

SOME NOTES ON THE TEXT OF SENECA'S DIALOGUES

1. 4. 9. Fugite delicias, fugite enervantem felicitatem, qua animi permadescunt et, nisi aliquid intervenit quod humanae sortis admoneat, †velut perpetua ebrietate sopiti†.

Although it is possible to produce a tolerable sentence by deleting *et* after *permadescunt*, it is generally agreed that a verb is missing in the last clause. Koch suggested <*iacent*> *sopiti*, Gertz *sopiti* <*torpent*>, Feldmann *sopiuntur*, but the excellent clausula suggests that the end of the sentence should not be tampered with. Others rightly insert their supplement after *admoneat*: *manent* Hermes, *vivunt* Schultess, *languent* Viansino. One would hesitate to add to the growing clutter of suggestions, did not one of Seneca's favourite verbs seem to meet all requirements, namely *marcent*. Cf. *ben.* 4. 6. 3 'quies in qua putrescis ac marces'; 4. 13. 1 'vobis voluptas est . . . securitatem sopitis simillimam adpetere et . . . animi marcentis oblectare torporem'; *dial.* 1. 3. 10 'hunc voluptatibus marcidum et felicitate nimia laborantem'; 9. 2. 6; 10. 2. 2; *epist.* 74. 1; 89. 18 *et al.*

2. 9. 2. Est et illa iniuria frequens, si lucrum alicui excussum est aut praemium diu captatum.

alicui ε: alicuius ω

alicui has been in the text as long as it has been in print, but rhythm suggests that *alicuius* is right. This example should be added to those collected by J. Müller¹ in connection with 7. 26. 4 'sapientis quisquis abstulerit divitias', where the genitive survives as the uncorrected reading of A, our earliest and best manuscript.²

It may be worth adding a few more examples of the many places in the *Dialogues* where a sound tradition has been wrongly suspected or altered. A more interesting case is 5. 14. 3. Seneca relates how Cambyses, advised by Praexaspes not to drink so heavily, drank more deeply than ever and then shot Praexaspes' son through the heart to show how little alcohol affected his steadiness of hand. Praexaspes abjectly applauded. What he should have done, said Seneca, was to question Cambyses' skill and challenge him to do the same again with himself as the target: 'controversiam illi facere de gloria debuit et revocare iactum, ut regi liberet in ipso patre certiores manum ostendere.' Lipsius doubted whether *iactus* could be used appropriately of an arrow and proposed *ictum*. Partly prompted by such doubts Professor Shackleton Bailey³ has recently re-examined the passage. He very rightly points out that *revocare* cannot here mean 'to recall the shot', which was a *fait accompli*. It must mean 'to call for an encore': therefore read *revocare in actum*. But it seems captious to deny the propriety of *iactus*, which is used of a variety of missiles however propelled: it is applied to arrows by Virgil (*Georg.* 2. 124) and Statius (*Theb.* 6.

¹ 'Kritische Studien zu den kleineren Schriften des Philosophen Seneca', *Sitzungsber. d. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien*, cxviii. 1 (1889), 28.

² Ambrosianus C go inf., of the eleventh

century. These notes are based on a view of the manuscript tradition which I presented in an earlier article, *C.Q.* n.s. xviii (1968), 355-72.

³ *C.Q.* n.s. xx (1970), 357.

932) and—though here the arrows are bracketed with stones—by Gellius (9. 12). And if *iactus* is sound, why not ‘call for its repetition’? Cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4. 63 ‘itaque non sine causa, cum Orestem fabulam doceret Euripides, primos tres versus revocasse dicitur Socrates’.

There has been trouble with 9. 17. 2 ‘at illa quantum habet voluptatis sincera et per se inornata simplicitas!’ The later manuscripts changed *per se inornata* to *per se ornata*, Gertz to *prorsus inornata*, Alexander to *per se <et> inornata*, Castiglioni (at different times) to *per se <satis> ornata* and *per se <non> inornata*. But the text is sound: *per se* strengthens *inornata*, as we can see from *epist.* 66. 3 ‘si posset (natura) per se nudos animos edere’, where *per se* goes with *nudos*.

