficiality of stylistic preoccupations (§§ 1–2) is set the pursuit of inner harmony (§ 18); the excited depiction of the Sage's character, culminating in the Vergilian quotation (§§ 3–5) and followed by the plain warning not to be blinded by external circumstances (§§ 6–7), contrasts with the concern for worldly success and prosperity, culminating in the quotations from Ovid and the tragedians (§§ 10–14) and followed by the excited exhortation to examine the inner man behind the dazzling façade (§§ 15–17). The central section, on which the whole development turns, is occupied by the elaborate image of hollow ostentation expounding the Ariston *chria*, which with its general contrast between the essential and the superficial points back to the opening antithesis, and with its specific contrast of external glitter and hidden rottenness prepares the way for the moral attack on avarice and ambition.[1]

The skilful construction is not untypical; but it is essentially a literary structure, not a logical one. The movement by association of ideas, which E. Albertini[2] saw as a growing tendency in Seneca's latest writings, is not a whimsical drift but a carefully controlled progression, in which a particular idea or group of ideas is approached from a number of different angles and reinforced at each new exposition.[3] The technique is not that of the philosopher, develop-

[1] In the companion letter 114, on decadence in style and morals, there is a similar association between the restless search for *orationis lasciuia* (§§ 3, 5, 15–19), luxurious living (§§ 4, 6–7), lavish architecture (§ 9), and personal adornment (§§ 20–1).

[2] *La Composition dans les Ouvrages Philosophiques de Sénèque* (Paris, 1923), 296–8. The failure to distinguish logical and literary criteria of structure leads Albertini to exaggerate the incoherence of the letters; e.g. pp. 143–6, where the present letter is actually included among those that lack unity.

[3] Cf. A. Bourgery's observation, *Sénèque Prosateur* (Paris, 1922), 114: 'il se plaît à

ing a systematic argument with a logical beginning, middle, and end, but of the preacher, concerned to drive home with all the arts of rhetoric one or two chosen doctrinal propositions. There is irony, to be sure, in the fact that Seneca has chosen to belittle the importance of literary style through the artful medium of an *oratio sollicita et polita*;[1] as there is in the spectacle of the millionaire philosopher extolling the virtues of poverty. But it is worth recalling that even the elder Cato, whose anti-stylistic posture was enshrined in the dictum 'rem tene, uerba sequentur', reveals in his prose style all the influences of Greek rhetorical theory and practice.

Much of Seneca's moralizing strikes us as trite.[2] The impression may be due, as with Cicero's philosophical writings, less to the derivative nature of the doctrines presented than to the author's constant reiteration of them and his success in establishing them as an integral part of the European humanist tradition. We cannot now assess the novelty of his particular blend of eclectic Stoicism;[3] but his habit of citing Epicurus to illustrate Stoic tenets, a characteristically witty exposure of underlying links between the two rival ethics,[4] must have raised a few orthodox philosophical eyebrows at least. Our judgement of Seneca as a man or as a philosopher must in any event not distract us from his achievement as a creative writer,[5] the first great exponent of Silver *Latinitas*. As we have seen, he can elaborate a period as skilfully as Cicero or Livy, but his own individuality is marked by a turning away from the Isocratean tradition of rhythmically structured prose towards a more lapidary—perhaps more truly Latin—style, which is based on parataxis and the juxtaposition of pointed phrases.[6] With this reduction of elaborate complexity and architectural

faire briller toutes les facettes d'une même idée.' This applies not only to individual letters but to the whole collection, as witness the recurrent themes and images cited in the notes to the present paper. Fronto makes the chief target in his savage criticism of Seneca (pp. 155–6 Naber) his fondness for repeating *eandem sententiam milliens alio atque alio amictu indutam.*

[1] It is interesting to note that in 75. 1–5 he asserts that his epistolary style is aimed at being 'qualis sermo meus esset, si una sederemus aut ambularemus, inlaboratus et facilis' (defending himself against a complaint he attributes to Lucilius that his letters are *minus accuratas*!), but then goes on to say 'non mehercules ieiuna esse et arida uolo quae de rebus tam magnis dicentur; neque enim philosophia ingenio renuntiat'.

[2] And hypocritical too, if we know something of his public and private life; cf. the scornful remarks on 'the cant of his philosophy' in Macaulay's essay on Bacon (*Edinburgh Review*, July 1837). But the discrepancy between the principles professed and the life that is lived, though relevant to our judgement of the man, has no necessary bearing on our assessment of his achievement as a writer. Here it is the effectiveness of what he writes that matters, not his 'sincerity'.

