

DE GRUYTER

Fabio Tutrone

HEALING GRIEF

A COMMENTARY ON SENECA'S
'CONSOLATIO AD MARCIAM'

CICERO - STUDIES ON ROMAN
THOUGHT AND ITS RECEPTION

DE
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A photograph of a Roman amphitheater. In the center, a man in a white toga stands on a raised platform, gesturing with his right hand. The audience, also in white togas, is seated in the curved tiers of the theater, looking towards the speaker. The scene is set against a light blue background.

Fabio Tutrone
Healing Grief

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For my father and my colorful family
Studia, hereditarium et paternum bonum
(Sen. Marc. 1.6)

Acknowledgements

When in November 2018 I began to work on the present project, I was firmly persuaded that Seneca's *Consolatio ad Marciam* deserved renewed attention, and that this attention should take the form of a new commentary *ad loca*. The three years that followed were tough enough to show that there was a deeper, more 'existential' reason to delve into Seneca's text. In a sense, I myself – and most of the people around me – quickly became Seneca's *consolandi* as the Covid-19 pandemic and the developing international crisis mixed with (and partly gave rise to) several personal and collective difficulties. When my father – who instilled in me a stubborn passion for literature – had the onset of a progressive neurological disorder, I inevitably felt deeper sympathy for Marcia, but I was also led to investigate more thoughtfully the cognitive and psychological foundations of Seneca's moral therapy. Although I must confess that I do not agree with all the conclusions that follow from Stoic natural philosophy, I am immensely grateful to Seneca for reminding me over and over again that human relationships and genuine love offer both the speediest way out of personal sorrow and the most satisfying reward for the everyday drudgery of life. This book is literally made up of the love bonds – the *oikeiōsis* bonds, as Seneca would have called them – that have made it possible and is dedicated to them.

As an unconventional teacher, my father has never ceased to show me that good literature can give form even to formlessness and to formless pain. Without knowing a word of Greek and Latin, my mother has taught me that philology is not an academic discipline, but a way of life which spans both the kitchen and the office. My sister Laura has accompanied me at every step, making sure I was not in lack of a word of insight and humor. I will never find enough words to express my gratitude to my wife Chiara and my children Clelia and Emanuele, who have tolerated my absences and vagueness arising from the gestation of this commentary for far too many years. Chiara has always been a fruitful vine in the inner part of myself, Clelia and Emanuele are like olive shoots deep-rooted in my soul. With their superhuman patience and their gratuitous love, they have allowed this book to take shape day after day and have demonstrated that wisdom – the gift of oneself – is not as rare as the phoenix – *pace* Seneca.

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Contents

Acknowledgements — VII

Introduction

- 1 ***Apprendre à mourir. Seneca's First Lesson on Death* — 3**
 - 1.1 Date — 3
 - 1.2 Context — 6
 - 1.3 Aims and Models — 10
- 2 **Therapeutic Words. Seneca and His Text(s) — 17**
 - 2.1 Source Criticism — 17
 - 2.2 Structure and Tradition — 19

Text

L. Annaei Senecae Dialogorum Liber VI ad Marciam de Consolatione — 25

Commentary

- 1 **Introductory Proem: Marcia's Self, Cremutius Cordus' Death, and Seneca's Therapy — 47**
- 2–5 **Teaching Through *Exempla*: Octavia, Livia, and Areus — 64**
- 6–11 **Nature, Time, and the Human Condition: General *Praecepta* for the Bereaved — 96**
- 12–19.2 **On the Bereaved's Self-Perception: *Praecepta* (and *Exempla*) about Marcia's Situation — 129**
- 19.3–25 **On the Sublime Privilege of Death: *Praecepta* about Metilius' Situation — 195**
- 26 **A Consoling and Familiar Apocalypse: Cremutius Cordus' *Prosopopoeia* and Stoic Truth — 270**

Abbreviations — 291

Bibliography — 293

Index Rerum — 323

Index Nominum — 329

Index Locorum — 333



Introduction

1 Apprendre à mourir. Seneca's First Lesson on Death

Michel de Montaigne devotes one of the most well-known chapters of his *Essais* to show “that to study philosophy is to learn to die” (“que philosopher c’est apprendre à mourir”). According to Montaigne, “the premeditation of death is the premeditation of liberty” insofar as “there is nothing of evil in life for a person who rightly understands that the loss of life is no evil”.¹ Montaigne does not conceal his debt to ancient writers as he starts by citing Cicero, who famously models his idea that studying philosophy means “learning to die” (*mori discere*) on the Socratic lesson of Plato’s *Phaedo*.² A thick garnish of Latin quotations is scattered throughout Montaigne’s chapter, and Cicero’s motto is quickly followed by Seneca’s claim in *Epistle* 117 that when it comes to the essential truths of ethics, one should rush past all “the clever little things” (*sollertissimae nugae*) which spark controversies among philosophers.³ At the dawn of his career as a philosophical writer, Seneca, like Montaigne, was persuaded that philosophy can set humans free from the bondage of grief and anguish by defeating the fear of death, and that scholarly disagreements over single issues are less important than often assumed.

1.1 Date

It should no longer be controversial that the *Consolatio ad Marciam* (hereafter *ad M.*) is the earliest of Seneca’s extant writings, an invaluable testimony to the genesis of Seneca’s project of doing philosophy – Stoic philosophy – in Latin for a

1 M. Montaigne, *Essais*, Book 1, Chapter 20 (cf. Michel 1965, 142–149): “la préméditation de la mort est préméditation de la liberté. [. . .] Il n’y a rien de mal en la vie pour celui qui a bien compris que la privation de la vie n’est pas mal”.

2 Cic. *Tusc.* 1.74–75; *Pl. Phd.* 64A–67D. On Cicero’s translation of Socrates’ μελέτη θανάτου as *commentatio mortis* and its *Nachleben* in Seneca, see below, note on *Marc.* 23.2, in *mortem prominere*. On the spiritual exercise of the premeditation of future evils – particularly of death – which is recalled by Montaigne and is one of Socrates’ most significant legacies for Stoic thought, see below, notes on *Marc.* 9.1.

3 Sen. *Ep.* 117.30, affirming the superiority of the struggle for moral perfection over internal disputes and distinctions such as that concerning “wisdom” (*sapientia*) and “being wise” (*sapere*). For Montaigne, who enacts an original combination of Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Christianity, “les dissensions des sectes philosophiques, en ce cas, sont verbales”.

Roman audience. A broad consensus exists among scholars that Seneca wrote his *consolatio* under Gaius (37–41 AD), at a crucial time for his life choices and the transformation of his cultural interests.⁴ From the very beginning of his address to Marcia – a noble lady who had lost her beloved son Metilius three years earlier⁵ – Seneca lays great emphasis on the heroic figure of Marcia's father, the historian A. Cremutius Cordus, who committed suicide in 25 AD to escape a *maiestas* trial orchestrated by Sejanus, but whose work was republished in the more favorable climate of Gaius' principate.⁶ Cremutius Cordus figures prominently not only in Seneca's proem, but also towards the end of the *consolatio*, when his Stoic-like death is dramatically reenacted (*Marc.* 22.4–8) and he delivers a speech from the heavens which, in several respects, is the peak of Seneca's consolatory discourse (26). It would be odd to suppose that Seneca conjured such a vibrant (and intentionally therapeutical) evocation of Cremutius' fall and rehabilitation many years after the events. Internal evidence also allows us to rule out the possibility that Seneca wrote to Marcia during (or after) his exile in Corsica (41–49 AD), for not only does Seneca include himself among those living in Rome,⁷ but he also describes the evils of exile in a remarkably conventional fashion which sharply contrasts with the

4 Over the past few decades, the attribution of the *ad M.* to the period of Gaius' reign – which was convincingly upheld by Lana 1955, 88–89, Abel 1958, 610, and Griffin 1976, 396–397, among others – has become common knowledge. Suffice it to mention Hine 2014, 3, Sauer 2014, 135, Wilson 2014, 69, Braund 2015, 25, and Star 2021, 134. The view of Bourgery 1922, 47, that the consolation was published after Seneca's exile in 49 AD, or that of Hermann 1929, who proposes the astonishingly late date of 62 AD, have not found acceptance among students of Seneca. However, Giaccotti 1957, 72–73, is remarkably skeptical about the *terminus ante quem*, and his date for the *ad M.* (accepted by Manning 1981, 4) is actually any time between Gaius' accession to the throne (37 AD) and Seneca's death (65 AD). By contrast, Favez 1928, xi–xiv, is prepared to admit that the work appeared before Seneca's exile but prefers a date after Caligula's death (January 41 AD). One notable contestation of the *communis opinio* can be found in Bellemore 1992, according to whom our *consolatio* was published under Tiberius, whom Seneca judges more favorably than usual. Yet, as Sauer 2014, 135, points out, accepting a Tiberian date means disregarding our only direct *testimonium* about the reappearance of Cremutius Cordus' *Annales* (Suet. *Calig.* 16) – not to mention the fact that in *Marc.* 15.1–3 Seneca portrays both Augustus and Tiberius as 'figures of memory' (Assmann 1992), using a remarkably different style than that required by the flattery of a living *princeps*.

5 Cf. note on *Marc.* 1.7: *tertius iam praeterit annus*.

6 For further details on Cremutius' trial and death as well as on the republication of his *Annales*, see the commentary notes on *Marc.* 1.2–3, and 22.4–8.

7 Cf. *Marc.* 16.2 (*in qua istud urbe, di boni, loquimur?*), with Manning 1981, 2, and Sauer 2014, 135; *contra* Marshall 2014, 34–35.

thorough revision of the literary tradition *On Exile* (Περὶ φυγῆς) he will carry out after 41 AD – most notably in his two other consolations.⁸

The fact that Gaius is never mentioned in our text can be considered a kind of *adulatio ex silentio* – a deliberate act of prudence – for in all of Seneca’s other writings Gaius stands out as “Nature’s monster”, a man with a characteristically vicious disposition symmetrical to the virtue of the sage.⁹ However, both Suetonius and Cassius Dio report that Gaius also tried to gain the consent of different social forces by breaking with some of Tiberius’ most unpopular policies.¹⁰ The revival of the works of Cremutius Cordus, Titus Labienus, and Cassius Severus epitomizes this pursuit of political support, and although Gaius seems to have ruled with some semblance of evenhandedness especially in the initial stages of his reign, “it seems likely that these favorable policies did continue throughout his reign for the most part”.¹¹ Certainly, it is Caligula’s breaking with the earlier climate of terror that Seneca recalls in his proem, where “a change of times” (*mutatio temporum*) is said to have provided Marcia with the opportunity to republish Cremutius’ *Annales* (*Marc.* 1.3). Seneca’s proemial statements have led some scholars to locate the composition of the *ad M.* in the early years of Gaius’ reign, or even in the first year of his rule (37 AD).¹² Though this is not impossible, due attention should be paid to the meaning of Seneca’s laudatory references to Tiberius (*Marc.* 3.2; 15.3.). As Miriam Griffin points out,¹³ Dio informs us that in

8 See below, notes on *Marc.* 17.5, 20.2, and 22.3. As Abel 1958, 610, points out, Seneca’s criticism of Dionisius II of Syracuse, who chose exile over death (*Marc.* 17.5), is especially significant since “für einen Seneca, der selbst in der Verbannung lebt oder gelebt hat, bedeuten die Worte beinahe notwendig eine vernichtende Selbstverurteilung. Das völlige Ignorieren dieser Auslegungsmöglichkeit seitens des Autors erklärt sich am einfachsten aus ihrem Nichtvorhandensein”.

9 On Seneca’s Gaius as “Nature’s monster”, see Wilcox 2008, who substantiates this view by reassessing the most eloquent among Seneca’s sixteen mentions of Caligula – “a man exceptionally greedy for human blood” (*hominem sanguinis humani avidissimum*, *Ben.* 4.31.2), “whom Nature produced for the destruction and the censure of the human race” (*quem rerum natura in exitium opprobriumque humani generis edidit*, *Polyb.* 17.3). The same idea had already been captured by Lana 1955, 112–113, and Grimal 1978, 268–273. As noted by Gloyn 2017, 158, in the consolatory context of the *Consolation to Polybius* Gaius is used, more specifically, as “an anti-*exemplum* of how to manage one’s grief on the death of a sibling”. No wonder that under the reign of Gaius Seneca chose a strategy of silence. A subtle *captatio benevolentiae*, though, can be seen in Seneca’s warm praise of Livia and Drusus, who were Gaius’ great-grandmother and grandfather, respectively (see below, note on *Marc.* 2.3, *Livia*).

10 Suet. *Calig.* 15–16, Cassius Dio, 59.9.4–7.

11 Adams 2007, 150.

12 See e.g., Lana 1955, 88–89 (“nell’atmosfera nuova creata dall’avvento di Gaio”); Traina 1987, 16 (“agli inizi liberali del suo principato, nel 37”).

13 Griffin 1976, 23; 56; 397.

39 AD Gaius radically changed his previously negative attitude to Tiberius: whereas up to this time Gaius “had spoken badly” (κακῶς ἔλεγε) of Tiberius before everybody and had even “taken delight” (ἔχαριεν) in derogatory references to his predecessor, in 39 AD he entered the senate-chamber and “eulogized his predecessor at length, besides severely rebuking the senate and the people, saying that they did wrong in finding fault with him”.¹⁴ Gaius allegedly went so far as to include in his speech a *prosopopoeia* of Tiberius warning against the senate’s unfaithfulness.¹⁵ It is curious to note that the *prosopopoeia* is one of the most characteristic rhetorical devices of the *ad M.*, recurring at three crucial points of Seneca’s consolatory therapy.¹⁶ Even more interestingly, Seneca’s repeated use of the perfective indicative in his proemial description of the *mutatio temporum* which allowed the reappearance of Cremutius’ work (*dedit, reduxisti, vindicasti, restituisti, meruisti*) can be thought to confirm Griffin’s hypothesis that a date after 39 AD is more likely – for Seneca seems to narrate Cremutius’ literary rehabilitation from a certain temporal distance. However, it should be acknowledged that these are not conclusive arguments, especially because Dio’s chronology of Caligula’s principate is anything but precise, and Caligula’s *ex post* appreciation of Tiberius’ oppression of the senate might seem at odds with Seneca’s eulogy of one of the most illustrious senatorial victims of the Tiberian era. Indeed, although Cremutius was a victim of Sejanus, it was hard to completely dissociate his story from the memory of Tiberius’ attacks on the senate. One can thus be content with the conclusion that the *ad M.* was written at some time during Gaius’ principate in an atmosphere of relative political détente, as shown also by Seneca’s comparatively unrestrained praise (and criticism) of republican *exempla*.¹⁷

1.2 Context

Once we have set the work in the general framework of the Gaian period, we can try to investigate with more precision Seneca’s intellectual aims and rhetorical strategies. One should start by noticing that, given the scarcity of our evidence, Seneca’s position under Gaius has been the subject of various speculations.

¹⁴ Cass. Dio 59.16.1 (πολλὰ μὲν ἐκεῖνον ἐπήνεσε, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ τῆς γερουσίας τοῦ τε δήμου κατηγορήσεν ὡς οὐκ ὀρθῶς αὐτὸν ψευόντων). Further evidence comes from Suet. *Calig.* 30.2.

¹⁵ Cass. Dio 59.16.4–7.

¹⁶ *Marc.* 4.2–5.6 (Areus); 17.2–7 (the journey to Syracuse and Nature’s speech); 26 (Cremutius Cordus).

¹⁷ See esp. *Marc.* 12.6–14.3; 20.4–6.

Rightly discredited is Zeph Stewart's old theory that between 39 and 40 AD Seneca's life was imperiled by "his long association with the suspect circle of the *Seiarniani*". According to Stewart, Seneca wrote the *ad M.* "to demonstrate that he had friends in the other camp as well and incidentally to attack Sejanus and his hangers-on and praise their enemy, Cremutius Cordus".¹⁸ Although it is likely that Seneca's uncle C. Galerius, the prefect of Aegypt, was an associate of Sejanus,¹⁹ Miriam Griffin (followed by Charles Manning) has produced abundant evidence, both literary and prosopographical, to show that among Sejanus' earlier supporters only obscure knights and *homines novi* were in real danger or perished when Sejanus fell (31 AD).²⁰ The *nobiles* and the Julio-Claudian court went on. It is hard to suppose that Seneca felt in danger several years after Sejanus' death, while living under the rule of a different *princeps*. Moreover, "there is no indication that the Annaei had any special personal loyalty to Sejanus or that they approved of the series of trials by which Sejanus eliminated his enemies and attained to his dominance".²¹ Yet, Stewart's reconstruction remains interesting insofar as it bears witness to the enduring unwillingness of scholars to recognize that Roman writers could do philosophy for its own sake – not for political motivations or personal interests – and could creatively adapt earlier philosophical ideas to more specialized discourses and situations.²² Over the past few decades, this deep-rooted prejudice has been effectively challenged by several scholars, some of whom have focused on Seneca as an especially telling case study. As Brad Inwood has shown, Seneca's generation, coming after the experience of the so-called Sextian school (which included Seneca's teacher Papirius Fabianus), "was

18 Stewart 1953, 81–82.

19 C. Galerius, who had married the sister of Seneca's mother, held the much-coveted post of *praefectus Aegypti* for the fifteen years during which Sejanus was Tiberius' all-powerful favorite. As McHugh 2020, 151, admits, "Galerius' sudden replacement at the time of Sejanus' fall, after fifteen years in the post, does suggest an association, but this remains mere conjecture".

20 Griffin 1976, 22–23; 48–52; Manning 1981, 4–6. See also below, note on *Marc. 22.4, Satrio Secundo*.

21 Weinrib 1990, 135, who nonetheless agrees with Stewart 1953 that the composition of *ad M.* is "politically motivated", since "there is not much point in writing a consolation a full three years after the event". For Weinrib, "Seneca decided to publish a statement indicating his sympathy with the family of Cremutius Cordus and including a panegyric of the historian's character and achievements". As often in modern scholarship, we are left with the impression that Seneca used literature and philosophy as a cover for politics.