A similarly individual turn of phrase has caused difficulty at 9. 1. 14: ‘rursus ubi se animus cogitationum magnitudine levavit, ambitiosus in verba est altiusque ut spirare ita eloqui gestit et ad dignitatem rerum exit oratio.’ *exigitur* is found for *exit* in the later manuscripts, Muretus proposed *exsurgit*. *exit* has been defended, but not with the right examples. It means ‘to go out for’, ‘to aspire to’; cf. *epist.* 52. 3 ‘quosdam ait Epicurus ad veritatem sine ullius adiutorio exisse, fecisse sibi ipsos viam’; 88. 1 ‘de liberalibus studiis quid sentiam scire desideras: nullum suspicio, nullum in bonis numero quod ad aes exit’.¹

plus where we might expect *peius* has raised eyebrows a little later in the same dialogue: 9. 1. 15 ‘vereor . . . ne semper casuro similis pendeam et plus fortasse sit quam quod ipse pervideo’ (*peius* Gertz, ‘fort. recte’ Hermes). It is an easy change, but we should also have to emend *epist.* 97. 5 ‘plus est distribuere adulteria quam facere’.

In 10. 8. 4 Seneca is developing the theme that men are too generous with their time, that they give away this precious commodity without realizing it: ‘sed hoc ipsum, an detrahant, nesciunt; ideo tolerabilis est illis iactura detrimenti latentis.’ Here more editors than not accept Madvig’s extremely neat emendation *unde detrahant*. This seems to me to be less good, and to originate from the false conviction that ignorance of what one is doing requires the accusative and infinitive construction.² That this is not the case is clear from Seneca’s own rather bolder use of the construction in 4. 30. 1: ‘puer est: aetati donetur, nescit an peccet.’³

There is still less reason to perpetuate such emendations as that of Wolters at 5. 31. 2, where the elected *consul ordinarius* says ‘a me numerari voluit annum’. Wolters proposed *nominari*, but the idiom is vindicated by Seneca himself: 10. 20. 1 ‘ut unus ab illis numeretur annus’.

4. 21. 11. Tenuis ante omnia victus sit et non pretiosa vestis et similis cultus cum aequalibus.

This example of *similis* with *cum* seems to have escaped both editors and grammarians. It appears to be unique. It can perhaps be defended on the

¹ M. D. Reeve has argued strongly for the deletion of *quod ad aes exit* (*C.R.* n.s. xx [1970], 135). This is part of a wider question, but his argument that this is an unexampled use of *exire* will not hold water. Indeed, it is such idiomatic Latin that I should be reluctant to assign it to a glossator.

² *Adversaria critica*, ii (Copenhagen, 1873),

398.

³ *an detrahant* was rightly defended by J. D. Duff (*L. Annaei Senecae dialogorum libri X, XI, XII* [Cambridge, 1915], 123), but with a reference to Cat. 17. 22 ‘ipse qui sit, utrum sit an non sit, id quoque nescit’; this is obviously not a valid parallel.

analogy of *similitudo cum*.¹ If not, the easiest solution is to delete *cum* as an insertion by someone who misunderstood the *comparatio compendiaria*;² except for the expression *similis sui* (*epist.* 109. 9, *nat.* 2. 10. 1) Seneca regularly uses *similis* with the dative.³ But the resulting word-order is rather lame: why did he not write 'similis aequalibus cultus'?

4. 28. 4. Utique bonis ne irascamur (cui enim non, si bonis quoque?), minime diis; non enim illorum, sed lege mortalitatis patimur quidquid incommodi accidit.

post illorum suppl. vi P. Thomas, saevitia (vel iniuria) Gertz

The latest editors retain the tradition. I doubt if *lege* can be taken ἀπό κοινοῦ here and it is an odd word to use of the gods: a word must have dropped out of the text. *vi* is a neat insertion, but it does not ring true; Seneca is talking about the allocation of blame. Perhaps *illorum* <vitio> is the answer: cf. 12. 11. 2 'non fortunae iste vitio, sed suo pauper est'; *nat.* 5. 18. 5 'sed non ideo non sunt ista natura bona, si vitio male utentium nocent'. *vitio* is often used by Seneca (opp. *beneficio*) to mean 'through the fault of', but at the same time it is so drained of moral content that it could be applied quite naturally to the gods: cf. 9. 2. 6 'non constantiae vitio parum leves sunt sed inertiae' (where *vitio* has been wrongly suspected); *Thyest.* 566 'pacis vitio quietae'.