[3] Proclaimed in 21. 9, 64. 10 and especially *Brev. Vit.* 14. 2: 'disputare cum Socrate licet, dubitare cum Carneade, cum Epicuro quiescere, hominis naturam cum Stoicis uincere, cum Cynicis excedere.' Orthodox Stoic positions and procedures are questioned in, e.g., 45, 85, and 117.

[4] It is especially frequent in the early letters; e.g. 2. 5, 8. 7, 9. 20, 12. 10. The gentle mockery and humour that A. L. Motto and J. R. Clark (*C.W.* lxii [1968], 37–42 'Paradoxum Senecae: The Epicurean Stoic') rightly see in this practice have thus a serious intent. P. Grimal's view, *Sénèque* (Paris, 1966), 40–1, is that Seneca 'veut utiliser, pour attirer son interlocuteur à la philosophie, ce que l'épicurisme offre de plus séduisant . . .'. But Stoicism would surely have had more immediate appeal than Epicureanism to a Roman reader, even an unphilosophical one.

[5] 'Il s'est approprié une matière commune par la forme artistique dont il l'a revêtue' (Albertini, op. cit. 233).

[6] This feature of Seneca's style has provoked adverse comments in ancient and modern times; e.g. Caligula's 'harena sine calce' (Suet. *Calig.* 53) and Macaulay's remarks to T. F. Ellis: 'His style affects me in something the same way with that of Gibbon. But Lucius Seneca's affectation is

grandeur goes an enrichment of lexical texture, effected by the importation of vocabulary from both the poetic and the colloquial registers and by the exploitation through metaphor of the full semantic possibilities of even ordinary words.[1] In obscuring the lexical boundaries between poetry and prose Livy provided important precedent but within a prose genre that was, in Quintilian's words, 'proxima poetis et quodam modo carmen solutum'. The lapidary style of Seneca would certainly conform to the Stoic criterion of *συντομία* in style, but the poetic colour in the vocabulary and imagery, by introducing an element of *ἀμφιβολία*, does not accord with the Stoic *σαφήνεια*, which accepted 'nullum florem orationis'.[2] The Senecan combination of poetic colour with the lapidary style points forward to that other great Silver prose artist, Tacitus.

Nor is Seneca's creative talent revealed only at the stylistic level. When we set about placing the *Epistulae Morales* in terms of literary genre, we naturally start by a comparison with Cicero's correspondence. But substantial differences between the two collections soon become apparent. Cicero's letters, addressed to a wide range of friends and acquaintances, are letters in the ordinary sense of the word. Their occasional character is revealed by the fact that they can be dated by their topical allusions; in Seneca such dating is impossible and there is very little in the whole collection that could be securely used even to assign them to the early sixties, when they were in fact composed. Again it is often possible to reconstruct something of the content of the letter which Cicero is answering and of the character and interests of the addressee from the tone of his writing and the range of topics discussed.[3] By contrast it is extremely difficult to form more than a vague picture of Lucilius the man from the sum total of the references to him[4] and impossible to reconstruct anything much of

more rank than Gibbon's. His works are made up of mottoes. There is hardly a sentence which might not be quoted; but to read him straightforward is like dining on nothing but anchovy sauce' (G. O. Trevelyan, *Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay* [London, 1908], p. 324). Quintilian's 'si rerum pondera minutissimis sententiis non fregisset' (10. 1. 130) forms part of a more balanced censure on him.

[1] Metaphor was appropriate both to poetry and to the high style of prose; cf. 59. 6, cited above, p. 277 n. 5, with Cic. *Brut.* 314, Quint. 8. 6. 11. It is difficult to recognize in the letters much of the 'fundamental ordinariness of diction' and the 'basically colloquial, direct and popular' style that H. M. Currie sees as characteristic of Seneca (*B.I.C.S.* xiii [1966], 76–87: 'The Younger Seneca's Style: some observations', esp. p. 84). Gellius (12. 2. 1) reports without dissent criticisms of Seneca's style as 'uulgaris et protrita' and having 'elegantiae parum,' and of his learning as 'uernacula et plebeia'; but the doctrinaire basis of these is revealed by the phrase 'nihilque ex ueterum scriptis habens neque gratiae neque dignitatis'.

[2] See Diog. L. 7. 59, Cic. *Par. St.* pr. 2.