22 To borrow the words of Lévy 1996, 15: "demeure cependant le soupçon que le philosophe romain ait été un Romain qui philosophait, autrement dit quelqu'un qui considèrerait la philosophie comme un objet, non comme ce qui le définissait en tant que sujet. Le philosophe romain a beau nous dire qu'il n'y a rien de plus important dans sa vie que la philosophie, le fait qu'il ait été consul, conseiller du prince ou empereur paraît démentir cette affirmation".

the first to grow up with such committed philosophers, working in Latin, available as role models. [. . .] For Seneca philosophy was not something essentially Greek, for which he might, like Cicero or Lucretius, be a missionary among the Romans. It was not something which had to be done in Greek if it were to be done seriously and in one's own voice".²³ This should be our starting point when approaching anew the *ad M.*, its intellectual program, and its strategies of persuasion.

Of course, interpreting Seneca's therapeutic arguments as a well-thought-out rewriting of the *consolatio* genre by a committed philosopher – who had eagerly turned to Stoicism under the influence of his third teacher Attalus of Pergamon²⁴ – does not mean ignoring their historically and culturally situated character. Rather, the key point is to understand the original significance of Seneca's literary and philosophical undertaking against the backdrop of the third decade of the first century AD. Admittedly, though hard to reconstruct in detail, the years of Gaius' principate were a turning point for Seneca's existential choices – the pursuit of philosophical wisdom primarily being, in the ancient view, "a way of life".²⁵ Soon after Gaius' accession to the throne in 37 AD, Seneca and his elder brother Novatus – who had entered the senate at the end of Tiberius' reign – were "preparing for the Forum and public honors", as we learn from Seneca the Elder's *Controversies*.²⁶ Since the political influence of Seneca's aunt, the wife of C. Galerius, had already secured him a quaestorship under Tiberius,²⁷ one can safely infer that at the start of Caligula's principate Seneca was aiming at the tribunate or aedilship.²⁸ In the same period, he was also gaining a reputation for his rhetorical skills, since the mordant story in Suetonius that Gaius described Seneca's oratory as "mere display pieces" (*commissiones merae*) and "sand without lime" (*harena sine calce*) takes for granted that "Seneca was very popular just then" (*Senecam tum maxime placentem*).²⁹ Likewise, one may doubt the veracity of Cassius Dio's claim that in

23 Inwood 2005, 11. On the philosophical school of Q. Sextius and his son Sextius Niger, which counted Seneca's teachers Papirius Fabianus and Sotion of Alexandria among its adherents, see Lana 1973, 1992, Hadot 2007, and Sellars 2014, 99–102.

24 On Attalus, a self-proclaimed Stoic from Pergamon who exerted decisive influence on Seneca's *Bildung*, see Seneca the Elder's remarks in *Suas.* 2.12, and Seneca's own memories in *Ep.* 9.7, 63.5, 67.15, 72.8, 81.22, 108.2–23, 110.14–20, *QNat.* 2.48.2, 2.50.1–3.

25 To quote the well-known definition by Hadot 1995. Cf. also Foucault 1986a, Foucault 1988.

26 *Sen. Contr.* 2.praef.4 (*fratribus tuis ambitiosa curae sunt foroque se et honoribus parant*).

27 *Helv.* 19.2 (*illa pro quaestura mea gratiam suam extendit*).

28 See Griffin 1976, 44–45, prompting comparison with the usage of Tac. *Ann.* 13.45; *Hist.* 2.1.1, and Suet. *Ner.* 35. Griffin's inference is more than plausible, *pace* Habinek 2014, 8 n. 26.

29 Suet. *Calig.* 53.2. On the background and meaning of Gaius' criticisms, see Habinek 2014, 8, and Setaioli 2015, 263–264.

39 AD Gaius sentenced Seneca to death out of envy of his rhetorical gifts (and let him off because a woman of the imperial entourage declared that Seneca was likely to die soon anyway of consumption), but, again, Seneca’s success as a learned man of senatorial rank is a *fait accompli* for Dio and his readers, who are reminded that Seneca “was superior in wisdom to all the Romans of his day and to many others as well”.³⁰ Clarke summarizes Seneca’s position in this period as follows:

By 39, he was closely connected with court circles; he had perhaps by now contracted his illustrious marriage – he was about forty; he had attained a position of popularity and pre-eminence by his literary and rhetorical activities; and his polished and pointed wit would have aided his progress in the imperial circles. Not only that; he had the backing of a prominent colonial family, noteworthy for its wealth, its literary talents, and its imperial influence.³¹

However, contrary to what one might surmise on the basis of such a rosy picture, Seneca was not seeking to improve his social standing – his public *persona* – by pursuing a regular *cursus honorum*. By traditional Roman standards, he had a strikingly “slow start”, as Miriam Griffin put it, which can be most easily explained by his natural disinclination to direct involvement in politics, a disinclination reinforced by both chronic ill health and a passion for philosophy and natural science.³² Indeed, what Griffin terms as “disinclination” is perhaps more suitably described by Inwood as “enthusiasm for the philosophical life”.³³ Some of Seneca’s lost works – such as his treatise on earthquakes (*de motu terrarum*) – belong to his youth³⁴ and attest to his ongoing efforts to emerge as a ‘professional’

30 Cass. Dio 59.19.7–8 (ὁ πάντας μὲν τοὺς καθ’ ἑαυτὸν Ῥωμαίους πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ ἄλλους σοφίᾳ ὑπεράρας). Cf. also Sen. *Ep.* 49.2. Stewart 1953, 80–85, and Clarke 1965, 64–66, provide an ingenious (but admittedly speculative) reading of Dio’s story – a story on which doubts have been cast since the time of Marchesi 1944, 11, and Lana 1955, 106–115. Certainly, the fact the Seneca had established his reputation as a man of letters under Gaius is the precondition of Agrippina’s recall of him in 49 AD “on account of his renown for his studies” (*ob claritudinem studiorum eius*, Tac. *Ann.* 12.8).

31 Clarke 1965, 66. Dio (61.10.3) defines Seneca’s marriage with Pompeia Paulina as “most brilliant” (ἐπιφανέστατον), since Paulina seems to have been the daughter of a wealthy knight from Arelate (cf. Plin. *HN* 33.143), Pompeius Paulinus, the dedicatee of Seneca’s dialogue *On the Shortness of Life*, “who, as *praefectus annonae* probably from 48 to 55 CE, was responsible for overseeing the Roman grain supply” (Williams 2014, 107).

32 Griffin 1976, 46.

33 Inwood 2005, 8.

34 See *QNat.* 6.4.2, and below, note on *Marc.* 26.6, *tremoribus*. Seneca’s ethnographic monographs on Egypt and India (*De situ et sacris Aegyptiorum* and *De situ Indiae*, cf. Serv. *Ad Aen.* 6.154; 9.30) and his philosophically engaged work *On Marriage* (*De Matrimonio*, cf. Hier. *Iov.*

thinker – as a writer using his rhetorical training to reframe earlier philosophical traditions and genres.

1.3 Aims and Models

This is the cultural and historical framework in which the *ad M.* should be placed. Throughout the present commentary, Seneca's text is interpreted as a supremely consistent effort to heal a living human being – a learned woman of the Julio-Claudian elite – through the power of philosophical teaching and rhetorical persuasion. What Seneca undertakes in his earliest extant work – whose ambitions, as Emily Wilson notices, “are as much literary as philosophical”³⁵ – is a self-conscious appropriation of the traditional genre of παραμυθία, which was already known in Rome as *adlocutio* or *consolatio*,³⁶ for the sake of Stoic ethical therapy. It has been claimed that ancient consolation literature is “perhaps the most heterodox of ancient philosophical genres”,³⁷ and a significant amount of work has been done in the twentieth century to collect the various *topoi* and rhetorical patterns that characterize consolatory writings of different forms and periods, both in poetry and in prose.³⁸ Yet, recent research has shown that, far from being a purely conventional pastiche of commonplaces, the ancient consolation is “a philosophically informed written crystallization of a social practice”.³⁹ In fact, at a relatively early stage in the evolution of the genre – which should more properly be seen as a constellation of communicative practices cutting across

1.41–49), have also been dated to the earliest stages of his writing career (see, most recently, Ferrero 2014, 208, assigning the ethnographic works to 17–19 AD, and *On Marriage* to 38–39 AD), but this cannot be established with certainty.

³⁵ Wilson 2014, 69.

³⁶ When Catullus asked his friend Cornificius for a poetic consolation – such as the one Catullus offered to Calvus (c. 96) – he translated the Greek παραμυθία with the Latin *adlocutio* (c. 38.5). Cicero, who wrote a proudly original *Consolation to Himself* (*Consolatio ad se*, see Baltussen 2013b), preferred the term *consolatio* and used it very frequently in his speeches, (e.g., *Balb.* 58; *Phil.* 14.34), letters (e.g., *Fam.* 5.16.; 6.3.4; 6.10b.1.), *rhetorica* (e.g., *De or.* 2.50, 64; 3.118), and *philosophica* (e.g., *Fin.* 4.6; *Tusc.* 1.65, 76, 115; 3.55; *Sen.* 1; 4).

³⁷ Kaufman 2014a, 275.

³⁸ The richest survey to date is still that of Kassel 1958, who explores Plutarch's *Consolation to Apollonius* as an inventory of consolatory *topoi* and points out its relationship to the wider ancient tradition. Note that in the present commentary the *Consolation to Apollonius* is ascribed to Plutarch for the sake of simplicity, even if serious doubts have been raised about the authorship of this work.

³⁹ Baltussen 2013a, xiv.

other more unified literary genres⁴⁰ – philosophy became an essential ingredient of the consolatory discourse (or παραμυθητικός λόγος), enriching the content and method of what originally was a culturally ingrained habit – the comforting address to the bereaved, which is attested as early as Homer.⁴¹ At least from Crantor of Soli onwards, “consolatory writing can be seen to bear a close relation to – indeed, to form part of – the much broader stream of philosophical literature of ethical exhortation, moral progress, and self-formation”.⁴² It is into this branch of the consolatory tradition that Seneca intends to tap with his literary and philosophical therapy of Marcia’s grief, which in fact shares several features of Seneca’s later and more famous works of ethical exhortation – the *Epistles to Lucilius* and the *Natural Questions*. The present commentary devotes special attention to the relationship between the *ad M.* and the other writings of the Senecan corpus, in an attempt to show that this often neglected *consolatio* allows us to penetrate Seneca’s discourse on the self in its embryonic stages.

There is every reason to agree with Christoph Jedan that Seneca’s *ad M.* should be taken seriously as an “argumentative consolation”, that is, as “an attempt to console by means of arguments rather than as an attempt to fit the agenda of a fixed literary genre and fixed rhetorical forms”.⁴³ Rhetorical devices and literary models do play an important role in the writer’s discussion, but their persuasive power is directed toward the fundamentally moral project of

40 For this view of ancient consolation literature, based on an “inclusive” and “flexible” approach which recognizes that “conceptual elasticity is essential in any attempt to define a genre of consolation” (10), see Scourfield 2013.

41 In his consolation to Priam, who weeps for Hector’s death, Achilles deploys two arguments which will remain at the core of the ancient consolatory tradition: the common condition of sorrow shared by all humans on account of divine will, and the archetypal meaning of mythical *exempla* (*Il.* 24.468–551). Priam’s and Achilles’ sharing of a meal in the same context highlights the ritual significance of the transaction between the *consolator* and the *consolandum* (see Livingstone 2014, 126–129). For a further Homeric paradigm, see Telemachus’ address to Penelope in *Od.* 1.353–355.

42 Scourfield 2013, 7. On Crantor of Soli, the late fourth-century Academic author of an influential work *On Mourning* (Περὶ πένθους), see Graver 2002, 187–194.

43 Jedan 2017, 167–168, who sets Seneca’s writing against the background of a wider “theo-philosophical” tradition (including such different authors as Plato, Cicero, Plutarch, and Paul) and argues that “it is crucial to understand those texts as instances of engaged thinking, truly argumentative and truly directed towards the support of embodied human beings at the same time”. Jedan rightly reacts against Wilson’s 2013a, 94, view that the “most salient characteristic” of Seneca’s *Consolations* is “their abstention from philosophy, and even suppression of it”. I myself cannot see how it is possible to argue that Seneca’s consolatory discourse reflects a rejection “not only of a specific Stoic ideal but also of the fitness of any philosophical doctrinal framework to the practical work of defeating grief” (Wilson 2013a, 108).

defeating Marcia's grief by correcting her cognitive distortions and re-educating her rational self. Central to this project is the Stoic understanding of grief and all other emotions (πάθη) as reason-based beliefs and value judgements, that is, as products of a rational act of assent (συγκατάθεσις) which can (and should) be brought back to healthy functioning by means of rigorous rational demonstrations.⁴⁴ With a skillful intellectual move which is intended to display the author's literary talents and philosophical insight, some of the most typical arguments of the ancient consolatory tradition are reframed in the context of Stoic ethics, physics, and psychology, prompting Marcia – and the educated Roman audience behind her – to immerse themselves in a morally constructive network of intertextual allusions and cultural revisions.⁴⁵ When in 1981 Charles Manning wrote his commentary on Seneca's *ad M.* – which is the most recent commentary in English on this work – both our perception of the ancient writers' tropes for allusivity and our appreciation of Seneca's commitment to Stoicism were largely different (and admittedly more limited).⁴⁶ It is thus not surprising that Manning could repeatedly remark on Seneca's "considerable restraint" in referring to literary authorities⁴⁷ as well as on his 'eclectic' inclusion of non-Stoic arguments – Platonic, Peripatetic, or Epicurean.⁴⁸ On the one hand, the present commentary

44 On the Stoic rational and physical explanation of the origin of the emotions, see the wide-ranging treatments by Sorabji 2002 and Graver 2007. Specific points of doctrine (and other references) are discussed in the commentary notes.

45 As already noted by Ker 2009, 90–91, Seneca's tailoring of his advice to suit the addressee "makes the consolation an exercise in the rhetoric of occasion, and also in the offering of 'mediating narratives'. [. . .] The therapy comes to be mediated through cultural and literary representations with their own tales to tell, thereby amplifying the therapy's signifying potential".

46 Fundamental for a deeper exploration of the role of literary memory, intertextuality, and intergeneric enrichment in Greek and Roman literature have been the works of Conte 1986, 2017, Hinds 1998, Edmunds 2001, and Harrison 2007 – to quote only a few outstanding pieces of scholarship. The old view of Seneca as an 'eclectic' philosopher combining Stoic thought with 'heterodox' doctrines (particularly with Platonism and Epicureanism) – a view influentially expressed by Zeller 1880, 693–729 – has been convincingly challenged by Inwood 2005, 2007, Reydams-Schils 2010, and Boys-Stones 2013b, among others.

47 For Manning 1981, 13, "a citation from Publilius Syrus, another from the *Aeneid* and an obvious allusion to that work are the limits of the backing sought in the *Ad M.* from the 'classics' of Seneca's own day".

48 Manning 1981, 19, acknowledges that "to write a *consolatio* is a thoroughly proper work for a convinced Stoic such as Seneca" but adds that "in deciding whether to use an argument, Seneca's ultimate criterion would be its effectiveness". On this basis, Manning is prepared to argue that one should regard Seneca's *praecepta* "not as necessarily corresponding wholly to the opinions of Seneca himself" (51). For instance, Epicurean principles are occasionally said to provide "some sort of unifying theme" (71), in preparation of the final "description of Stico-Platonic afterlife" (109).

will show that Seneca engages in a complex relationship of *imitatio/aemulatio* with earlier writers (particularly with Cicero, Lucretius, Virgil, and Ovid) and that he consciously replaces the tendency of ancient consolations to use verbatim quotations with a more sophisticated strategy of hidden re-writing – which is, of course, in line with the reading and writing practices of early imperial Latin authors.⁴⁹ On the other hand, it will be clear that, as in his later works, Seneca tries to carve for himself an original and thought-provoking position within the borders of Stoic orthodoxy.

It is now generally acknowledged that a fixed and, so to speak, ‘monolithic’ paradigm of Stoic orthodoxy has never existed in the history of ancient thought. As Brad Inwood put it, “the picture which modern scholars have made for themselves of an orthodox Stoicism teaching internally consistent doctrine, grounded on clear general principles” is nothing more than “an artefact of our reconstructive methodology”.⁵⁰ It is true that the first three scholarchs – Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus – served as a kind of criterion of what it meant to be a Stoic, but it is equally true that different readings of the same issues have characterized the history of the Stoa since its very beginning – the ethics of Aristo of Chios being just the most glaring example.⁵¹ From the time of his earliest *consolatio* to that of his *Epistles* and *Natural Questions*, Seneca is acutely aware (and overtly proud) of the comparatively large freedom associated with his adherence to Stoicism – a state of things which he promptly translates in the political terms of Roman *libertas*.⁵² To borrow the words of Catharine Edwards, “it is precisely as a Stoic that Seneca feels impelled to add something new to established doctrines”.⁵³ Yet,

49 Verbatim quotations from ancient poets are quite common in Plutarch’s consolations, which, following Kassel 1958, are reasonably regarded as textual prototypes of the Greek tradition of παραμυθία. In fact, Diogenes Laertius (*Vit.* 4.26–27) reports that Crantor of Soli greatly admired, and lavishly quoted from, both epic and tragic poets. On Seneca’s sustained engagement with intertextual echoes in his *philosophica*, see the studies collected in Garani *et al.* 2020.

50 Inwood 2005, 25.

51 On Aristo of Chios and the early Stoic debate over moral progress, see Ioppolo 1980 and Roskam 2005, 21–90. As wisely noted by Sedley 2003, 14–15, “because history is written by the winners, Aristo had come to be seen with hindsight as a marginal and heretical figure”, though “this was certainly not so in his own day, when his impact at Athens was enormous”. Indeed, “there are signs of philosophical independence also in other figures of the first-generation school” such as Herillus of Carthage and Persaeus of Citium. The debates among the so-called Middle Stoics – that is, among Panaetius, Posidonius, and other thinkers of the second and first centuries BC – simply mirror a more advanced stage of the same situation.