6. 12. 4. Filium tibi di immortales non diu daturi statim talem dederunt qualis diu effici potest.

posset Gertz: qualis diu vivendo effici vix potuisset *van der Vliet*

Marcia's son had enjoyed such a precocious and successful career because the gods knew that he was doomed to an early death. The general sense is clear, but one has to put a deal of emphasis on *diu* to extract the required meaning from *qualis diu effici potest*: 'such as can only be produced over a long period'. Gertz seems to have seen the difficulty, but his *posset* is of little help. *van der Vliet* may be along the right lines, but his solution involves too much rewriting: we need a more epigrammatic close. It is worth considering whether a negative or virtual negative has dropped out of the text. *diu* <non> would be too precious: perhaps simply <*vix*> *diu* or *diu* <*vix*> *effici potest*.

6. 18. 6. Quid lapidum gemmarumque fulgor et †inter rapidorum torrentium aurum harenis interfluens† et in mediis terris medioque rursus mari aetheriae ignium faces et vinculum terrarum oceanus . . . ?

torrentium *A*: cursum torrentium *γ* aetheriae *Haupt*: terrae *A*⁵ in *ras.*, *V*: terret *β*: taetrae *R*: aeriae *Madvig*

A high-flown passage on the wonders of the world. An important but highly interpolated group of the *recentiores* (*γ*) tried to resolve the crux by inserting *cursum*, other late manuscripts emended—rather more neatly—to *harenas aurum*. Both methods have been imitated by modern scholars and Gertz's early suggestion⁴ *aurum harenas* was adopted by Hermes. Among other expedients are

¹ Cic. *Leg.* 1. 25, *Tusc.* 2. 54.

² Cf. *epist.* 74. 45 'similia naufragis pati'; *dial.* 9. 12. 3.

³ Gertz's emendation of *senatu similis* to

senatus similis at 9. 5. 1 should therefore be rejected.

⁴ *Studia critica in L. Annaei Senecae dialogos* (Copenhagen, 1874), 114.

'nitens rapidorum torrentium aurum harenis interfluens' (Gertz 1886) and 'inter<fluens> rapidorum torrentium aurum harenis [interfluens]' (Castiglioni). There are two occurrences of *interfluere* in Seneca which make it clear that he uses the verb with the dative: *epist.* 100. 6 'concisura aquarum cubiculis interfluentium'; *ben.* 6. 7. 3 '(flumina) pinguibus arvis interfluant'. The simplest and most obvious solution has not been adopted: ¹ delete *inter*. A sophisticated word-order is particularly common in this dialogue: cf. 3. 2 'ultima filii oscula gratumque extremi sermonem oris haurire' and 'nec plus doluit quam aut honestum erat Caesare aut aequom salvo', with Abel's note on the latter.²

I have preferred Haupt's *aetheriae* to the commonly adopted *aeriae*. All that can be seen of the original reading of A is the initial letter *a*, joined to *mari*. But the testimony of the β manuscripts, copied from A before it was ravaged by A⁵, and of γ (RV) support *aetheriae* at least as strongly as *aeriae*. Both words are largely poetical, but while *aetherius* is common in Seneca's tragedies, *aerius* is alien to his vocabulary.

6. 22. 3. Nihil est tam fallax quam vita humana, nihil tam insidiosum; non mehercules quisquam illam accepisset, nisi daretur inscientibus.

inscientibus Fickert: intibus A: insciis γ

Here editors follow Fickert. But *insciens* is not used by Livy after the first decade and is rare in later prose.³ It is quite out of place in Seneca and cannot be right. Instead Seneca uses *inscius* or *nesciens*.