[3] In an interesting passage of a letter to Curio (*ad Fam.* 2. 4. 1) Cicero says: 'epistularum genera multa esse non ignoras, sed unum illud certissimum, cuius causa inuenta res ipsa est, ut certiores faceremus absentis, si quid esset quod eos scire aut nostra aut ipsorum interesset . . . reliqua sunt epistularum genera duo, quae me magnopere delectant, unum familiare et iocosum, alterum seuerum et graue.' The classification, which smacks of the threefold rhetorical division of styles—'ut doceat, ut delectet, ut moueat'—is certainly not hard and fast in his own letters, which often range over all three categories. As we have seen, the boundary between *docere* and *mouere* is a very fluid one in Seneca's letters too.

[4] We learn that he was a native of Campania (49. 1, etc.), a self-made man (19. 5), younger than Seneca (26. 7) but a friend of long standing (49. 1) who wrote to him frequently (31. 1, etc.), enjoyed travelling whether in his procuratorial duties (31. 9) or privately (48. 1), scholarly (45. 1) and a writer of prose and verse (46. 1, 8. 10, 24. 19 ff.), suffered from catarrh (78. 1), and was involved as defendant in a lawsuit (24. 1). But most of these references are incidental or else introduced as a theme for moralizing, and Lucilius himself tends to fade altogether

even one of his letters from the 124 pieces that purport to be Seneca's replies to him. Finally, whereas in the course of a letter to a close friend Cicero frequently ranges over a great medley of topics, Seneca's letters are a series of carefully organized essays on specific themes.[1]

The use of the epistolary form for philosophical exposition, especially of the more exoteric kind, was as old as Plato, and is represented by such diverse figures as Epicurus, Ariston, who was quoted in the present letter, and St. Paul. Like the convention of an addressee in didactic poetry the epistolary framework enables the writer to give his doctrine a more personalized tone and to establish through the medium of the notional correspondent a more intimate relationship with his wider public. In this respect we can observe a contrast in the treatment of similar philosophical topics in Seneca's letters and his formal treatises.[2]

At this point the philosophical letter comes close to the διατριβή in which Cynic and Stoic philosophers gave popular expositions of ethical doctrine.[3] The typical diatribe may well have been 'declaimed with sharp wit and aggressive satire and enlivened with polemic in fictional dialogues',[4] but the evidence is meagre and we should beware of regarding the diatribe as any more neatly defined a genre than, say, the modern lecture or sermon. Examples of the characteristics listed can be cited from the surviving fragments of Teles, along with occasional instances of pointed epigrams, vivid metaphors and analogies, and quotations from earlier philosophers and poets woven into the texture of the argument. Yet, if much of this seems to anticipate the *Epistulae Morales*, the over-all impression is of a much plainer, more pedestrian manner of exposition. Teles' elder contemporary Bion does seem to have had literary pretensions. Apart from the similarity of subject-matter, some of the quotations from Bion preserved by Stobaeus and others show a truly Senecan taste for pointed antithesis and metaphor; e.g. *οἱ ἀγαθοὶ οἰκέται ἐλεύθεροι, οἱ δὲ πονηροὶ ἐλεύθεροι δοῦλοι πολλῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν* (Stob. 3. 2. 38), *τὴν φιλαργυρίαν μητρόπολιν πάσης κακίας* (*ib.* 10. 37). Quotable gems need not of course be typical of the contexts from which they are lifted; but the testimony of Diogenes Laertius indicates that whatever Bion's professions of plain speech, addressed to the man in the street, may have been, he was a master of the literary arts: *διὰ δὴ οὖν τὸ παντὶ εἴδει λόγου κεκρᾶσθαί φασι λέγειν ἐπ' αὐτοῦ τὸν Ἐρατοσθένην ὡς πρῶτος Βίων τὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἄνθινα ἐνέδυσεν.*[5] The serious business of philosophy ought not to be decked out in meretricious garb; the scholar-intellectual's dis-

as a person in the later letters. It is of course relevant to add that, apart from his moral views, we learn very little of Seneca himself either.

[1] In this respect like many of Pliny's letters, which have all the characteristics of set pieces, e.g. on the villa at Laurentum (2. 17), the will-hunter Regulus (2. 20), the source of the Clitumnus (8. 8), and even the pair on Vesuvius (6. 16. 20). Though, unlike Seneca, Pliny addressed his letters to a vast number of different recipients, it is clear that he too regarded them as literary compositions in a distinct genre.

[2] The dedication of the latter to particular people, e.g. *Naturales Quaestiones* to Lucilius, *de Beneficiis* to Liberalis Aebutius, does not affect their more impersonal mode of exposition. On the thematic continuity between the letters and the earlier works see Albertini, op. cit. 142.