52 See e.g., Sen. *Ep.* 33.4 (*non sumus sub rege: sibi quisque se vindicat*); 45.4 (*non enim me cuiquam emancipavi, nullius nomen fero*).

53 Edwards 2019, 14.

Seneca is also careful in observing the fundamental axioms of Stoic philosophy – such as physical monism, the providential immanence of god, natural teleology, and the coincidence between good, virtue, and wisdom. In the *ad M.*, he takes a personal position on a number of issues which had been a matter of debate among earlier Stoics – the destiny of the soul after death being a case in point.⁵⁴ Moreover, Seneca deploys a series of characteristically Stoic themes which find direct application in the treatment of grief and the related cognitive problems: the idea that both life and death are ‘indifferents’ (ἀδιάφορα),⁵⁵ the difference between emotions (πάθη) and pre-emotions (προπάθειαι),⁵⁶ the ‘hardening’ of emotions over time,⁵⁷ the importance of moral virtues such as noble-mindedness (μεγαλοψυχία),⁵⁸ and the destiny of material annihilation which awaits both the individual selves and the cosmos as a whole.⁵⁹ A lucid and interiorized understanding of the limits of the self and the ineluctability of natural laws is the ultimate goal of Seneca’s therapy, which thus transforms the traditional practice of παραμυθία/*consolatio* into a much deeper process of moral growth and psychological renewal – for the good of Marcia and that of readers.

At the same time, Seneca is aware that the special condition of Marcia as a woman wounded by three years of relentless mourning – as a prototype of the *proficiens* burdened with a troubled soul – requires a gradual approach and a careful consideration of her condition (ἔξις) and disposition (διάθεσις).⁶⁰ Seneca agrees with Chrysippus that it is not always possible to start the treatment of someone enslaved to emotion with a direct and uncompromising exposition of Stoic doctrine – which, as is well known, has the total eradication of the emotions (ἀπάθεια) as its true goal. The good doctor should sometimes approach his patient with a sort of first-aid therapy, which does not immediately overthrow “the doctrines which have occupied the soul first” (τῶν προκαταλαβόντων τὴν ψυχὴν δογμάτων), but rather builds on them.⁶¹ Pursuing this line of intervention, Seneca leads Marcia step by step from the provisional ideal of the “moderation of the emotions” (μετριοπάθεια), which is characteristic of the Academic and Peripatetic traditions, to the higher model of Stoic impassiveness. We do

⁵⁴ See notes on *Marc.* 19.3–26.

⁵⁵ Cf. *Marc.* 7.4, 10.1, 12.3, 17.7, 18.8, 19.5–6, 20.2, 22.3, 26.3.

⁵⁶ *Marc.* 5.6, 7.1, 8.2, 13.2, 19.1.

⁵⁷ *Marc.* 2.2–5, 8.2.

⁵⁸ *Marc.* 1.5, 16.4.

⁵⁹ *Marc.* 19.5–6, 20–21, 26.

⁶⁰ On the Stoics’ understanding of these concepts in the context of their theory of moral good, see Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.98.

⁶¹ On Chrysippus’ therapeutic method (which is described by Origen, *C. Cels.* 1.64; 8.51) and its analogy with Seneca’s approach, see below, note on *Marc.* 3.4, *moderatus, mitius*.

not know if Marcia had gravitated towards Academic or Peripatetic philosophy earlier in her life – a fact that would make her case comparable to that of an emotional Epicurean corrected by Chrysippus “in light of his own principles”⁶² – but it may suffice to observe that Seneca’s didactic plan has solid roots in the history of the Stoa. Furthermore, as noticed by Karlhans Abel, such a carefully devised plan is faithfully reflected in the textual structure of our *consolatio*, which hosts a first series of *exempla* (2–5) encouraging Marcia’s embracement of μετριοπάθεια and a second series of *exempla* (12–16) more evidently inspired by the theme of Stoic ἀπάθεια⁶³ – Cremutius Cordus’ *prosopopoeia* at the end of the work being the pinnacle of Seneca’s Stoicization of the *consolatio* genre.

Seneca’s ascription of a pivotal psychagogic role to the rhetoric of exemplarity – which is manifested in the writer’s choice of discussing *exempla* before *praecepta* (2.1) as well as in the large number of characters of Roman history mentioned in almost every section – is itself a consequence of the decision to convey philosophical ideas in the way that best suits the addressee.⁶⁴ For the same reason, gender issues are given appropriate consideration throughout the text, from Seneca’s proemial statements on the natural condition of women⁶⁵ to his original use of female paradigms at a more advanced stage.⁶⁶ The social and cultural dimensions of grief occupy a central position in Seneca’s consolatory discourse, which endeavors to restore in Marcia a constructive sense of memory and human relationships in accordance with the principles of Stoic οἰκείωσις.⁶⁷ Like present-day therapists, Seneca seems convinced that “bereavement through death is inevitably social as well as psychological”, insofar as “the integration of the past (the dead) into the present must be negotiated not just in the head of the individual mourner, but within society itself”.⁶⁸ Thus, by gradually expanding

62 Tielemann 2003, 132, commenting on Origen’s *testimonium*.

63 Abel 1967, 21–22.

64 See below, notes on *Marc.* 2.1. For a comprehensive reassessment of Seneca’s discourse of exemplarity, see now Roller 2018.

65 Cf. below, note on *Marc.* 1.1, *ab infirmitate muliebris animi*.

66 The most obvious evidence is provided by Seneca’s discussion of the figures of Octavia and Livia in *Marc.* 2–5, with Augustus’ house philosopher Areus serving as Seneca’s *alter ego* – a discussion that has already been a topic of fairly consistent interest among scholars (Shelton 1995, Wilcox 2006). Also eloquent is Seneca’s depiction of Lucretia, Cloelia, and the two Cornelias in *Marc.* 16.1–5.

67 On the relevance of the Stoic theory of οἰκείωσις for Seneca’s therapeutic plan, see Gloyne 2017, 19–33.

68 Walter 1999, 20.

the scope of his didactic purposes, Seneca ends up transforming his consolation on the death of Marcia's son into a more complex lesson on the mortal nature of Marcia's own self, the moral vocation of humans, and the physical structure of the world – into a bold exhortation to learn the art of dying, which is intended to legitimize its author as a *Seelenleiter* in the eyes of the Julio-Claudian élite – half-way between Socrates and Montaigne

2 Therapeutic Words. Seneca and His Text(s)

2.1 Source Criticism

Scholars interested in a revival of the method of the so-called *Quellenforschung* will probably be disappointed by the present commentary, which at several points admits that it is neither possible nor useful to trace back Seneca's arguments to one influential source (or to a narrow number of sources). On close inspection, the text of Seneca's *consolatio* seems the product of a multilayered negotiation between different authoritative voices of the consolatory and Stoic traditions – the creative response by someone who has deep knowledge of these and other traditions but is primarily interested in making his voice heard. Perhaps one of the most noteworthy results achieved in this book is the revision of the role of Posidonius of Apamea, who has long been regarded as the main inspiring source of Seneca's exposition – particularly of its final eschatological section.¹ From time to time, it is indeed possible to assume with some confidence that Seneca knew and drew on Posidonius' writings on physics, cosmography, and psychology, but Posidonius' voice usually turns out to be just one among the many Stoic models echoed and reframed by Seneca.² It is now generally recognized that Posidonius cannot be considered the joining link between Seneca and a supposedly heterodox mixture of Stoic, Platonic, and Pythagorean theories, for, contrary to what the nineteenth- and twentieth-century *Altertumswissenschaft* argued from Corsen to Pohlenz, Posidonius was not “a kind of philosophical collector in which a few basic Platonic and Aristotelian ideas merged themselves with Stoic doctrine”, breaking the Stoic belief in divine immanence and corrupting the orthodoxy of the Roman Stoics.³ Neither in the *ad M.* nor in his later works does Seneca depart from Stoic monism and corporealism – that is, from the view that

1 See e.g., Abel 1964, who, building on the assumptions of Badstübner 1901, 1–18, and Boyancé 1936, 42–44, claims that the analogies between Seneca's consolation and Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* are due to their common dependence on Posidonius (“aus ihrer Abhängigkeit von einer gemeinsamen Quelle”). Cf. also below, note on *Marc.* 17.6, *natura*.

2 Cf. esp. 7.3; 11.4; 17.2; 17.6; 18.6–7; 21.2; 23.1; 24.5; 25.1–3; 26.4–6. A first important step in this interpretive direction was already taken by Manning 1981, 135, who, while acknowledging that “Seneca may have read Posidonius”, protested that “one of the less satisfactory assumptions of *Quellenforschung* is that no Roman writer was capable of reading a number of authors and forming his own particular synthesis of ideas”.

3 To quote Mazzoli's 1967, 205, pathbreaking criticism of the (once popular) view of Corsen 1878, Reinhardt 1921, 1926, and Pohlenz 1948–49, I, 208, that Posidonius embodied “il collettore in cui alcune fondamentali idee platoniche e aristoteliche si sarebbe fuse con la dottrina stoica, e il filtro attraverso il quale questo nuovo amalgama filosofico, sempre meno sensibile

every natural entity, including the soul, is a material body unified by divine breath (πνεῦμα).⁴ Platonic images and arguments do recur in our *consolatio* – where Plato is even mentioned twice by name⁵ – but Seneca’s intertextual references should be seen as part of a long-standing tradition of Stoic readings of Plato, which starts long before Posidonius and is often aimed at correcting the Academic interpretation of Plato’s texts.⁶ What is more, as several scholars have shown, Seneca’s eschatology has a characteristically *ethical* – not *metaphysical* – character, which is more clearly indebted to the philosophers of the school of the Sextii – such as Papirius Fabianus, who is also cited in our *consolatio*⁷ – than to Posidonius.⁸

Likewise, rather than speculating about Seneca’s and Cicero’s dependance on a lost source, the present commentary will interpret both analogies and the differences between Cremutius Cordus’ *prosopopoeia* and Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* as evidence of Seneca’s self-conscious *aemulatio* (and Stoicization) of Cicero’s Platonizing account.⁹ In the literary consciousness of Seneca and early imperial readers, Cicero was already a well-established authority on matters of ethics, psychology, and eschatology, and was thus a more than legitimate object of intertextual revision.¹⁰ Indeed, throughout our *consolatio* Cicero’s personal vicissitudes, intellectual undertakings, and linguistic experiments are continuously revisited – a fact that primarily mirrors Seneca’s response to Cicero’s pioneering exploration of Greek consolation literature in his *Tusculan Disputations* and *Consolation to*

ai dogmi immanentistici della Stoa antica, sarebbe passato ai Latini, operando, soprattutto su Cicerone, su Seneca e su Marco Aurelio, una forte suggestione ideologica”.

4 For a forceful and detailed reaffirmation of Seneca’s physical orthodoxy, see Wildberger 2006a.

5 See below, notes on *Marc.* 17.5 and 23.2.

6 The rich and intriguing history of the Stoic reception of Plato’s dialogues has been explored in the volumes of Bonazzi/Helmig 2007, Long 2013, and Engberg-Pedersen 2017. For an intelligent reassessment of Posidonius’ position in this history, see Tieleman 2003, 198–287, whose analysis of Galen’s *testimonium* in *Plac. Hipp. Plat.* 4–5 demonstrates that “Posidonius saw the Platonic model as an (imperfect) anticipation of the accurate doctrine as it had been first formulated by Zeno and Cleanthes and further developed by Chrysippus” (201).

7 Cf. 23.5.

8 The importance of Seneca’s *tirocinium* in the Sextian school for the development of his thought is highlighted by Inwood 2005, 7–22, and Sellars 2014. Already Mazzoli 1967, 234, argued with irrefutable logic that Seneca’s eschatology bears no relationship to Posidonius and is instead indebted to Sextian philosophy, whose *novitas* and ‘Romanness’ consists precisely “nell’aver collocato al vertice dello sforzo escatologico umano non le astratte entità metafisiche della tradizione pitagorica e platonica, ma la *sapientia*, intesa come supremo ideale etico, verso cui conduce la *voluntas*, non la δίανοια”.

9 See below, the introduction to, and the notes on, chapter 26.

10 On Cicero’s reception in the imperial period, see Keeline 2018 and La Bua 2019.

Himself, but might also be related to Cremutius Cordus' treatment (and veneration) of Cicero's figure in his lost historical work.¹¹

2.2 Structure and Tradition

As a rule, the present commentary will approach Seneca's relationship to earlier Greek and Latin authors as an active and creative process of reception, which can also pave the way for a brief overview of Seneca's own reception in later literature – particularly in Christian and modern thought. Special attention will be given to the gradual development of Seneca's didactic and therapeutic strategies, which form part of a comprehensive literary program. Building on the earlier analyses of Charles Manning and Harry Hine,¹² it is possible to summarize the structure of Seneca's consolation as follows:

1. Introductory proem
- 2–5. *Exempla* of Octavia and Livia
- 6–11. General advice about death and bereavement
- 12–19.2. Advice related to Marcia's situation
- 19.3–25. Advice related to Metilius' situation
26. Final peroration

This is, of course, a simplifying outline which captures only the most general and broad features of Seneca's argumentative plan. For instance, the psychagogic power of *exempla* is exploited well beyond the second section on Octavia and Livia as Seneca's advice is never just 'theoretical'. It is also worth noting that, as already acknowledged by Hine, chapter 6 is not a link section – *pace* Manning – but fully belongs to the third section on general *praecepta*. In Manning's structural outline, paragraph 19.3, too, is defined as a link section, and Hine seems to consider this paragraph both the conclusion of the fourth section and the beginning of the fifth. However, in the general introduction to 19.3–25, I offer some arguments for the view that 19.3 is a transitional premise to the new section on Metilius' situation and should thus be considered full part of it. Overall, commentary notes are grouped according to the above-mentioned division of Seneca's *materia consolandi*, and a general introduction precedes each section, summing up Seneca's main interests and aims.

¹¹ See below, notes on *Marc.* 20.4–5, and 26.1.

¹² Manning 1981, 8–9; Hine 2014, 4.

Hine's admirably fresh translation of Seneca's text has exempted me from the need to provide a new translation and is consistently used (with minor changes) in the present commentary.¹³ The English rendering of works other than the *ad M.* is my revision of earlier translations which are now in the public domain – the only exceptions being Cicero's *On the Commonwealth*¹⁴ and *Tusculan Disputations*¹⁵ and Seneca's *Dialogues*¹⁶ and *Natural Questions*.¹⁷ The Latin text of the *ad M.* which accompanies the commentary is my revision of the text established by Leighton D. Reynolds in his Oxford edition of Seneca's *Dialogues*.¹⁸ Both in his introduction to this edition and in an earlier article on the medieval transmission of Seneca's text,¹⁹ Reynolds has argued that the abbacy of Monte Cassino is the source of the whole tradition of Seneca's *Dialogues*, and that Italy is the home of all forms of the *recentior* tradition. Most notably, the oldest of our manuscripts was written in a Beneventan hand at Monte Cassino during the latter part of the eleventh century. Since this manuscript is now at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, it is commonly known as Ambrosianus – its proper name being Ambrosianus C 90 inf., usually abbreviated to **A**. All other manuscripts, which are later than **A**, are divided by Reynolds in two groups: the large group of **β** manuscripts, which are ultimately derived from **A** and are of value only when this is lacking, and the much more restricted group of **γ** manuscripts, whose parent was close to **A**, and probably inferior to it, but descended independently from the archetype. Reynolds has managed to trace only four pure **γ** manuscripts: two Vaticanani of the fourteenth century (Vaticanus lat. 2214 and 2215) and two Laurentiani of the fifteenth century (Laurentianus 76.35 and 76.41), the latter pair being so corrupt that editorial work can concentrate on the Vaticanani (abbreviated as **V** and **R**, respectively). Although **γ** seems to have been, in Reynolds' words, "prodigiously corrupt",²⁰ the manuscripts of this family should be given adequate attention, especially when the reading of **A** is uncertain, for they can offer independent evidence of what Seneca wrote. Reynolds' *stemma codicum* can ultimately be summarized as follows:

13 Hine 2014.

14 Zetzel 1999.

15 Graver 2002.

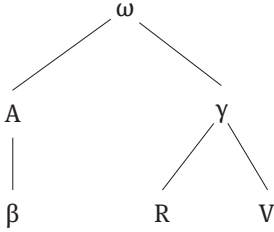
16 Fantham *et al.* 2014.

17 Hine 2010.

18 Reynolds 1977. The names of Renaissance and nineteenth-century critical editors that appear in the notes always refer to Reynolds' *apparatus criticus*.

19 Reynolds 1968.

20 Reynolds 1968, 366.



In the present commentary, a number of textual critical problems are discussed insofar as they bear considerable relevance to the interpretation of Seneca's arguments. As for the text the precedes the commentary, not only did I revise Reynolds' punctuation (which sometimes did not mirror adequately the complexity of Seneca's reasoning), but on fifteen occasions I have also chosen a different reading after personal inspection of **A** – a digital copy of which is available online from the Biblioteca Ambrosiana website²¹ – and careful comparison with both variant readings and the conjectures of modern editors. For the sake of clarity, I provide here a list of the fifteen passages which diverge from the text of Reynolds, with Reynold's own readings on the right. Full details about the reasons for each textual choice are given in the related commentary notes.