The γ reading should not be dismissed out of hand as an obvious conjecture, for *inscius* is perfectly appropriate in Seneca in this sort of context: *ben.* 3. 12. 3 'ingratum vocabis eum cui beneficium inscio et, si scisset, non accepturo impositum est?' But it is most unlikely to be right because it makes the reading of A inexplicable. An obvious substitute would be *nescientibus*, but I think that Seneca here expressed the idea in another and characteristic way by writing *ignorantibus*. He likes to use *ignorare* of the person to whom something happens without his knowledge: 9. 10. 1 'tibi ignoranti vel publica fortuna vel privata laqueum inpegit quem nec solvere possis nec rumpere'; 10. 18. 6 'quaedam enim ignorantibus aegris curanda sunt'; *ben.* 2. 10. 1 'pulvino eius ignorantis sacculum subiecit'; 3. 12. 3 'aliquando ignorans obligor' (where *ignorans* corresponds to *inscius* in the following sentence, quoted above); 7. 31. 2 'di . . . beneficia ignorantibus dare incipiunt, ingratis perseverant'. It is well known that the text from the *Ad Marciam* onwards shows signs of increased carelessness in copying and a propensity to truncate words, resulting in *solli* for *sollicitudinis* (6. 11. 4), *educat* for *educatione* (6. 12. 2), and similar mutilations. But there are also examples of telescoping; at least this is the assumption on which one reads, rightly I think, *querella* for *qua* at 10. 2. 2. It looks as if A has here faithfully preserved the remnants of *ignorantibus*, while γ has emended.

7. 10. 2. Atqui quis ignorat . . . animum ipsum genera voluptatis prava et multa suggerere?—in primis insolentiam et nimiam aestimationem sui tumoremque elatum super ceteros et amorem rerum suarum caecum et inprovidum,

¹ Deletion had occurred to Schultess, but he preferred to emend *inter* to *nitor*, *Annaeana studia* (Hamburg, 1888), 48.

² *Gnomon*, xxxvi (1964), 684–5. *aequom*

salvo is his neat rectification of the much emended *aequo malo* of A.

³ *T.L.L.* vii. i. 1839. 39 ff., where this example is listed among the *dubia vel falsa*.

delicias fluentis et ex minimis ac puerilibus causis exsultationem, iam dicacitatem ac superbiam contumeliis gaudentem, desidiam dissolutionemque segnis animi, indormientis sibi.

delicias fluentis *post* gaudentem *transp.* Reitzenstein

Seneca is listing the vices of a life in which *voluptas* and not *virtus* is at the helm. Reitzenstein's transposition solves certain difficulties. First, *deliciae fluentes* ('dissolute luxury') seems out of place sandwiched between *amor rerum suarum* and *exsultatio*; it is more at home in the company of *desidia* and *dissolutio*. Secondly, the postponement of this phrase helps to bolster the end of the sentence, which flags somewhat—Gertz actually inserts *et* after *animi*. Further, *fluentis* now ceases to be an accusative plural going with *delicias* and becomes a genitive singular with *animi*; though this does not appear to have been one of the considerations which influenced Reitzenstein, *deliciae fluentes* is a surprisingly bold expression. There is therefore much to be said for his conjecture, but the resulting sentence—'delicias fluentis, desidiam dissolutionemque segnis animi, indormientis sibi'—is impossibly awkward. A better solution is to emend *delicias fluentis* to *deliciis fluentis*—the change from ablative to accusative would be inevitable when it was moved to its new home—and place it after *animi*. This retains all the advantages which Reitzenstein secured and adds two more: it produces a more stylish end to the sentence, and *animus deliciis fluens* is a more natural expression than *deliciae fluentis animi*. That this is the normal idiom is clear from *epist.* 78. 25 'delicati et luxu fluentes'; *dial.* 1. 1. 6 'malos lascivire et voluptatibus fluere'; 1. 4. 5 'divitiis diffluere'; Cic. *amic.* 52 'deliciis diffuentes'.

7. 26. 4. 'Nihil magis' inquit ille Socrates aut aliquis alius <ius> cui idem adversus humana atque eadem potestas est 'persuasi mihi quam ne ad opiniones vestras actum vitae meae flecterem.'

ius *add.* J. Mueller: animi *ante* idem Castiglioni

The *sapiens* is unharmed by hostile criticism and need not pay any attention to it. But he does reply, not because provoked, but to point out to his traducers the error of their thinking.