[3] As a literary term διατριβή continued to bear the general meaning 'discourse, lecture' that it had had earlier; cf. Pl. *Apol.* 37 d with D. H. *Ant. Rom.* 10. 15. The more specialized reference to moral sermons, for which the semantic history of *sermo* itself offers something of a parallel, was due to the character of the διατριβαί delivered by Bion, Teles, Cleanthes, etc.

[4] The definition is adapted from A. Lesky, but it represents a consensus of modern opinion.

[5] Diog. L. 4. 52; cf. Strabo 1. 2. 2.

approval of this breach of decorum, implied in Eratosthenes' observation, could well have been directed by a hostile critic at the *lasciuiae flosculi* of Seneca's philosophical style.[1]

Where so much has been lost it is difficult to assess precisely Seneca's debt to the diatribe. Certainly there is little concrete evidence for specific debts in subject-matter[2] or verbal presentation.[3] It is rather in the general willingness to employ all the literary and rhetorical arts in the exposition of ethical doctrine that we can see a connection between the Hellenistic diatribes and the *Epistulae Morales*.[4] The distinctive character of the letters is after all formed by Seneca's own creative talent. We can see this by comparing the passages in Teles and Seneca where the analogy of the apyrenum and the helmsman's defiance respectively occur (see n. 3 below). In both instances the Latin author has woven the material far more neatly into the surrounding context and exploited its illustrative possibilities more comprehensively. We can also see it by comparing the letters with two very different Latin works that were much influenced by the Hellenistic diatribes, Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum* and the satires of Horace. However the verse epistles of Horace on moral themes are in many respects the closest precedent we have in extant literature for what Seneca was doing in prose.[5]

In the letters of Seneca we see not only the emergence of the literary epistle as a distinct genre but also a novel form of moral essay, circumscribed in subject-matter and highly wrought in style, in which both Montaigne and Bacon could recognize their own literary ancestry.[6]

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[1] The phrase is Quintilian's (2. 5. 22), the target probably Seneca and his imitators, but the judgement is not that of a defender of the purity of philosophical discourse.

[2] A. Oltramare in *Les Origines de la Diatribe Romaine* (Lausanne, 1926), 44–65, 263–92, lists themes common to Seneca and the Greek popular philosophical tradition, as defined by Ariston, Diogenes, Antisthenes, Bion, Teles. But the range of topics is so comprehensive that a Latin moralist would have been hard put to it to break new ground; wealth as an obstacle to philosophizing (Teles, p. 45. 3 ff. Hense, Sen. 17. 3), the folly of blaming our faults on external circumstances (Teles, p. 8. 6, Sen. 50. 1), and consolatory reflections at the death of a loved one (Teles, p. 56. 14 f., Sen. 74. 30) are so commonplace as to be inconclusive for indebtedness.

[3] Most of the instances noted are either trivial, like the use of the analogy with the apyrenum in the discussion of imperturbability at Teles, p. 55 and Sen. 85. 5, or else likely to belong to an older tradition; e.g. the helmsman's defiant address to the sea-god in Teles, p. 62 and Sen. 85. 33, which clearly comes from some lost tale, and the conceit at Sen. 119. 12: 'sic diuitias habent quomodo habere dicimur febrem cum illa nos habeat', which recalls not only Bion's *οὐχ οὗτος τὴν οὐσίαν κέκτηται ἀλλ' ἡ οὐσία τοῦτον* but also Aristippus' *ἔχω ἀλλ' οὐκ ἔχομαι* (Diog. L. 4. 50, 2. 75).

[4] Only thus far can we on the evidence available accept Albertini's claim (op. cit. 304) that 'il n'y a pas de nom dans la terminologie antique qui s'applique aux œuvres de Sénèque plus exactement que celui-là (*sc.* la diatribe)'.

[5] A striking example is Hor. *Ep.* 1. 11 and Sen. 28, which clearly alludes to it in the phrase 'animum debes mutare, non caelum' in the opening paragraph.

[6] Seneca's influence as a prose writer reached its zenith in the sixteenth century with such diverse continental authors as Erasmus, Muret, and Montaigne (see Summers, op. cit. ciii–cvii). But it was important too in seventeenth-century English literature from Bacon onwards; see G. Williamson, *The Senecan Amble: a study in prose from Bacon to Collier* (London, 1951). Sometimes the relation is very close; see, e.g., C. E. Clark, *B.H.R.* xxx (1968), 249–66: 'Seneca's Letters to Lucilius as a source of some of Montaigne's imagery', esp. pp. 260–2 on the image of *solida felicitas*.