- 2.1. *animum ad speciosa stupentem: animum ad speciosa stupentibus*
 3.2. *aut <aequum altero filio s>alvo: aut <aequum s>alvo*
 7.4. *paupertatem luctum abiectioem: paupertatem luctum ambitionem*
 9.4. *quasi perituras: quasi periturus*
 10.3. *exemptum †auctore†: exempto auctore*
 11.2. *et quae diligis [veneraris]: et quae diligis, veneraris*
 14.1. *[in qua non aliquid turbatum sit]: in qua non aliquid turbatum sit*
 14.3. *crescerent: cresceret*
 17.2. *verticem perstringere: verticem stringere*
 17.7. *inpositura: inpositurus*
 18.5. *rivis lacu vallibus palude: †tripis lacu vallibus pavidae†*
 18.6. *aeriae ignium faces: †terret† ignium faces*
 19.3. *«non movent me detrimenta mea». Etenim: «non movent me detrimenta mea; etenim*
 23.3. *Quid tu, Marcia?: Quid? tu, Marcia*
 26.2. *composita cervice †formatos†: composita cervice firmatos*

²¹ Ambrosiana 2022.

Text

L. Annaei Senecae Dialogorum Liber VI ad Marciam de Consolatione

1. 1.1. Nisi te, Marcia, scirem tam longe ab infirmitate muliebris animi quam a ceteris vitiis recessisse et mores tuos velut aliquod antiquum exemplar aspici, non auderem obviam ire dolori tuo, cui viri quoque libenter haerent et incubant, nec spem concepissem tam iniquo tempore, tam inimico iudice, tam invidioso crimine posse me efficere ut fortunam tuam absolveres. Fiduciam mihi dedit exploratum iam robur animi et magno experimento adprobata virtus tua. **1.2.** Non est ignotum qualem te in persona patris tui gesseris, quem non minus quam liberos dilexisti, excepto eo quod non optabas superstitem. Nec scio an et optaveris: permittit enim sibi quaedam contra bonum morem magna pietas. Mortem A. Cremuti Cordi parentis tui quantum poteras inhibuisti. Postquam tibi apparuit inter Seianianos satellites illam unam patere servitutis fugam, non favisti consilio eius, sed dedisti manus victa, fudistique lacrimas palam et gemitus devorasti quidem, non tamen hilari fronte texisti, et haec illo saeculo quo magna pietas erat nihil impie facere. **1.3.** Ut vero aliquam occasionem mutatio temporum dedit, ingenium patris tui, de quo sumptum erat supplicium, in usum hominum reduxisti et a vera illum vindicasti morte ac restituisti in publica monumenta libros quos vir ille fortissimus sanguine suo scripserat. Optime meruisti de Romanis studiis: magna illorum pars arserat; optime de posteris, ad quos veniet incorrupta rerum fides, auctori suo magno inputata; optime de ipso, cuius viget vigebitque memoria quam diu in pretio fuerit Romana cognosci, quam diu quisquam erit qui reverti velit ad acta maiorum, quam diu quisquam qui velit scire quid sit vir Romanus, quid subactis iam cervicibus omnium et ad Seianianum iugum adactis indomitus, quid sit homo ingenio animo manu liber. **1.4.** Magnum mehercules detrimentum res publica ceperat si illum ob duas res pulcherrimas in oblivionem coniectum, eloquentiam et libertatem, non eruisses. Legitur, floret, in manus hominum, in pectora receptus vetustatem nullam timet; at illorum carnificum cito scelera quoque, quibus solis memoriam meruerunt, tacebuntur. **1.5.** Haec magnitudo animi tui vetuit me ad sexum tuum respicere, vetuit ad vultum, quem tot annorum continua tristitia, ut semel obduxit, tenet. Et vide quam non subrepam tibi nec furtum facere adfectibus tuis cogitem: antiqua mala in memoriam reduxi et, ut scires hanc quoque plagam esse sanandam, ostendi tibi aequae magni vulneris cicatricem. Alii itaque molliter agant et blandiantur; ego conflagrare cum tuo maerore constitui et defessos exhaustosque oculos, si verum vis magis iam ex

consuetudine quam ex desiderio fluentis, continebo, si fieri potuerit, favente te remediis tuis, si minus, vel invita, teneas licet et amplexeris dolorem tuum, quem tibi in filii locum superstitem fecisti. **1.6.** Quis enim erit finis? Omnia in supervacuum temptata sunt: fatigatae adlocutiones amicorum, auctoritates magnorum et adfinium tibi virorum; studia, hereditarium et paternum bonum, surdas aures inrito et vix ad brevem occupationem proficiente solacio transeunt; illud ipsum naturale remedium temporis, quod maximas quoque aerumnas componit, in te una vim suam perdidit. **1.7.** Tertius iam praeterit annus, cum interim nihil ex primo illo impetu cecidit: renovat se et corroborat cotidie luctus et iam sibi ius mora fecit eoque adductus est ut putet turpe desinere. Quemadmodum omnia vitia penitus insidunt nisi dum surgunt oppressa sunt, ita haec quoque tristitia et misera et in se saevientia ipsa novissime acerbitate pascuntur et fit infelicis animi prava voluptas dolor. **1.8.** Cupissem itaque primis temporibus ad istam curationem accedere: leniore medicina fuisset oriens adhuc restringenda vis; vehementius contra inveterata pugnandum est. Nam vulnere quoque sanitas facilis est, dum a sanguine recentia sunt: tunc et uruntur et in altum revocantur et digitos scrutantium recipiunt, ubi corrupta in malum ulcus verterunt. Non possum nunc per obsequium nec molliter adgredi tam durum dolorem: frangendus est.

2. 2.1. Scio a praeceptis incipere omnis qui monere aliquem volunt, in exemplis desinere. Mutari hunc interim morem expedit: aliter enim cum alio agendum est. Quosdam ratio ducit, quibusdam nomina clara opponenda sunt et auctoritas quae liberum non relinquat animum ad speciosa stupentem. **2.2.** Duo tibi ponam ante oculos maxima et sexus et saeculi tui exempla: alterius feminae quae se tradidit ferendam dolori, alterius quae pari adfecta casu, maiore damno, non tamen dedit longum in se malis suis dominium, sed cito animum in sedem suam reposuit. **2.3.** Octavia et Livia, altera soror Augusti, altera uxor, amiserunt filios iuvenes, utraque spe futuri principis certa. Octavia Marcellum, cui et avunculus et socer incumbere coeperat, in quem onus imperii reclinare, adulescentem animo alacrem, ingenio potentem, sed frugalitatis continentiaeque in illis aut annis aut opibus non mediocriter admirandae, patientem laborum, voluptatibus alienum, quantumcumque inponere illi avunculus et, ut ita dicam, inaedificare voluisset laturum; bene legerat nulli cessura ponderi fundamenta. **2.4.** Nullum finem per omne vitae suae tempus flendi gemendique fecit nec ullas admisit voces salutare aliquid adferentis, ne avocari quidem se passa est; intenta in unam rem et toto animo adfixa, talis per omnem vitam fuit qualis in funere, non dico non [est] ausa consurgere, sed adlevare recusans, secundam orbitatem iudicans lacrimas mittere. **2.5.** Nullam habere imaginem filii carissimi voluit, nullam sibi de illo fieri mentionem. Oderat omnes matres et in Liviam maxime furebat, quia videbatur ad illius

filium transisse sibi promissa felicitas. Tenebris et solitudini familiarissima, ne ad fratrem quidem respiciens, carmina celebrandae Marcelli memoriae composita aliosque studiorum honores reiecit et aures suas adversus omne solacium clusit. A sollemnibus officiis seducta et ipsam magnitudinis fraternae nimis circumlucentem fortunam exosa defodit se et abdidit. Adsidentibus liberis, nepotibus lugubrem vestem non deposuit, non sine contumelia omnium suorum, quibus salvis orba sibi videbatur.

3. 3.1. Livia amiserat filium Drusum, magnum futurum principem, iam magnum ducem; intraverat penitus Germaniam et ibi signa Romana fixerat ubi vix ullos esse Romanos notum erat. In expeditione decesserat ipsis illum hostibus aegrum cum veneratione et pace mutua prosequentibus nec optare quod expediebat audentibus. Accedebat ad hanc mortem, quam ille pro re publica obierat, ingens civium provinciarumque et totius Italiae desiderium, per quam effusis in officium lugubre municipiis coloniisque usque in urbem ductum erat funus triumpho simillimum. **3.2.** Non licuerat matri ultima filii oscula gratumque extremi sermonem oris haurire; longo itinere reliquias Drusi sui prosecuta, tot per omnem Italiam ardentibus rogis, quasi totiens illum amitteret, inritata, ut primum tamen intulit tumulto, simul et illum et dolorem suum posuit, nec plus doluit quam aut honestum erat Caesare aut aequum <altero filio s>alvo. Non desiit denique Drusi sui celebrare nomen, ubique illum sibi privatim publiceque repraesentare, libentissime de illo loqui, de illo audire: cum memoria illius vixit, quam nemo potest retinere et frequentare qui illam tristem sibi reddidit. **3.3.** Elige itaque utrum exemplum putes probabilius. Si illud prius sequi vis, eximes te numero vivorum; aversaberis et alienos liberos et tuos ipsumque quem desideras; triste matribus omen occures; voluptates honestas, permissas, tamquam parum decoras fortunae tuae reicies; invisae haerebis in luce et aetati tuae, quod non praecipitet te quam primum et finiat, infestissima eris; quod turpissimum alienissimumque est animo tuo in meliorem noto partem, ostendes te vivere nolle, mori non posse. **3.4.** Si ad hoc maximae feminae te exemplum adplicueris moderatius, mitius, non eris in aerumnis nec te tormentis macerabis. Quae enim, malum, amentia est poenas a se infelicitatis exigere et mala sua tnon† augere! Quam in omni vita servasti morum probitatem et verecundiam, in hac quoque re praestabis: est enim quaedam et dolendi modestia. Illum ipsum iuvenem, dignissimum qui te laetam semper nominatus cogitatusque faciat, meliore pones loco, si matri suae, qualis vivus solebat, hilarisque et cum gaudio occurrit.

4. 4.1. Nec te ad fortiora ducam praecepta, ut inhumano ferre humana iubeam modo, ut ipso funebri die oculos matris exsiccem. Ad arbitrium tecum veniam: hoc inter nos quaeretur, utrum magnus dolor esse debeat an perpetuus. **4.2.** Non

dubito quin Iuliae Augustae, quam familiariter coluisti, magis tibi placeat exemplum: illa te ad suum consilium vocat. Illa in primo fervore, cum maxime impatientes ferocesque sunt miseriae, consolandam se Areo, philosopho viri sui, praebuit et multum eam rem profuisse sibi confessa est, plus quam populum Romanum, quem nolebat tristem tristitia sua facere, plus quam Augustum, qui subducto altero adminiculo titubabat nec luctu suorum inclinandus erat, plus quam Tiberium filium, cuius pietas efficiebat ut in illo acerbo et defleto gentibus funere nihil sibi nisi numerum deesse sentiret. **4.3.** Hic, ut opinor, aditus illi fuit, hoc principium apud feminam opinionis suae custodem diligentissimam: ‘usque in hunc diem, Iulia, quantum quidem ego sciam, adsiduus viri tui comes, cui non tantum quae in publicum emittuntur nota, sed omnes sunt secretiores animorum vestrorum motus, dedisti operam ne quid esset quod in te quisquam reprehenderet; nec id in maioribus modo observasti, sed in minimis, ne quid faceres cui famam, liberrimam principum iudicem, velles ignoscere. **4.4.** Nec quicquam pulchrius existimo quam in summo fastigio conlocatos multarum rerum veniam dare, nullius petere. Servandus itaque tibi in hac quoque re tuus mos est, ne quid committas quod minus aliterve factum velis.

5. 5.1. Deinde oro atque obsecro ne te difficilem amicis et intractabilem praestes. Non est enim quod ignores omnes hos nescire quemadmodum se gerant, loquantur aliquid coram te de Druso an nihil, ne aut oblivio clarissimi iuvenis illi faciat iniuriam aut mentio tibi. **5.2.** Cum secessimus et in unum convenimus, facta eius dictaque quanto meruit suspectu celebramus: coram te altum nobis de illo silentium est. Cares itaque maxima voluptate, filii tui laudibus, quas non dubito quin vel inpendio vitae, si potestas detur, in aevum omne sis prorogatura. **5.3.** Quare patere, immo arcesse sermones quibus ille narretur, et apertas aures praebe ad nomen memoriamque filii tui; nec hoc grave duxeris ceterorum more, qui in eiusmodi casu partem mali putant audire solacia. **5.4.** Nunc incubuisti tota in alteram partem et oblita meliorum fortunam tuam qua deterior est aspicias. Non convertis te ad convictus filii tui occursusque iucundos, non ad pueriles dulcesque blanditias, non ad incrementa studiorum: ultimam illam faciem rerum premis; in illam, quasi parum ipsa per se horrida sit, quidquid potes congeris. Ne, obsecro te, concupieris perversissimam gloriam, infelicissima videri. **5.5.** Simul cogita non esse magnum rebus prosperis fortem se gerere, ubi secundo cursu vita procedit. Ne gubernatoris quidem artem tranquillum mare et obsequens ventus ostendit: adversi aliquid incurrat oportet quod animum probet. **5.6.** Proinde ne summiseris te, immo contra fige stabilem gradum et quidquid onerum supra cecidit sustine, primo dumtaxat strepitu conterrita. Nulla re maior invidia fortunae fit quam aequo animo.’ Post haec ostendit illi filium incolumem, ostendit ex amisso nepotes.

6. 6.1. Tuum illic, Marcia, negotium actum, tibi Areus adsedit; muta personam: te consolatus est. Sed puta, Marcia, ereptum tibi amplius quam ulla umquam mater amiserit. **6.2.** Non permulceo te nec extenuo calamitatem tuam: si fletibus fata vincuntur, conferamus; eat omnis inter luctus dies, noctem sine somno tristitia consumat; ingerantur lacerato pectori manus et in ipsam faciem impetus fiat atque omni se genere saevitiae profecturus maeror exerceat. Sed si nullis planctibus defuncta revocantur, si sors inmotata et in aeternum fixa nulla miseria mutatur et mors tenuit quidquid abstulit, desinat dolor qui perit. **6.3.** Quare regamur nec nos ista vis transversos auferat. Turpis est navigii rector cui gubernacula fluctus eripuit, qui fluvitancia vela deseruit, permisit tempestati ratem; at ille vel in naufragio laudandus quem obruit mare clavum tenentem et obnixum.

7. 7.1. ‘At enim naturale desiderium suorum est.’ Quis negat, quam diu modicum est? Nam discessu, non solum amissione carissimorum necessarius morsus est et firmissimorum quoque animorum contractio. Sed plus est quod opinio adicit quam quod natura imperavit. **7.2.** Aspice mutorum animalium quam concitata sint desideria et tamen quam brevia: vaccarum uno die alterove mugitus auditur, nec diutius equarum vagus ille amensque discursus est; ferae cum vestigia catulorum consecratae sunt et silvas pervagatae, cum saepe ad cubilia expilata redierunt, rabiem intra exiguum tempus extinguunt; aves cum stridore magno inanes nidos circumfremuerunt, intra momentum tamen quietae volatus suos repetunt; nec ulli animali longum fetus sui desiderium est nisi homini, qui adest dolori suo nec tantum quantum sentit sed quantum constituit adficitur. **7.3.** Ut scias autem non esse hoc naturale, luctibus frangi, primum magis feminas quam viros, magis barbaros quam placidae eruditaeque gentis homines, magis indoctos quam doctos eadem orbitas vulnerat. Atqui quae a natura vim acceperunt eandem in omnibus servant: apparet non esse naturale quod varium est. **7.4.** Ignis omnes aetates omniumque urbium cives, tam viros quam feminas uret; ferrum in omni corpore exhibebit secandi potentiam. Quare? Quia vires illis a natura datae sunt, quae nihil in personam constituit. Paupertatem luctum abiectioem alius aliter sentit prout illum consuetudo infecit, et inbecillum impatientemque reddit praesumpta opinio de non timendis terribilis.

8. 8.1. Deinde quod naturale est non decrescit mora: dolorem dies longa consumit. Licet contumacissimum, cotidie insurgentem et contra remedia effervescentem, tamen illum efficacissimum mitigandae ferociae tempus enervat. **8.2.** Manet quidem tibi, Marcia, etiamnunc ingens tristitia et iam videtur duxisse callum, non illa concitata qualis initio fuit, sed pertinax et obstinata; tamen hanc quoque tibi aetas minutatim eximet: quotiens aliud egeris, animus relaxabitur. **8.3.** Nunc te ipsa custodis; multum autem interest utrum tibi permittas maerere an imperes.

Quanto magis hoc morum tuorum elegantiae convenit, finem luctus potius facere quam expectare, nec illum opperiri diem quo te invita dolor desinat! Ipsa illi renuntia.

9. 9.1. ‘Unde ergo tanta nobis pertinacia in deploratione nostri, si id non fit naturae iussu?’ Quod nihil nobis mali antequam eveniat proponimus, sed ut immunes ipsi et aliis pacatius ingressi iter alienis non admonemur casibus illos esse communes. **9.2.** Tot praeter domum nostram ducuntur exequiae: de morte non cogitamus. Tot acerba funera: nos togam nostrorum infantium, nos militiam et paternae hereditatis successionem agitamus animo. Tot divitum subita paupertas in oculos incidit: et nobis numquam in mentem venit nostras quoque opes aequae in lubrico positas. Necesse est itaque magis corruamus: quasi ex inopinato ferimur. Quae multo ante provisae sunt languidius incurrunt. **9.3.** Vis tu scire te ad omnis expositum ictus stare et illa quae alios tela fixerunt circa te vibrasse? Velut murum aliquem aut obsessum multo hoste locum et arduum ascensu semermis adeas, expecta vulnus et illa superne volantia cum sagittis pilisque saxa in tuum puta librata corpus. Quotiens aliquis ad latus aut pone tergum ceciderit, exclama: ‘non decipies me, fortuna, nec securum aut neglegentem opprimes. Scio quid pares: alium quidem percussisti, sed me petisti.’ **9.4.** Quis umquam res suas quasi perituras aspexit? Quis umquam vestrum de exilio, de egestate, de luctu cogitare ausus est? Quis non, si admoneatur ut cogitet, tamquam dirum omen respuat et in capita inimicorum aut ipsius intemptivi monitoris abire illa iubeat? **9.5.** ‘Non putavi futurum.’ Quicquam tu putas non futurum quod [multis] scis posse fieri, quod multis vides evenisse? Egregium versum et dignum qui non e pulpito exiret:

cuius potest accidere quod cuiquam potest!