Clearly a word has dropped out of the text; *idem* is left unattached. *ius* is normally accepted as a supplement because it could so easily have fallen out after *aliquis*. But *ius ac potestas* denotes legally constituted authority¹ and is quite inappropriately used of the *sapiens*. And we need some reference to his paternalistic attitude. Thus <*animi*> *idem* is along the right lines, but it is awkward and would mean 'the same degree of courage'.² It is simpler and neater to insert *animus* before *adversus*: cf. 1. 2. 6 'patrium deus habet adversus bonos viros animum'; 2. 12. 1 'quem animum nos adversus pueros habemus, hunc sapiens adversus omnes quibus etiam post iuventam canosque puerilitas est'. These passages would appear to clinch the matter, were there not another supplement equally possible and paleographically still more plausible, namely *adfectus*: cf. 2. 13. 2 'hunc adfectum adversus omnis habet sapiens quem adversus aegros suos medicus'. All three passages come from the same general context as the one we have here.

8. 1. 1. *** cit, nobis magno consensu vitia commendant.

cit *aut* cir A¹: cir C, cur PQ: circi A⁵ γ

¹ Livy 24. 39. 2, Cic. *Phil.* 11. 30.

² Cf. *epist.* 24. 8.

This is the ragged start of what remains of the *De otio*: when the fragment begins Seneca is discoursing on the inducements to vice encountered in the company of the multitude. The loss of some leaves in an ancestor of our manuscripts has robbed us of the earlier part of the dialogue. The remainder was for a long time joined without a break to the end of the *De vita beata*; Muretus diagnosed its alien nature, Lipsius severed it from the preceding treatise.

Disembodied syllables are normally the perquisite of papyrologists, and *cit* could not be expected to cause much excitement in the learned world, especially as its final letter is in doubt. The original reading of A has been obscured by the intervention of a later corrector (A⁵), who did a great deal of damage in the fourteenth century. He imported the correction *circi*, also found in γ : the circuses were thought to be of sufficiently dubious repute to provide the missing subject for *commendant*. But the β manuscripts, of which the earliest and best is C, predate the ravages of A⁵ and suggest that the original reading of A was *cir*. The correction *circi*, which must have started from *cir*, confirms that this is the transmitted reading.

There is, though it may at this stage be doubted, some point to this exercise: *cir* can only begin a word in Latin. Unless we make the unlikely assumption of a lacuna both before and after *cir*, our resurrected syllable belongs not to the beginning of the fragment *De otio* but to the end of the *De vita beata*. Lipsius applied the necessary surgery, but he did not make the incision in precisely the right place. Hardly a windfall for the *De vita beata*, it may be thought, but again there is some point. If the logic is correct, the migration of this syllable helps to settle the problem first raised by Lipsius: is our text of the *De vita beata* complete? The common view is that something has been lost at the end, and the dialogue as we have it ends abruptly.¹ But this view has been recently contested, by Pohlenz² and Abel.³ It may well be that the structure is complete in all essentials, but I cannot escape the conclusion that the end of the dialogue is missing, for the simple reason that it stops in the middle of a word. It also stops in the middle of a tornado, and *rotat* and *involvit* provide a context in which the truncated word, *circum* or one of its compounds,⁴ would be highly appropriate. Whether the final sentence of our text is complete in itself is debatable; to me it seems more than somewhat lame.

If this is true, it allows the inferior manuscripts to make a modest contribution. If not, then Seneca should have taught us not to overwork a syllable: 'mus syllaba est; mus autem caseum rodit; syllaba ergo caseum rodit.'⁵ After that, there can be no excuse for making a *mons* out of a *mus*.