Ille amisit liberos: et tu amittere potes; ille damnatus est: et tua innocentia sub ictu est. Error decipit hic, effeminat, dum patimur quae numquam pati nos posse providimus. Aufert vim praesentibus malis qui futura prospexit.

10. 10.1. Quidquid est hoc, Marcia, quod circa nos ex adventicio fulget, liberi honores opes, ampla atria et exclusorum clientium turba referta vestibula, clarum <nomen>, nobilis aut formosa coniux ceteraque ex incerta et mobili sorte pendencia alieni commodatique apparatus sunt; nihil horum dono datur. Conlaticii et ad dominos redituris instrumentis scaena adornatur: alia ex his primo die, alia secundo referuntur, pauca usque ad finem perseverabunt. **10.2.** Itaque non est quod nos suspiciamus tamquam inter nostra positi: mutua accepimus. Usus fructusque noster est, cuius tempus ille arbiter muneris sui temperat. Nos

oportet in promptu habere quae in incertum diem data sunt et appellatos sine querella reddere: pessimi debitoris est creditori facere convicium. **10.3.** Omnes ergo nostros, et quos superstites lege nascendi optamus et quos praecedere iustissimum ipsorum votum est, sic amare debemus tamquam nihil nobis de perpetuitate, immo nihil de diuturnitate eorum promissum sit. Saepe admonendus est animus, amet ut recessura, immo tamquam recedentia: quidquid a fortuna datum est, tamquam exemptum t̄auctore† possideas. **10.4.** Rapite ex liberis voluptates, fruendos vos in vicem liberis date et sine dilatione omne gaudium haurite: nihil de hodierna nocte promittitur. Nimis magnam advocationem dedi: nihil de hac hora. Festinandum est, instatur a tergo: iam disicietur iste comitatus, iam contubernia ista sublato clamore solventur. Rapina rerum omnium est: miseri nescitis in fuga vivere. **10.5.** Si mortuum tibi filium doles, eius temporis quo natus est crimen est: mors enim illi denuntiata nascenti est, in hanc legem genitus <est>, hoc illum fatum ab utero statim prosequabatur. **10.6.** In regnum fortunae et quidem durum atque invictum pervenimus, illius arbitrio digna atque indigna passuri. Corporibus nostris inpotenter contumeliose crudeliter abutetur: alios ignibus peruret vel in poenam admotis vel in remedium; alios vinciet – id nunc hosti licebit, nunc civi; alios per incerta nudos maria iactabit et luctatos cum fluctibus ne in harenam quidem aut litus explodet, sed in alicuius immensae ventrem beluae decondet; alios morborum variis generibus emaceratos diu inter vitam mortemque medios detinebit. Ut varia et libidinosa mancipiorumque suorum neglegens domina et poenis et muneribus errabit.

11. 11.1. Quid opus est partes deflere? Tota flebilis vita est: urgebunt nova incommoda, priusquam veteribus satis feceris. Moderandum est itaque vobis maxime, quae inmoderate fertis, et in multos dolores humani pectoris <vis> dispensanda. Quae deinde ista suae publicaeque condicionis oblivio est? Mortalis nata es mortalesque peperisti: putre ipsa fluidumque corpus et causis [morbos] repetita sperasti tam inbecilla materia solida et aeterna gestasse? **11.2.** Decessit filius tuus, id est decucurrit ad hunc finem ad quem quae feliciora partu tuo putas properant. Hoc omnis ista quae in foro litigat, in theatris <plaudit>, in templis precatur turba dispari gradu vadit: et quae diligis [veneraris] et quae despicias unus exaequabit cinis. **11.3.** Hoc videlicet * * * illa Pythicis oraculis adscripta <vox>: NOSCE TE. Quid est homo? Quolibet quassu vas et quolibet fragile iactatu. Non tempestate magna ut dissiperis opus est: ubicumque arietaveris, solveris. Quid est homo? Inbecillum corpus et fragile, nudum, suapte natura inerme, alienae opis indigens, ad omnis fortunae contumelias proiectum, cum bene lacertos exercuit, cuiuslibet ferae pabulum, cuiuslibet victima; ex infirmis fluidisque contextum et lineamentis exterioribus nitidum, frigoris aestus laboris inpatiens, ipso rursus situ et otio

iturum in tabem, alimenta metuens sua, quorum modo inopia <deficit, modo copia> rumpitur; anxiae sollicitaeque tutelae, precarii spiritus et male haerentis, quod pavor repentinus aut auditus ex improviso sonus auribus gravis excutit, sollicitudinis semper sibi nutrimentum, vitiosum et inutile. **11.4.** Miramur in hoc mortem, quae unius singultus opus est? Numquid enim ut concidat magni res molimenti est? Odor illi saporque et lassitudo et vigilia et umor et cibus et sine quibus vivere non potest mortifera sunt; quocumque se movit, statim infirmitatis suae conscium, non omne caelum ferens, aquarum novitatibus flatuque non familiaris aerae et tenuissimis causis atque offensionibus morbidum, putre causarium, fletu vitam auspicatum, cum interim quantos tumultus hoc tam contemptum animal movet, in quantas cogitationes oblitum condicionis suae venit! **11.5.** Inmortalia, aeterna volutat animo et in nepotes pronepotesque disponit, cum interim longa conantem eum mors opprimit et hoc quod senectus vocatur paucissimorum <est> circumitus annorum.

12. 12.1. Dolor tuus, si modo ulla illi ratio est, utrum sua spectat incommoda an eius qui decessit? Utrum te in amisso filio movet quod nullas ex illo voluptates cepisti, an quod maiores, si diutius vixisset, percipere potuisti? **12.2.** Si nullas percepisse te dixeris, tolerabilius efficies detrimentum tuum: minus enim homines desiderant ea ex quibus nihil gaudi laetitiaeque perceperant. Si confessa fueris percepisse magnas voluptates, oportet te non de eo quod deductum est queri, sed de eo gratias agere quod contigit: provenerunt enim satis magni fructus laborum tuorum ex ipsa educatione, nisi forte ii qui catulos avesque et frivola animorum oblectamenta summa diligentia nutriunt fruuntur aliqua voluptate ex visu tactuque et blanda adulatione mutorum, liberos nutriuntibus non fructus educationis ipsa educatio est. Licet itaque nil tibi industria eius contulerit, nihil diligentia custodierit, nihil prudentia suaserit, ipsum quod habuisti, quod amasti, fructus est. **12.3.** 'At potuit longior esse, maior.' Melius tamen tecum actum est quam si omnino non contigisset, quoniam, si ponatur electio utrum satius sit non diu felicem esse an numquam, melius est discessura nobis bona quam nulla contingere. Utrumne malles degenerem aliquem et numerum tantum nomenque filii expleturum habuisse an tantae indolis quantae tuus fuit, iuvenis cito prudens, cito pius, cito maritus, cito pater, cito omnis officii curiosus, cito sacerdos, omnia tamquam properans? Nulli fere et magna bona et diuturna contingunt, non durat nec ad ultimum exit nisi lenta felicitas: filium tibi di immortales non diu daturi statim talem dederunt qualis diu effici <vix> potest. **12.4.** Ne illud quidem dicere potes, electam te a dis cui frui non liceret filio: circumfer per omnem notorum, ignotorum frequentiam oculos, occurrent tibi passi ubique maiora. Senserunt ista magni duces, senserunt principes; ne deos quidem fabulae immunes reliquerunt,

puto, ut nostrorum funerum levamentum esset etiam divina concidere. Circumspice, inquam, omnis: nullam < tam > miseram nominabis domum quae non inveniatur in miseriore solacium. **12.5.** Non mehercules tam male de moribus tuis sentio ut putem posse te levius pati casum tuum, si tibi ingentem lugentium numerum produxero: malivolum solacii genus est turba miserorum. Quosdam tamen referam, non ut scias hoc solere hominibus accidere – ridiculum est enim mortalitatis exempla colligere – sed ut scias fuisse multos qui lenirent aspera placide ferendo. **12.6.** A felicissimo incipiam. L. Sulla filium amisit, nec ea res aut malitiam eius et acerrimam virtutem in hostes civesque contudit aut effecit ut cognomen illud usurpasse falso videretur, quod amisso filio adsumpsit nec odia hominum veritus, quorum malo illae nimis secundae res constabant, nec invidiam deorum, quorum illud crimen erat, Sulla tam felix. Sed istud inter res nondum iudicatas abeat, qualis Sulla fuerit (etiam inimici fatebuntur bene illum arma sumpsisse, bene posuisse). Hoc de quo agitur constabit: non esse maximum malum quod etiam ad felicissimos pervenit.

13. 13.1. Ne nimis admiretur Graecia illum patrem qui in ipso sacrificio nuntiata filii morte tibicinem tantum tacere iussit et coronam capiti detraxit, cetera rite perfecit, Pulvillus effecit pontifex, cui postem tenenti et Capitolium dedicanti mors filii nuntiata est. Quam ille exaudisse dissimulavit et sollempnia pontificii carminis verba concepit gemitu non interrumpente precatorem et ad filii sui nomen Iove propitiato. **13.2.** Putasne eius luctus aliquem finem esse debere, cuius primus dies et primus impetus ab altaribus publicis et fausta nuncupatione non abduxit patrem? Dignus mehercules fuit memorabili dedicatione, dignus amplissimo sacerdotio, qui colere deos ne iratos quidem destitit. Idem tamen, ut rediit domum, et inplevit oculos et aliquas voces flebiles misit; sed peractis quae mos erat praestare defunctis ad Capitolinum illum rediit vultum. **13.3.** Paulus circa illos nobilissimi triumphus dies quo vinctum ante currum egit Persen [incliti regis nomen] duos filios in adoptionem dedit, < duos > quos sibi servaverat extulit. Quales retentos putas, cum inter commodatos Scipio fuisset? Non sine motu vacuum Pauli currum populus Romanus aspexit. Contionatus est tamen et egit dis gratias quod compos voti factus esset; precatum enim se ut, si quid ob ingentem victoriam invidiae dandum esset, id suo potius quam publico damno solveretur. **13.4.** Vides quam magno animo tulerit? Orbitati suae gratulatus est. Et quem magis poterat permovere tanta mutatio? Solacia simul atque auxilia perdidit. Non contigit tamen tristem Paulum Persi videre.

14. 14.1. Quid nunc te per innumerabilia magnorum virorum exempla ducam et quaeram miseros, quasi non difficilius sit invenire felices? Quota enim quaeque domus usque ad exitum omnibus partibus suis constitit [in qua non aliquid

turbatum sit]? Unum quemlibet annum occupa et ex eo magistratus cita, Lucium si vis Bibulum et C. Caesarem: videbis inter collegas inimicissimos concordem fortunam. **14.2.** L. Bibuli, melioris quam fortioris viri, duo simul filii interfecti sunt, Aegypto quidem militi ludibrio habiti, ut non minus ipsa orbitate auctor eius digna res lacrimis esset. Bibulus tamen, qui toto honoris sui anno <in> invidiam collegae domi latuerat, postero die quam geminum funus renuntiatum est processit ad solita imperatoris officia. Quis minus potest quam unum diem duobus filiis dare? Tam cito liberorum luctum finivit qui consulatum anno luxerat. **14.3.** C. Caesar cum Britanniam peragraret nec oceano continere felicitatem suam posset, audit decessisse filiam publica secum fata ducentem. In oculis erat iam Cn. Pompeius non aequo laturus animo quemquam alium esse in re publica magnum et modum inpositurus incrementis, quae gravia illi videbantur etiam cum in commune crescerent. Tamen intra tertium diem imperatoria obit munia et tam cito dolorem vicit quam omnia solebat.

15. 15.1. Quid aliorum tibi funera Caesarum referam? Quos in hoc mihi videtur interim violare fortuna ut sic quoque generi humano prosint, ostendentes ne eos quidem qui dis geniti deosque genituri dicantur sic suam fortunam in potestate habere quemadmodum alienam. **15.2.** Divus Augustus amissis liberis, nepotibus, exhausta Caesarum turba, adoptione desertam domum fulsit; tulit tamen tam fortiter quam cuius iam res agebatur cuiusque maxime intererat de dis neminem queri. **15.3.** Ti. Caesar et quem genuerat et quem adoptaverat amisit. Ipse tamen pro rostris laudavit filium stetitque in conspectu posito corpore, interiecto tantummodo velamento quod pontificis oculos a funere arceret, et flente populo Romano non flexit vultum; experiendum se dedit Seiano ad latus stanti quam patienter posset suos perdere. **15.4.** Videsne quanta copia virorum maximorum sit quos non excepit hic omnia prosternens casus, et in quos tot animi bona, tot ornamenta publice privatimque congesta erant? Sed videlicet it in orbem ista tempestas et sine dilectu vastat omnia agitque ut sua. Iube singulos conferre rationem: nulli contigit inpune nasci.

16. 16.1. Scio quid dicas: ‘oblitus es feminam te consolari, virorum refers exempla.’ Quis autem dixit naturam maligne cum mulierum ingeniis egisse et virtutes illarum in artum retraxisse? Par illis, mihi crede, vigor, par ad honesta, libeat <modo>, facultas est; dolorem laboremque ex aequo, si consuevere, patiuntur. **16.2.** In qua istud urbe, di boni, loquimur? In qua regem Romanis capitibus Lucretia et Brutus deiecerunt: Bruto libertatem debemus, Lucretiae Brutum; in qua Cloeliam contempto et hoste et flumine ob insignem audaciam tantum non in viros transcripsimus: equestri insidens statuae in sacra via, celeberrimo loco, Cloelia exprobrat iuvenibus nostris pulvinum escendentibus in ea illos urbe sic

ingredi in qua etiam feminas equo donavimus. **16.3.** Quod tibi si vis exempla referri feminarum quae suos fortiter desideraverint, non ostiatim quaeram. Ex una tibi familia duas Cornelias dabo: primam Scipionis filiam, Gracchorum matrem. Duodecim illa partus totidem funeribus recognovit; et de ceteris facile est, quos nec editos nec amissos civitas sensit; Tiberium <Gaiumque>, quos etiam qui bonos viros negaverit magnos fatebitur, et occisos vidit et insepultos. Consolantibus tamen miseramque dicentibus ‘numquam’ inquit ‘non felicem me dicam, quae Gracchos peperit.’ **16.4.** Cornelia Livi Drusi clarissimum iuvenem inlustris ingenii, vadentem per Gracchana vestigia imperfectis tot rogationibus intra penates interemptum suos, amiserat incerto caedis auctore. Tamen et acerbam mortem filii et inultam tam magno animo tulit quam ipse leges tulerat. **16.5.** Iam cum fortuna in gratiam, Marcia, reverteris, si tela quae in Scipiones Scipionumque matres ac filias exegit, quibus Caesares petiit, ne a te quidem continuit? Plena et infesta variis casibus vita est, a quibus nulli longa pax, vix indutiae sunt. Quattuor liberos sustuleras, Marcia. Nullum aiunt frustra cadere telum quod in confertum agmen inmissum est: mirum est tantam turbam non potuisse sine invidia damnove praetervehi? **16.6.** ‘At hoc iniquior fortuna fuit quod non tantum eripuit filios sed elegit.’ Numquam tamen iniuriam dixeris ex aequo cum potentiore dividere. Duas tibi reliquit filias et harum nepotes; et ipsum quem maxime luges prioris oblita non ex toto abstulit: habes ex illo duas filias, si male fers, magna onera, si bene, magna solacia. In hoc te perduc ut illas cum videris admonearis filii, non doloris. **16.7.** Agricola eversis arboribus quas aut ventus radicitus avolsit aut contortus repentino impetu turbo praefregit sobolem ex illis residuam fovet et in <locum> amissarum semina statim plantasque disponit; et momento (nam ut ad damna, ita ad incrementa rapidum veloxque tempus est) adolescent amissis laetiora. **16.8.** Has nunc Metili tui filias in eius vicem substitue et vacantem locum exple et unum dolorem geminato solacio leva. Est quidem haec natura mortalium, ut nihil magis placeat quam quod amissum est: iniquiores sumus adversus relicta ereptorum desiderio. Sed si aestimare volueris quam valde tibi fortuna, etiam cum saeviret, pepercerit, scies te habere plus quam solacia: respice tot nepotes, duas filias. Dic illud quoque, Marcia: ‘moverer, si esset cuique fortuna pro moribus et numquam mala bonos sequerentur: nunc video exempto discrimine eodem modo malos bonosque iactari.’

17. 17.1. ‘Grave est tamen quem educaveris iuvenem, iam matri iam patri praesidium ac decus amittere.’ Quis negat grave esse? Sed humanum est. Ad hoc genitus es, ut perderes ut perires, ut sperares metueres, alios teque inquietares, mortem et timeres et optares et, quod est pessimum, numquam scires cuius esses status. **17.2.** Si quis Syracusas petenti diceret: ‘omnia incommoda, omnes voluptates futurae peregrinationis tuae ante cognosce, deinde ita naviga. Haec

sunt quae mirari possis: videbis primum ipsam insulam ab Italia angusto inter-scissam freto, quam continenti quondam cohaesisse constat; subitum illo mare inrupit et

Hesperium Siculo latus abscidit.

Deinde videbis (licebit enim tibi avidissimum maris verticem perstringere) stratum illam fabulosam Charybdis quam diu ab austro vacat, at, si quid inde vehementius spiravit, magno hiatu profundoque navigia sorbentem. **17.3.** Videbis celebratissimum carminibus fontem Arethusam, nitidissimi ac perlucidi ad imum stagni, gelidissimas aquas profundentem, sive illas ibi primum nascentis invenit, sive inlapsum terris flumen integrum subter tot maria et a confusione peioris undae servatum reddidit. **17.4.** Videbis portum quietissimum omnium quos aut natura posuit in tutelam classium aut adiuvit manus, sic tutum ut ne maximarum quidem tempestatium furori locus sit. Videbis ubi Athenarum potentia fracta, ubi tot milia captivorum ille excisis in infinitam altitudinem saxi nativus carcer incluserat, ipsam ingentem civitatem et laxius territorium quam multarum urbium fines sunt, tepidissima hiberna et nullum diem sine interventu solis. **17.5.** Sed cum omnia ista cognoveris, gravis et insalubris aestas hiberni caeli beneficia corrumpet. Erit Dionysius illic tyrannus, libertatis iustitiae legum exitium, dominationis cupidus etiam post Platonem, vitae etiam post exilium: alios uret, alios verberabit, alios ob levem offensam detruncari iubebit, arcesset ad libidinem mares feminasque et inter foedos regiae intemperantiae greges parum erit simul binis coire. Audisti quid te invitare possit, quid abstertere: proinde aut naviga aut resiste.' **17.6.** Post hanc denuntiationem si quis dixisset intrare se Syracusas velle, satisne iustam querellam de ullo nisi de se habere posset, qui non incidisset in illa sed prudens sciensque venisset? Dicit omnibus nobis natura: 'neminem decipio. Tu si filios sustuleris, poteris habere formosos, et deformes poteris. Fortasse multi nascentur: esse aliquis ex illis tam servator patriae quam proditor poterit. **17.7.** Non est quod desperes tantae dignationis futuros ut nemo tibi propter illos male dicere audeat; propone tamen et tantae futuros turpitudinis ut ipsi maledicta sint. Nihil vetat illos tibi suprema praestare et laudari te a liberis tuis, sed sic te para tamquam in ignem inpositura vel puerum vel iuvenem vel senem: nihil enim ad rem pertinent anni, quoniam nullum non acerbum funus est quod parens sequitur.' Post has leges propositas si liberos tollis, omni deos invidia liberas, qui tibi nihil certi sponderunt.

18. 18.1. <Ad> hanc imaginem aedum totius vitae introitum refer. An Syracusas viseres deliberanti tibi quidquid delectare poterat, quidquid offendere exposui: puta nascenti me tibi venire in consilium. **18.2.** 'Intraturus es urbem dis hominibus

communem, omnia complexam, certis legibus aeternisque devinctam, indefatigata caelestium officia volventem. Videbis illic innumerabiles stellas micare, videbis uno sidere omnia inpleri, solem cotidiano cursu diei noctisque spatia signantem, annuo aestates hiemesque aequalius[que] dividentem. Videbis nocturnam lunae successionem, a fraternis occursibus lene remissumque lumen mutuantem et modo occultam modo toto ore terris imminentem, accessionibus damnisque mutabilem, semper proximae dissimilem. **18.3.** Videbis quinque sidera diversas agentia vias et in contrarium praecipiti mundo nitentia: ex horum levissimis motibus fortunae populorum dependent et maxima ac minima proinde formantur prout aequum iniquumue sidus incessit. Miraberis collecta nubila et cadentis aquas et obliqua fulmina et caeli fragorem. **18.4.** Cum satiatus spectaculo superiorum in terram oculos deieceris, excipiet te alia forma rerum aliterque mirabilis: hinc camporum in infinitum patentium fusa planities, hinc montium magnis et nivalibus surgentium iugis erecti in sublime vertices; deiectus fluminum et ex uno fonte in occidentem orientemque diffusi amnes et summis cacuminibus nemora nutantia et tantum silvarum cum suis animalibus aviumque concentu dissono; **18.5.** varii urbium situs et seclusae nationes locorum difficultate, quarum aliae se in erectos subtrahunt montes, aliae rivis lacu vallibus palude circumfunduntur; adiuta cultu seges et arbusta sine cultore feritatis; et rivorum lenis inter prata discursus et amoeni sinus et litora in portum recedentia; sparsae tot per vastum insulae, quae interventu suo maria distinguunt. **18.6.** Quid lapidum gemmarumque fulgor et [inter] rapidorum torrentium aurum harenis interfluens et in mediis terris medioque rursus mari aerae ignium faces et vinculum terrarum oceanus, continuationem gentium triplici sinu scindens et ingenti licentia exaestuans? **18.7.** Videbis hic inquietis et sine vento fluctuantibus aquis innare [et] excedenti terrestria magnitudine animalia, quaedam gravia et alieno se magisterio moventia, quaedam velocia et concitatis perniciores remigiis, quaedam haurientia undas et magno praenavigantium periculo efflantia; videbis hic navigia quas non novere terras quaerentia; videbis nihil humanae audaciae intemptatum erisque et spectator et ipse pars magna conantium; discas docebisque artes, alias quae vitam instruant, alias quae ornent, alias quae regant. **18.8.** Sed istic erunt mille corporum, animorum pestes et bella et latrocinia et venena et naufragia et intemperies caeli corporisque et carissimorum acerba desideria et mors, incertum facilis an per poenam cruciatumque. Delibera tecum et perpende quid velis: ut ad illa venias, per illa exeundum est.' Respondebis velle te vivere. Quidni? Immo, puto, ad id non accedes ex quo tibi aliquid decuti doles! Vive ergo ut convenit. 'Nemo' inquis 'nos consuluit.' Consulti sunt de nobis parentes nostri, qui, cum condicionem vitae nossent, in hanc nos sustulerunt.

19. 19.1. Sed ut ad solacia veniam, videamus primum quid curandum sit, deinde quemadmodum. Movet lugentem desiderium eius quem dilexit. Id per se tolerabile esse apparet: absentis enim afuturosque dum vivent non flemus, quamvis omnis usus nobis illorum <cum> conspectu ereptus sit. Opinio est ergo quae nos cruciat et tanti quodque malum est quanti illud taxavimus. In nostra potestate remedium habemus: iudicemus illos abesse et nosmet ipsi fallamus. Dimisimus illos, immo consecuturi praemisimus. **19.2.** Movet et illud lugentem: «non erit qui me defendat, qui a contemptu vindicet.» Ut minime probabili sed vero solacio utar, in civitate nostra plus gratiae orbitas confert quam eripit adeoque senectutem solitudo, quae solebat destruere, ad potentiam ducit ut quidam odia filiorum simulent et liberos eiurent, orbitatem manu faciant. **19.3.** Scio quid dicas: «non movent me detrimenta mea». Etenim non est dignus solacio qui filium sibi decessisse sicut mancipium moleste fert, cui quicquam in filio respicere praeter ipsum vacat. Quid igitur te, Marcia, movet? Utrum quod filius tuus decessit an quod non diu vixit? Si quod decessit, semper debuisti dolere: semper enim scisti moriturum. **19.4.** Cogita nullis defunctum malis adfici, illa quae nobis inferos faciunt terribiles fabulas esse, nullas imminere mortuis tenebras nec carcerem nec flumina igne flagrantia nec Oblivionem amnem nec tribunalia et reos et in illa libertate tam laxa ullos iterum tyrannos: luserunt ista poetae et vanis nos agitavere terroribus. **19.5.** Mors dolorum omnium exsolutio est et finis ultra quem mala nostra non exeunt, quae nos in illam tranquillitatem in qua antequam nasceremur iacuimus reponit. Si mortuorum aliquis miseretur, et non natorum misereatur. Mors nec bonum nec malum est: id enim potest aut bonum aut malum esse quod aliquid est; quod vero ipsum nihil est et omnia in nihilum redigit, nulli nos fortunae tradit. Mala enim bonaque circa aliquam versantur materiam: non potest id fortuna tenere quod natura dimisit nec potest miser esse qui nullus est. **19.6.** Excessit filius tuus terminos intra quos servitur, exceptit illum magna et aeterna pax: non paupertatis metu, non divitiarum cura, non libidinis per voluptatem animos carpentis stimulis incessitur; non invidia felicitatis alienae tangitur, non suae premitur, ne conviciis quidem ullis verecundae aures verberantur; nulla publica clades prospicitur, nulla privata; non sollicitus futuri pendet [et] ex eventu semper t̄in certiora dependent̄. Tandem ibi constitit unde nil eum pellat, ubi nihil terreat.

20. 20.1. O ignaros malorum suorum, quibus non mors ut optimum inventum naturae laudatur expectaturque, sive felicitatem includit, sive calamitatem repellit, sive satietatem ac lassitudinem senis terminat, sive iuvenile aevum dum meliora sperantur in flore deducit, sive pueritiam ante duriores gradus revocat, omnibus finis, multis remedium, quibusdam votum, de nullis melius merita quam de iis ad quos venit antequam invocaretur. **20.2.** Haec servitutum invito

domino remittit; haec captivorum catenas levat; haec e carcere educit quos exire imperium inpotens vetuerat; haec exulibus in patriam semper animum oculosque tendentibus ostendit nihil interesse infra quos quis iaceat; haec, ubi res communes fortuna male divisit et aequo iure genitos alium alii donavit, exaequat omnia; haec est post quam nihil quisquam alieno fecit arbitrio; haec est in qua nemo humilitatem suam sensit; haec est quae nulli non patuit; haec est, Marcia, quam pater tuus concupit; haec est, inquam, quae efficit ut nasci non sit supplicium, quae efficit ut non concidam adversus minas casuum, ut servare animum salvum ac potentem sui possim: habeo quod appellem. **20.3.** Video istic cruces ne unius quidem generis sed aliter ab aliis fabricatas: capite quidam conversos in terram suspendere, alii per obscena stipitem egerunt, alii brachia patibulo explicuerunt. Video fidiculas, video verbera, et membrum singulis articulis† singula† docuerunt† machinamenta, sed video et mortem. Sunt istic hostes cruenti, cives superbi, sed video istic et mortem. Non est molestum servire ubi, si domini pertaesum est, licet uno gradu ad libertatem transire. Caram te, vita, beneficio mortis habeo. **20.4.** Cogita quantum boni opportuna mors habeat, quam multis diutius vixisse nocuerit. Si Gnaeum Pompeium, decus istud firmamentumque imperii, Neapoli valetudo abstulisset, indubitatus populi Romani princeps excesserat: at nunc exigui temporis adiectio fastigio illum suo depulit. Vidit legiones in conspectu suo caesas et ex illo proelio in quo prima acies senatus fuit – quam infelices reliquiae sunt! – ipsum imperatorem superfuisse; vidit Aegyptium carnificem et sacrosanctum victoribus corpus satelliti praestitit, etiam si incolumis fuisset paenitentiam salutis acturus. Quid enim erat turpius quam Pompeium vivere beneficio regis? **20.5.** M. Cicero si illo tempore quo Catilinae sicas devitavit, quibus pariter cum patria petitus est, concidisset, liberata re publica servator eius, si denique filiae suae funus secutus esset, etiam tunc felix mori potuit. Non vidisset strictos in civilia capita mucrones nec divisa percussoribus occisorum bona, ut etiam de suo perirent, non hastam consularia spolia vendentem nec caedes locatas publice nec latrocinia, bella, rapinas, tantum Catilinarum. **20.6.** M. Catonem si a Cypro et hereditatis regiae dispensatione redeuntem mare devorasset vel cum illa ipsa pecunia quam adferebat civili bello stipendium, nonne illi bene actum foret? Hoc certe secum tulisset, neminem ausurum coram Catone peccare: nunc annorum adiectio paucissimorum virum libertati non suae tantum sed publicae natum coegit Caesarem fugere, Pompeium sequi. Nihil ergo illi mali in matura mors attulit: omnium etiam malorum remisit patientiam.

21. 21.1. ‘Nimis tamen cito perit et immaturus.’ Primum puta illi superfuisse – comprende quantum plurimum procedere homini licet: quantum est? Ad brevissimum tempus editi, cito cessuri loco venienti in pactum hoc prospicimus

hospitium. De nostris aetatibus loquor, quas incredibili celeritate †convolvit†? Computa urbium saecula: videbis quam non diu steterint etiam quae vetustate gloriantur. Omnia humana brevia et caduca sunt et infiniti temporis nullam partem occupantia. **21.2.** Terram hanc cum urbibus populisque et fluminibus et ambitu maris puncti loco ponimus ad universa referentes: minorem portionem aetas nostra quam puncti habet, si omni tempori comparetur, cuius maior est mensura quam mundi, utpote cum ille se intra huius spatium totiens remetiat. Quid ergo interest id extendere cuius quantumcumque fuerit incrementum non multum aberit a nihilo? Uno modo multum est quod vivimus, si satis est. **21.3.** Licet mihi vivaces et in memoriam traditae senectutis viros nomines, centenos denosque percenseas annos: cum ad omne tempus dimiseris animum, nulla erit illa brevissimi longissimique aevi differentia, si inspecto quanto quis vixerit spatio comparaveris quanto non vixerit. **21.4.** Deinde sibi maturus decessit: vixit enim quantum debuit vivere, nihil illi iam ultra supererat. Non una hominibus senectus est ut ne animalibus quidem: intra quattuordecim quaedam annos defetigavit et haec illis longissima aetas est quae homini prima; dispar cuique vivendi facultas data est. Nemo nimis cito moritur quia victurus diutius quam vixit non fuit. **21.5.** Fixus est cuique terminus: manebit semper ubi positus est nec illum ulterius diligentia aut gratia promovebit. Sic habe, te illum [ulterius diligentiam] ex consilio perdidisse: tulit suum

metasque dati pervenit ad aevi.

Non est itaque quod sic te oneres: ‘potuit diutius vivere’. Non est interrupta eius vita nec umquam se annis casus intericit. Solvitur quod cuique promissum est: eunt via sua fata nec adiciunt quicquam nec ex promisso semel demunt. Frustra vota ac studia sunt: habebit quisque quantum illi dies primus adscripsit. Ex illo quo primum lucem vidit iter mortis ingressus est accessitque fato propior et illi ipsi qui adiciebantur adolescentiae anni vitae detrahebantur. **21.7.** In hoc omnes errore versamur, ut non putemus ad mortem nisi senes inclinatosque iam vergere, cum illo infantia statim et iuventa, omnis aetas ferat. Agunt opus suum fata: nobis sensum nostrae necis auferunt, quoque facilius obrepat, mors sub ipso vitae nomine latet. Infantiam in se pueritia convertit, pueritiam pubertas, iuvenem senex abstulit: incrementa ipsa, si bene computes, damna sunt.

22. 22.1. Quereris, Marcia, non tam diu filium tuum vixisse quam potuisset? Unde enim scis an diutius illi expedierit vivere, an illi hac morte consultum sit? Quemquam invenire hodie potes cuius res tam bene positae fundataeque sint ut nihil illi procedente tempore timendum sit? Labant humana ac fluunt neque

ulla pars vitae nostrae tam obnoxia aut tenera est quam quae maxime placet, ideoque felicissimis optanda mors est, quia in tanta inconstantia turbaque rerum nihil nisi quod praeterit certum est. **22.2.** Quis tibi recipit illud fili tui pulcherrimum corpus et summa pudoris custodia inter luxuriosae urbis oculos conservatum potuisse tot morbos ita evadere ut ad senectutem inlaesum perferret formae decus? Cogita animi mille labes; neque enim recta ingenia qualem in adulescentia spem sui fecerant usque in senectutem pertulerunt, sed interspersa plerumque sunt: aut sera eoque foedior luxuria invasit coepitque dehonestare speciosa principia, aut in popinam ventremque procubuerunt toti summaque illis curarum fuit quid essent, quid biberent. **22.3.** Adice incendia ruinas naufragia lacerationesque medicorum ossa vivis legentium et totas in viscera manus demittentium et non per simplicem dolorem pudenda curantium; post haec exilium (non fuit innocentior filius tuus quam Rutilius), carcerem (non fuit sapientior quam Socrates), voluntario vulnere transfixum pectus (non fuit sanctior quam Cato): cum ista perspexeris, scies optime cum iis agi quos natura, quia illos hoc manebat vitae stipendium, cito in tutum recepit. Nihil est tam fallax quam vita humana, nihil tam insidiosum: non mehercules quisquam illam accepisset, nisi daretur ignorantibus. Itaque si felicissimum est non nasci, proximum est, puto, brevi aetate defunctos cito in integrum restitui. **22.4.** Propone illud acerbissimum tibi tempus quo Seianus patrem tuum clienti suo Satrio Secundo congiarium dedit. Irascebatur illi ob unum aut alterum liberius dictum quod tacitus ferre non potuerat Seianum in cervices nostras ne inponi quidem sed escendere. Decernebatur illi statua in Pompei theatro ponenda, quod exustum Caesar reficiebat: exclamavit Cordus tunc vere theatrum perire. **22.5.** Quid ergo? Non rumperetur supra cineres Cn. Pompei constitui Seianum et in monumentis maximi imperatoris consecrari perfidum militem? †Consecratur† subscriptio et acerrimi canes, quos ille, ut sibi uni mansuetos, omnibus feros haberet, sanguine humano pascebat, circumlatrare hominem †etiam illum imperiatum† incipiunt. **22.6.** Quid faceret? Si vivere vellet, Seianus rogandus erat, si mori, filia, uterque inexorabilis: constituit filiam fallere. Usus itaque balineo quo plus virium poneret, in cubiculum se quasi gustaturus contulit et dimissis pueris quaedam per fenestram, ut videretur edisse, proiecit; a cena deinde, quasi iam satis in cubiculo edisset, abstinuit. Altero quoque die et tertio idem fecit; quartus ipsa infirmitate corporis faciebat indicium. Complexus itaque te, ‘carissima’ inquit ‘filia et hoc unum tota celata vita, iter mortis ingressus sum et iam medium fere teneo: revocare me nec debes nec potes.’ Atque ita iussit lumen omne praeccludi et se in tenebras condidit. **22.7.** Cognito consilio eius publica voluptas erat quod e faucibus avidissimorum luporum educeretur praeda. Accusatores auctore Seiano adeunt consulum tribunalia, queruntur mori Cordum ut interpellarent quod coegerant: adeo illis Cordus videbatur effugere. Magna res erat in quaestione, an

mortis <ius> rei perderent; dum deliberatur, dum accusatores iterum adeunt, ille se absolverat. **22.8.** Videsne, Marcia, quantae iniquorum temporum vices ex inopinato ingruant? Fles quod alicui tuorum mori necesse fuit? Paene non licuit.