12. 12. 2. Transeamus †ape spe non obveniamus† ad locupletes: quam multa tempora sunt quibus pauperibus similes sint!

ape spe non obveniamus A: a pauperibus veniamus γ : opes paene inopes, veniamus *Madvig*: asperiores. nos obvertamus *Feldman*: a re saepe non obvia, veniamus *Roszbach*: capite censos, veniamus *Niemeyer*

¹ 'Quid porro? nonne nunc quoque, etiam si parum sentitis, turbo quidam animos vestros rotat et involvit, fugientes petentesque eadem et nunc in sublime adlevatos nunc in infima adlisis?'
² M. Pohlenz, *N.A.G.* iv (1941), 76

(= *KL. Schr.* i. 405 f.), who does concede the possibility of some small loss.

³ K. Abel, *Bauformen in Senecas Dialogen* (Heidelberg, 1967), 173.

⁴ Such as *circumagere* (cf. *epist.* 83. 21, *nat.* 7. 10. 3).
⁵ *Epist.* 48. 6.

Seneca is arguing that poverty is not an evil. Indeed, the poor may even be happier than the rich, because they have less to worry about. There are occasions when the rich too, through necessity or even by choice, survive happily on a reduced style of living.

The text of A is garbled at this point, and the result has been a large crop of emendations, of which a selection are quoted above. None of them is even plausible. Consequently the vulgate reading, first put into the text by Lipsius, has recently come back into favour:¹ *a pauperibus, veniamus*. This proves to be the reading of γ and so merits serious reconsideration. Compared with the ingenuity of nineteenth-century scholarship, it seems rather facile, but it could be facile because it is right. The resulting text, *transeamus a pauperibus, veniamus ad locupletes*, is simple, it could conceivably have been garbled to produce the mess we have in A, and it is not out of keeping with Seneca's idiom. He commonly uses *transire ad* as a transitional formula,² but *venire ad* is also used, more informally, of movement to another topic.³

Some doubt remains. It seems rather heavy-handed, especially when the movement of thought is as swift as it is here, to spell out both the *a quo* and the *ad quod* of such a simple transition. If that is so, and as glosses are easily garbled, excision may be preferable to emendation. I would suggest reading either [*transeamus a pauperibus*] *veniamus ad locupletes* or, better, *transeamus [a pauperibus veniamus] ad locupletes*.

12. 15. 3. Si multo ante afuisses, fortius tulisses ipso intervallo desiderium molliente; si non recessisses, ultimum certe fructum biduo diutius videndi filium tulisses.

Seneca's mother Helvia had unfortunately left Rome three days before his exile. If she had left long before, the blow would not have been as hard; had she not gone away, she would at least have had the final solace of two more days with her son.

The repetition of *tulisses* after such a short interval and with a different meaning is awkward, as Duff noticed.⁴ There is a stronger objection: *fructum ferre* commonly means 'to bear fruit', and it seems unlikely that it could also mean (on the analogy of *spolia, praemia ferre*) 'to bear off', i.e. 'to reap fruit'. I think that *filium tulisses* owes its existence in part to a recollection of the previous *fortius tulisses* and that Seneca wrote not *tulisses* but a word of similar shape which it has replaced, namely *cepisses*. The appropriate verb with *fructum* in this sense is *capere* or *percipere*. Seneca prefers the latter,⁵ but the ease with which the simple and compound verb are interchanged is clear from 6. 12. 1 'utrum te in amisso filio movet quod nullas ex illo voluptates cepisti, an quod maiores, si diutius vixisset, percipere potuisti?' He may have avoided *percipere* here because he had just used the word in the previous sentence; and for *fructum capere* cf. *ben.* 2. 31. 2.⁶

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¹ Recommended by F. Ageno (*R.I.G.I.* vi [1922], 33), adopted by Waltz and (with the unnecessary incorporation of *et* from some recentiores) Viansino.

² Cf. *epist.* 88. 9, 95. 55, 114. 15, *dial.* 9. 8. 1.

³ Cf. *epist.* 24. 6, 66. 19, 87. 5, 88. 14.

⁴ J. D. Duff, *op. cit.* 282.

⁵ e.g. *epist.* 35. 2, 78. 27, 98. 11.

⁶ It is also possible that *cepisses* or *percepisses* originally stood after *recessisses* but then dropped out of the text by homoeoteleuton; in that case *tulisses* would be a stopgap.