23. 23.1. Praeter hoc quod omne futurum incertum est et ad deteriora certius, facillimum ad superos iter est animis cito ab humana conversatione dimissis: minimum enim faecis, ponderis traxerunt. Antequam obdurescerent et altius terrena conciperent liberati leviores ad originem suam revolant et facilius quidquid est illud obsoleti inliti que eluunt. **23.2.** Nec umquam magnis ingeniis cara in corpore mora est: exire atque erumpere gestiunt, aegre has angustias ferunt, vagari per omne sublimes et ex alto adsueti humana despiciere. Inde est quod Platon clamat: sapientis animum totum in mortem prominere, hoc velle, hoc meditari, hac semper cupidine ferri in exteriora tendentem. **23.3.** Quid tu, Marcia? Cum videres senilem in iuvene prudentiam, victorem omnium voluptatum animum, emendatum, carentem vitio, divitias sine avaritia, honores sine ambitione, voluptates sine luxuria adpetentem, diu tibi putabas illum sospitem posse contingere? Quidquid ad summum pervenit ab exitu prope est: eripit se aufertque ex oculis perfecta virtus nec ultimum tempus expectant quae in primo maturuerunt. **23.4.** Ignis quo clarior fulsit citius extinguitur: vivacior est qui cum lenta ac difficili materia commissus fumo que demersus ex sordido lucet; eadem enim detinet causa quae maligne alit. Sic ingenia quo inlustriora, breviora sunt: nam ubi incremento locus non est, vicinus occasus est. **23.5.** Fabianus ait, id quod nostri quoque parentes videre, puerum Romae fuisse statura ingentis viri tantet; sed hic cito decessit et moriturum brevi nemo <non> prudens dixit: non poterat enim ad illam aetatem pervenire quam praeceperat. Ita est: indicium imminenti exitii nimia maturitas est; adpetit finis ubi incrementa consumpta sunt.

24. 24.1. Incipe virtutibus illum, non annis aestimare: satis diu vixit. Pupillus relictus sub tutorum cura usque ad quartum decimum annum fuit, sub matris tutela semper. Cum haberet suos penates, relinquere tuos noluit et in materno contubernio, cum vix paternum liberi ferant, perseveravit. Adulescens statura, pulchritudine, certo corporis robore castris natus militiam recusavit ne a te discederet. **24.2.** Computa, Marcia, quam raro liberos videant quae in diversis domibus habitant; cogita tot illos perire annos matribus et per sollicitudinem exigi quibus filios in exercitu habent: scies multum patuisse hoc tempus ex quo nil perdidisti. Numquam e conspectu tuo recessit; sub oculis tuis studia formavit excellentis ingeni et aequaturum nisi obstitisset verecundia, quae multorum profectus silentio pressit. **24.3.** Adulescens rarissimae formae in tam magna feminarum turba viros corrumpentium nullius se spei praebuit et cum quarundam usque ad temptandum

pervenisset improbitas, erubuit quasi peccasset quod placuerat. Hac sanctitate morum effecit ut puer admodum dignus sacerdotio videretur, materna sine dubio suffragatione, sed ne mater quidem nisi pro bono candidato valuisset. **24.4.** Harum contemplatione virtutum filium gere quasi <sinu>. Nunc ille tibi magis vacat, nunc nihil habet quo avocetur; numquam tibi sollicitudini, numquam maerori erit. Quod unum ex tam bono filio poteras dolere, doluisti: cetera, exempta casibus, plena voluptatis sunt, si modo uti filio scis, si modo quid in illo pretiosissimum fuerit intellegis. **24.5.** Imago dumtaxat fili tui perit et effigies non simillima, ipse quidem aeternus meliorisque nunc status est, despoliatus oneribus alienis et sibi relictus. Haec quae vides circumiecta nobis, ossa nervos et obductam cutem vultumque et ministras manus et cetera quibus involuti sumus, vincula animorum tenebraeque sunt; obruitur his, offocatur inficitur, arcetur a veris et suis in falsa coiectus. Omne illi cum hac gravi carne certamen est ne abstrahatur et sidat; nititur illo unde demissus est. Ibi illum aeterna requies manet ex confusis crassisque pura et liquida visentem.

25. 25.1. Proinde non est quod ad sepulcrum fili tui curras: pessima eius et ipsi molestissima istic iacent, ossa cineresque, non magis illius partes quam vestes aliaque tegimenta corporum. Integer ille nihilque in terris relinquens sui fugit et totus excessit; paulumque supra nos commoratus, dum expurgatur et inhaerentia vitia situmque omnem mortalis aevi excutit, deinde ad excelsa sublatus inter felices currit animas. **25.2.** Excepit illum coetus sacer, Scipiones Catonesque, interque contemptores vitae et <mortis> beneficio liberos parens tuus, Marcia. Ille nepotem suum – quamquam illic omnibus omne cognatum est – adplicat sibi nova luce gaudentem et vicinorum siderum meatus docet, nec ex coniectura sed omnium ex vero peritus in arcana naturae libens ducit; utque ignotarum urbium monstrator hospiti gratus est, ita sciscitanti caelestium causas domesticus interpres. Et in profunda terrarum permittere aciem <iubet>: iuvat enim ex alto relicta despiciere. **25.3.** Sic itaque te, Marcia, gere tamquam sub oculis patris filique posita, non illorum quos noveras, sed tanto excelsiorum et in summo locatorum. Erubescit quicquam humile aut vulgare <cogitare> et mutatos in melius tuos flere. †Aeternarum rerum per libera et vasta spatia dimissit non illos interfusa maria discludunt nec altitudo montium aut inviae valles aut incertarum vada Syrtium: †omnium planat† et ex facili mobiles et expediti et in vicem pervii sunt intermixti que sideribus.

26. 26.1. Puta itaque ex illa arce caelesti patrem tuum, Marcia, cui tantum apud te auctoritatis erat quantum tibi apud filium tuum, non illo ingenio quo civilia bella deflevit, quo proscribentis in aeternum ipse proscripsit, sed tanto elatiore quanto est ipse sublimior dicere: **26.2.** ‘Cur te, filia, tam longa tenet aegritudo?’

Cur in tanta veri ignoratione versaris ut inique actum cum filio tuo iudices quod integro domus statu integer ipse <se> ad maiores recepit suos? Nescis quantis fortuna procellis disturbet omnia, quam nullis benignam facilemque se praestiterit nisi qui minimum cum illa contraxerant? Regesne tibi nominem felicissimos futuros si maturius illos mors instantibus subtraxisset malis? An Romanos duces, quorum nihil magnitudini deerit si aliquid aetati detraxeris? An nobilissimos viros clarissimosque ad ictum militaris gladi composita cervice †formatos†? **26.3.** Respice patrem atque avum tuum: ille in alieni percussoris venit arbitrium; ego nihil in me cuiquam permisi et cibo prohibitus ostendi tam magno me quam vivebam animo scripsisse. Cur in domo nostra diutissime lugetur qui felicissime moritur? Coimus omnes in unum videmusque non alta nocte circumdati nil apud vos, ut putatis, optabile, nil excelsum, nil splendidum, sed humilia cuncta et gravia et anxia et quotam partem luminis nostri cernentia! **26.4.** Quid dicam nulla hic arma mutuis furere concursibus nec classes classibus frangi nec parricidia aut fingi aut cogitari nec fora litibus strepere dies perpetuos, nihil in obscuro, detectas mentes et aperta praecordia et in publico medioque vitam et omnis aevi prospectum venientiumque? **26.5.** Iuvabat unius me saeculi facta componere in parte ultima mundi et inter paucissimos gesta: tot saecula, tot aetatium contextum, seriem, quidquid annorum est, licet visere; licet surrectura, licet ruitura regna prospicere et magnarum urbium lapsus et maris novos cursus. **26.6.** Nam si tibi potest solacio esse desiderii tui commune fatum, nihil quo stat loco stabit, omnia sternet abducatque secum vetustas. Nec hominibus solum (quota enim ista fortunatae potentiae portio est?) sed locis, sed regionibus, sed mundi partibus ludet. Totos supprimet montes et alibi rupes in altum novas exprimet; maria sorbebit, flumina avertet et commercio gentium rupto societatem generis humani coetumque dissolvit; alibi hiatibus vastis subducat urbes, tremoribus quatiet et ex infimo pestilentiae halitus mittet et inundationibus quidquid habitatur obducat necabitque omne animal orbe submerso et ignibus vastis torrebit incendetque mortalia. Et cum tempus advenerit quo se mundus renovaturus extinguat, viribus ista se suis caedent et sidera sideribus incurrent et omni flagrante materia uno igni quidquid nunc ex disposito lucet ardebit. **26.7.** Nos quoque felices animae et aeterna sortitae, cum deo visum erit iterum ista moliri, labentibus cunctis et ipsae parva ruinae ingentis accessio in antiqua elementa vertemur.' Felicem filium tuum, Marcia, qui ista iam novit!

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Commentary

1 Introductory Proem: Marcia's Self, Cremutius Cordus' Death, and Seneca's Therapy

At the outset of his consolatory enterprise, Seneca makes clear whom he is writing to, which issues he will focus on, and how he will tackle his therapeutic task. The first chapter of the *ad M.* thus centers on three basic issues: a) the identity, nature, and gender of the addressee (1.1); b) the relationship between grief, social bonds, and human memory (1.2–4); c) the adoption of an effective (and, if necessary, harsh) method of treatment (1.5–8).

In accordance with the conventions of ancient rhetoric (e.g., Cic. *Inv.* 1.22–23), Seneca's *exordium* attempts to arouse the attention and benevolence of the addressee by highlighting both the relevance of the main topic and the merits of the addressee herself. Marcia is praised for her virtue (*virtus* = ἀρετή), fortitude (*robur animi* = καρτερία), and noble-mindedness (*magnitudo animi* = μεγαλοψυχία), though these are, in Stoic terms, the ultimate goals of Seneca's program of emotional re-education. Implicitly, Seneca's *captatio benevolentiae* reminds the addressee (and the reader) that the purpose of Stoic therapy is finding – or, more properly, re-discovering – one's truest self. This rhetorical strategy has deep roots in philosophical pedagogy (suffice here to mention Plato's claim that “the discovery of the self is a process of separating merely apparent subjects from the true one”, Gerson 2019, 16) and will be further elaborated in Seneca's work *On Mercy* (1.1.1–9) – in which Nero will contemplate his virtues as in a mirror.

Seneca is careful in basing his paraenetic introduction on the reality of Marcia's earlier life. As shown by Gloyn 2017, 19–33, the praise of Marcia's forbearance in dealing with the loss of her father, the historian Cremutius Cordus (1.2–4), reflects a practical application of the Stoic theory of οἰκείωσις, which is traditionally regarded as the cornerstone of Stoic ethics (“der Ausgangspunkt wie der feste Grund der stoischen Ethik”, Pohlenz 1940, 11). According to the οἰκείωσις theory, after learning to love themselves in their childhood, human beings – *qua* rational agents – establish relationships with other humans, starting with their closest relatives (Pembroke 1971; Engberg-Pedersen 1990; Radice 2000). The Stoic Hierocles famously expresses this idea through the image of concentric circles (ideally extending to the entire humankind) and places parents, siblings, spouse, and children in the same circle of proximity, i.e. in the first circle after that of self-appropriation (Stob. *Ecl.* 4.671.7–673.11 = Long/Sedley 1987, 349; Ramelli 2009, 90–93; Gourinat 2016). Marcia is thus invited by Seneca to react to the death of her son in the same (rationally correct) way she reacted to the death of her father – the roles of father and son being functionally identical from the perspective of an adult woman. Marcia's earlier grief for her father is in fact

depicted as “an equally severe injury” (*aeque magni vulneris*), the awareness of which can show that “the present wound also needs healing” (*hanc quoque plagam esse sanandam*, 1.5). Therefore, far from being a mere rhetorical trope, the story of Cordus’ death and Marcia’s re-publication of her father’s writings sets a clear target for Seneca’s healing strategy: restoring Marcia to her previously rational self by reminding her of the true meaning of family ties, natural laws, and constructive memory.

Seneca’s understanding of the *consolatio* genre (or παραμυθητικός λόγος) as a form of emotional and rational therapy is confirmed by the widespread use of medical imagery in the final section of the chapter (1.5–8) and throughout the work as a whole. Medical metaphors were employed to describe psychic distress and consolatory practices as early as Homer (see e.g., *Il.* 15.390–394 on Patroclus’ λόγοι to Eurypylos as φάρμακα), a fact that may well mirror a pre-literary cultural phenomenon. Both tragedy (e.g., Aesch. *PV* 377–385) and philosophy (e.g., Pl. *Ti.* 86–87) continued this usage, which became even more common in the Hellenistic era, when almost all philosophical schools concentrated their efforts on healing the wounds of desire (Nussbaum 1994). The Stoics proved especially keen on using medical images to describe moral evil and the emotions (πάθη), first of all because they considered “the mind to be necessarily a material thing and mental events to be of necessity physical changes in the world” (Graver 2007, 16; cf. Inwood 1985, 18–102, Sorabji 2002, 17–75). Building on the lesson of Aristotle (*Sens.* 436a-b; *Resp.* 489b23-30; *Eth. Nic.* 1097a8-14), Zeno of Citium (*ap. Stob. Ecl.* 4.34.68 = *SVF* 1.323), presented philosophy itself as an art (τέχνη) that, like medicine, “had the power to heal diseases of the soul” (τὰς τῆς ψυχῆς νόσους ἰάσασθαι δυναμένη). Moreover, Zeno (*ap. Diog. Laert.* 7.17 = *SVF* 1.286) conceived of emotional disorders like erotic passion as “inflammations” (φλεγμαίνοντα), whose “remedy” (φάρμακον) is “rest” (ἡσυχία). The analogy between medicine and philosophy – emotions and diseases – was developed with particular care by Chrysippus in the fourth book of his treatise *On the Emotions* (Περὶ παθῶν), which was also known separately with the meaningful title *Therapeutics* (Θεραπευτικόν). As is clear from the reports of Cicero (*Tusc.* 4.23–26), Galen (*Plac. Hipp. Plat.* 5.2.22–27), and Stobaeus (2.7.5b4), Chrysippus “saw the soul’s health as a matter of the right blend of the four physical elements” (Tielemans 2003, 155) and interpreted every emotion as a disproportion between such elements (particularly between the hot and the cold *qua* constituents of the psychic *pneuma*). Seneca’s emphasis on medical analogies in all of his extant works is thus primarily indebted to the Stoic tradition (which, in turn, drew heavily on medical thought) and should not be regarded as a purely literary device. For Seneca, as for all Stoics, the soul’s affections *are* like those of the body insofar as the soul is as corporeal as the body and the world.

According to Stobaeus (2.7.5f, cf. Graver 2007, 133–148), when dealing with the “evils of mind” (τὰ περὶ ψυχὴν κακά), the Stoics distinguished between “sicknesses” (νοσήματα), “infirmities” (ἀρρωστήματα), and “proclivities” (εὐκαταφορία or εὐεμπτωσία). “Tendency to grief” (ἐπιλυπία) – that is, Marcia’s problem – was considered a “proclivity to emotion as to one of the actions contrary to nature” (εὐκαταφορίαν εἰς πάθος, ὡς τι τῶν παρὰ φύσιν ἔργων, Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.10e). In contrast to sicknesses such as avarice (φιλαργυρία) and love of wine (φιλονία), that are characterized by their focus on one object of desire (money, wine *et sim.*) and may arouse different kinds of emotions, proclivities like grief subjugate the soul to one and the same emotion – in our case to “pain” (λύπη) – which may arise in connection with a wide range of objects. However, the concluding remarks of Seneca’s introduction (1.7–8) also suggest that Marcia’s unnatural attachment shares a typical feature of Stoic sicknesses – a fact that makes the use of medical arguments even more appropriate. Stobaeus (2.7.10e) defines sicknesses as “an erroneous judgement in the process of desire (δόξαν ἐπιθυμίας), which has turned into a condition and become ingrained (ἐρρηκυῖαν εἰς ἔξιν καὶ ἐνεσκρωμένην), according to which people consider extremely choiceworthy things that are not choiceworthy (καθ’ ἣν ὑπολαμβάνουσι τὰ μὴ αἰρετὰ σφόδρα αἰρετὰ εἶναι)”. Indeed, Marcia’s mourning (*luctus*) – which has led her to choose social isolation in contrast with the principles of οἰκείωσις – is said to “have established squatter’s rights through the passage of time” (*iam sibi ius mora fecit*); after three years it “renews and strengthens itself each day” (*renovat se et corroborat cotidie*), just like those “faults” (*vitia*) that tend to “become deeply embedded” (*penitus insidunt*) and to “feed on their own bitterness” (*ipsa acerbitate pascuntur*) – that is, just like Stobaeus’ νοσήματα and Seneca’s own *morbi animi* (*Ep.* 75.11). By observing that Marcia clings to her grief (*amplexeris dolorem tuum*) and keeps it alive in place of her son (*in filii locum superstitem fecisti*), Seneca makes the subtle point that attachment to one emotion (sorrow) and attachment to one object (Metilius) – “proclivity” and “sickness”, in Stoic terms – are mutually coextensive in his addressee’s case. From this perspective, too, the re-evocation of Cremutius Cordus’ death – as well as the later mention of another dead son (16.6) – are essential to Seneca’s therapeutic argument, for they patently show that both Marcia’s obsession with her son and the resulting emotional state are contrary to nature and unworthy of Marcia’s true *persona*.

1.1 *ab infirmitate muliebris animi*: It might seem unusual for a Stoic instructor to start his address to a woman by reminding her of the “frailties of the female temperament”. Compared to other ancient thinkers, the Stoics had a distinctly positive view of female nature and women’s potential for wisdom. Cleanthes wrote a work *On the Claim That the Virtue of a Man and a Woman Are the Same*

(Περὶ τοῦ ὅτι ἡ αὐτὴ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικός, Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.175), a claim echoed in Chrysippus' theology and cosmology (cf. Phld. *De Piet.* = PHerc. 1428, col. 5.8–14; Henrichs 1974, 15–16). Stobaeus preserves extensive quotations from Musonius Rufus' two tracts *On Whether our Daughters Should Be Educated Like our Sons* (Εἰ παραπλησίως παιδευτέον τὰς θυγατέρας τοῖς υἱοῖς) and *That Women, too, Should Philosophize* (“Ὅτι καὶ γυναῖξι φιλοσοφητέον), where it is explicitly argued (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.31.126.5–8) that “women have the same rationality as men have, for interacting with one another and morally assessing every action” (λόγον [. . .] τὸν αὐτὸν εἰλήφασι παρὰ θεῶν αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, ὧς τε χρώμεθα πρὸς ἀλλήλους καὶ καθ’ ὃν διανοοῦμεθα περὶ ἐκάστου πράγματος, <εἰ> ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακὸν ἐστὶ καὶ καλὸν ἢ αἰσχρὸν). Whereas it may be historically inappropriate to describe the Stoics as forerunners of the modern feminist idea of gender equality (Asmis 1996, criticized by Engel 2003) – or to label them as “failed proto-liberal feminists” (Hill 2001, 40) – it should be acknowledged that Stoicism developed a sophisticated discourse on gender and the feminine (Grahn-Wilder 2018), which reflected a remarkably generous appreciation of the cognitive abilities of women. Later in the *ad M.* (16.1), Seneca himself proclaims that women have “just as much strength and just as much potential for moral goodness” (*par vigor, par ad honesta facultas*) as men. However, in the *Consolation to Helvia* (16) we hear that specifically feminine faults (*muliebria vitia*) do exist and should be avoided by wise women. Both ideas are perfectly in line with the Stoic tradition, which – as attested by Cicero's discussion of *καθήκοντα*, *personae*, and *proclivitas* (*Off.* 1.107–120; *Tusc.* 4.27–28; 4.81; cf. Manning 1973, 173–174) – recognized the importance of individual dispositions, social roles, and practical circumstances for ethical theory. Seneca's point thus has a protreptic and therapeutic character: since Marcia is immune to the weaknesses typical of her natural condition – as well as to other less gender-specific faults (*a ceteris vitiis*) – the teacher/therapist can restrict himself to the task of healing an inveterate tendency to grief (ἐπιλυπία). The disease is chronic, but the prognosis is favorable.

velut aliquod antiquum exemplar aspici: The use of instructive *exempla* was a core feature of ancient consolation literature (Kassel 1958, 70–71, Baltussen 2009, 81–82, On Chong-Gossard 2013, 39–49) and of Roman public discourse, which attributed to the rhetoric of exemplarity “a special capacity for communicating moral ideas” due to its “elementary and invitational roles” (Langlands 2018, 49; cf. Roller 2018). Seneca's fondness for moral *exempla* is well-known (Armisen-Marchetti 1989, Mayer 1991) and underlies his non-conventional choice to discuss *exempla* before *praecepta* in the *ad M.* (2.1; but see the *caveat* at 12.5). However, long before entering the realm of literature, the habit of teaching and

learning *per exempla* took root in Roman culture through ancestral practices such as funeral processions, forensic persuasion, and the exhibition of ancestor masks (*imagines*) in aristocratic houses (Bettini 1986, 176–193, Flower 1996). Since Marcia came from an aristocratic family, Seneca’s description of the act of “looking up to an ancient paragon” (or, more literally, “to an ancient impression”, *antiquum exemplar*) may entail an allusion to the Roman practice of making, exposing, and admiring ancestor wax masks (cf. e.g., Sall. *Jug.* 4.5–6; Plin. *HN* 35.6–7). By praising Marcia’s character (*mores*) and presenting her with a sort of mirror image that anticipates her own future position as an “ancient model”, Seneca suggests that unnatural mourning can disfigure even the most admirable aristocratic profile.

***virī quoque*:** A purposeful corrective to the earlier mention of the *infirmitas muliebris animi*, by means of which Seneca distances himself from common stereotypes about gender and shows his adherence to orthodox Stoic psychology.

***tam iniquo tempore*:** The timing of Seneca’s *consolatio* is unfavorable first of all because, as we shall hear shortly (1.7), Marcia has been grieving Metilius’ death for three years – a fact that shows that her disease is remarkably resistant to eradication. At the same time, the proemial position of this note could not fail to remind readers of Lucretius’ opening complaint about “the evil time for the fatherland” (*patriai tempore iniquo*, *Lucret.* 1.41) in which the *De Rerum Natura* was written (see Mazzoli 1970, 206–209, on Seneca’s relatively frequent allusions to Lucretius). Such an intertextual connection might give a political overtone to Seneca’s psychological argument. There has been much speculation in the past about the political implications of Seneca’s consolation as a whole, but the only safe conclusion we can draw from the extant evidence is that Seneca wrote his work during Caligula’s reign (37–41 AD), perhaps around 39–40 AD (see the Introduction for further details). Most importantly, any attempt to trace a criticism of Caligula’s rule in Seneca’s Lucretian note would be groundless, for it is Caligula’s reign that allowed the republication of Cremutius’ *Annales* celebrated in 1.3–4. Considering Seneca’s subsequent remarks about the hard times in which Marcia’s father committed suicide – hard times “when doing nothing irreverent was equivalent to showing great reverence” (*saeculo quo magna pietas erat nihil impie facere*, 1.2) – it is much more reasonable to see Seneca’s *tempus iniquum* as a rather general reference to Marcia’s excessively prolonged grief and, to a lesser extent, to the difficult situation of the Julio-Claudian principate. Seneca’s description must have sounded familiar to any member of the senatorial aristocracy and could thus increase the empathy between the noble Marcia and her Stoic teacher.

tam inimico iudice, tam invidioso crimine: The frequent use of legal imagery in the *ad M.* can be explained by two main reasons. On the one hand, Seneca makes the most of his rhetorical and political background, which is widely shared by his Roman readers. As Cicero's works had already shown, "putting some law into one's philosophical discourse could increase its appeal for an educated Roman audience. The kind of law used in this way is mostly the *ius civile*" (Griffin 2013, 101), whose 'technical' language is adapted to express Greek thought in an attempt at intellectual appropriation and cross-cultural assimilation (Hine 2006, 54–56; cf. also Armisen-Marchetti 1989, 106; 152–153; 232–233). On the other hand, Seneca's engagement with legal terminology finds a solid basis in the Stoic tradition: not only does "his use of the model of legal judgement give clearer shape to the concept of moral judgement he has been developing" (Inwood 2005, 213), but it also undergirds the Stoic "characterization of the reasonable structure in nature as a 'law'" (Jedan 2009, 122). As is well-known, the Stoics are among the earliest proponents of the idea of natural law and describe Zeus – the cosmic, personal God – as a fully rational lawgiver (Striker 1987, Mitsis 1994).

fortunam tuam absolveres: One of Seneca's main aims in re-educating Marcia's reason is to reconcile her with her fate (*fortuna*), for according to the Stoics every human should happily accept his or her destiny as an objective expression of the divine, rational fate that rules the cosmos and is immanent in it (cf. e.g., *Ep.* 96.2). As Diogenes Laertius reminds us (7.149 = *SVF* 2.915), such prominent Stoics as Chrysippus, Posidonius, Zeno, and Boethus agreed that "everything comes to be by fate" (καθ' εἰμαρμένην τὰ πάντα γίνεσθαι), the cosmic fate being a chain or string (εἰρμός = *series*) of causes (cf. Aetius, *Plac.* 1.28.4 = *SVF* 2.917; Alex. *Mantissa* 185.1–5 = *SVF* 2.920; Cic. *Div.* 1.125, *Fat.* 20–21; see Meyer 2009). Once again, however, Seneca employs the language of Roman legal practice (*absolveres*) to express his Stoic view.

robur animi et virtus tua: As is typical of proemial openings, Marcia is encouragingly (and enticingly) described as a promising pupil. *Robur animi* is, first of all, the Stoic virtue of fortitude or καρτερία – "knowledge disposed to abide by things that are judged in the right way" (ἐπιστήμη ἐμμενητική τοῖς ὀρθῶς κριθεῖσι), according to Chrysippus' definition *ap. Stob. Ecl.* 2.7.5b2 (= *SVF* 3.264; cf. also *SVF* 3.265 and 370, with the reports of Diogenes Laertius and Andronicus). Yet, in light of Seneca's description of Marcia's vicissitudes in the next paragraph, a reference to the other Stoic virtues subordinate to courage (ἀνδρεία) may also be implied. These are boldness (θαρσαλέοτης), noble-mindedness (μεγαλοψυχία, which is explicitly mentioned later as *magnitudo animi*), high spirit (εὐψυχία), and love of labor (φιλοπονία). Cicero's definition of Stoic fortitude (*fortitudo*) as

“the virtue that fights for justice” (*eam virtutem propugnantem pro aequitate*, *Off.* 1.62) is notably consistent with Seneca’s emphasis on the reciprocal connection between the primary virtues of courage (ἀνδρεία) and justice (δικαιοσύνη), which emerges from the subsequent section.

1.2 in persona patris tui: Marcia’s behavior is assessed against the background of the Stoic theory of *personae* (= πρόσωπα), according to which every rational agent should consciously realize what is appropriate (καθήκον) to his or her social and familial role before making any moral choice (Gill 1988, Inwood 1999). As is clear from Cicero’s treatment in *Off.* 1.107–125 – broadly based on Panaetius’ *On Duty* (Περὶ τοῦ καθήκοντος) – the Stoics developed a sophisticated *philosophia praeceptiva* that took into account the different duties arising from one’s position in the οἰκείωσις system. They strongly recommended well-reasoned consistency *qua* freedom from perturbation (what Cicero, *Off.* 1.93–98; 107–111, terms *constantia* or *aequabilitas*: see Konstan forthcoming), providing instructions, for instance, on “how a husband should conduct himself towards his wife, or how a father should bring up his children” (Sen. *Ep.* 94.1). In *Epistle* 94, Seneca argues (*contra* Aristo of Chios) that this individualized and preceptive approach to moral teaching can be useful to most humans (who have not yet attained perfect wisdom) and points out its relevance to the *consolatio* genre (see esp. *Ep.* 94.49). Seneca is thus urging Marcia to show consistency in behavior and act as appropriately as in the past – which means equating the death of a father and the loss of a son *qua* members of the same οἰκείωσις circle (Gloyn 2017, 19–33).

nec scio an et optaveris: A further detail is added to the double-sided portrait of Marcia as a good pupil and a *proficiens* in need of correction. By loving her father just as much as her children (*quem non minus quam liberos dilexisti*), Marcia observed the rational laws of οἰκείωσις. However, both Stoic thought and ancient common sense attached great importance to the *natural* development of kinship relationships. Especially widespread was the assumption that children should bury their parents, not the other way round, as attested by both literary and epigraphical evidence (see e.g., Eur. *Heracl.* 322–325; *Alc.* 634–672; Cic. *Sen.* 84; Plin. *Ep.* 5.16.1–6; Plut. *Cons. Apoll.* 119F; *CIL* 9.5407, 10.484, and the several inscriptions discussed by Lattimore 1962, 187–191, who, on the basis of the fact that “this particular figure is far more common in the Latin than in the Greek inscriptions”, argues that “the Romans were conscious of this feeling more universally, and more strongly, than the Greeks”). By suggesting that Marcia may have wished her father to outlive her, Seneca implies that Marcia’s dutiful affection (*magna pietas*) may already have overstepped the bounds of natural law. The Stoic teacher has a sympathetic approach to this apparently innocent contravention

of normal moral rules (*bonum morem*), but he clearly sets himself the goal of correcting what the Stoics consider a conscious deviation from true piety (εὐσέβεια = *pietas*) – that is, a misleading kind of πάθος.

Mortem A. Cremuti Cordi: Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.34–35) and Cassius Dio (57.24.2–4) report that in 25 AD Marcia’s father, the senator and historian Aulus Cremutius Cordus, was charged with *maiestas* by two of Sejanus’ clients, Satrius Secundus and Pinarius Natta. The trial appeared emblematic of the climate of terror that reigned under Tiberius and his ruthless praetorian prefect Sejanus (Woodman/Martin 1989, 176–184, McHugh 2004, Strunk 2017, 157–165). According to Dio, Cordus “was accused of having praised Cassius and Brutus, of having assailed the people and the senate” (τόν τε Κάσσιον καὶ τὸν Βροῦτον ἐπήνεσε, καὶ τοῦ δήμου τῆς τε βουλῆς καθήψατο), and, quite remarkably, “of not having praised to the skies” (οὐ μέντοι καὶ ὑπερεσέμνυε) Caesar and Augustus. Tacitus – who describes Cordus’ defense before the senate and the “grim visage” (*truci vultu*) of Tiberius – adds that the old senator dared to “call Cassius the last of the Romans” (*C. Cassium Romanorum ultimum dixisset*), a claim that echoes Brutus’ own eulogy of Cassius (*ap.* Plut. *Brut.* 44: ἔσχατον ἄνδρα Ῥωμαίων) and recurs also in Suetonius, *Tib.* 61.3 (who, however, does not name Cordus explicitly). After the trial, Cremutius Cordus committed suicide by self-starvation – *abstinentia* (Tac. *Ann.* 4.35; cf. below, notes on *Marc.* 22.4–8), a word recalling Cordus’ Stoic-like temperance. The senate ordered his books to be burned, but some copies were hidden by Marcia and other friends (ἄλλοι τε γὰρ καὶ μάλιστα ἡ θυγάτηρ αὐτοῦ Μαρκία, Dio, 57.24.4). Dio’s account confirms Seneca’s assertion that Marcia published anew the historical work of her father (the surviving fragments of which are discussed in Cornell 2013, I, 497–501; II, 964–973; III, 592–593). Marcia and her friends were skilled enough to carry out a textual revision, for according to Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.104, the passages that had brought Cordus to his ruin were expurgated (*circumcisis quae dixisse ei nocuerat*). Though making no mention of Marcia, Tacitus’ description of Cordus’ defense and death shares Seneca’s emphasis on the cultural significance of memory and the effects of autocratic censorship – a central topic in the intellectual debate of the early imperial era (Gowing 2005, Galinsky 2016).

inter Seianinos satellites: Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.34) names Satrius Secundus (a *municipalis*, like Sejanus himself) and Pinarius Natta (who was to become one of Sejanus’ closest allies). In imperial Rome, *delatores* and *accusatores* became increasingly involved in the repression of political dissent, and Cremutius Cordus’ trial seems to have marked a turning point, for “it is not possible to detect Sejanus’ involvement in any prosecutions with any certitude until 25” (Rutledge 2001, 95). On the profile and career of Satrius and Pinarius (that Seneca mentions

also in *Marc.* 22.4 and *Ep.* 122.11), see McHugh 2020, 239–243. On the origin of the *laesa maiestas* trials, see Konstan 2015, 380–381.

non favisti consilio eius: Seneca makes clear that, even if Marcia ultimately accepted her father’s decision, she did not favor it as this would have amounted to parricide in the Roman mentality. It is no exaggeration to say that “in ancient Rome the fear of parenticide created a real collective neurosis” (Muravyeva and Toivo 2018, 257; cf. Veyne 1987, 29–30; Thomas 1986, 2017; Cantarella 2003, 2017) – which can also help explain Seneca’s care in reconstructing Marcia’s reaction.

judistique lacrimas palam: The remark that Marcia openly shed tears is in sharp contrast with the immediately following claim that she swallowed her sighs (*gemitus devorasti*). In an attempt to harmonize the sequence, Basore 1932, followed by Manning 1981, 30, translates “you routed your tears” (taking the verb *fundo* in its ‘military’ sense). But, as Hine 2014, 37 n. 3, points out, this is a strained translation, for the expression *lacrimas fundere* is widely attested with the more natural meaning of “to weep”. Seneca himself (*Tranq. an.* 5.6) uses it with this meaning. According to Traina 1987, 47, Seneca makes the subtle claim that, although Marcia did not abandon herself to despair, she was not afraid of showing her grief (which is confirmed by the phrase *non tamen hilari fronte textisti*). Still, as both Manning and Hine acknowledge, the sequence of ideas remains puzzling. There seems to be good reason to suspect that the text is corrupt and to revive the thesis of Birt 1928, 53, that “Seneca schrieb vielmehr *clam* (oder *non palam*)”.

illo saeculo: The Tiberian age is described as morally perverse through the rhetorical device of antithesis (*pietas/impie*). Seneca is aware that ethical virtues like *pietas/εὐσέβεια* are not suspended in a kind of philosophical *vacuum* but are subjected to, and even deformed by, the pressure of history.

1.3 *mutatio temporum*: According to Suetonius (*Calig.* 16), at the outset of his reign (37 AD), Caligula “allowed the writings of Titus Labienus, Cremutius Cordus, and Cassius Severus, which had been suppressed by decrees of the senate, to be hunted up, circulated, and read (*Titi Labieni, Cordi Cremuti, Cassi Severi scripta senatus consultis abolita requiri et esse in manibus lectitarique permisit*), saying that it was wholly to his interest that everything which happened be handed down to posterity (*quando maxime sua interesset ut facta quaeque posteris tradantur*)”. Gaius’ early display of fondness for historical memory and free speech – which allegedly entailed the removal of the *maiestas* trials and a public declaration that the new emperor “had no ears for informants” (*negavitque se*

delatoribus aures habere, Suet. *Calig.* 15; cf. also Cassius Dio, 59.9.4–7) – offered Marcia the opportunity to resurrect the work of her father. Some of the ‘good deeds’ that Suetonius and Dio attribute to the early phase of Caligula’s reign – in an attempt to create a characteristically dichotomic picture of his principate – may have been accomplished later, but, in all likelihood, this is not the case of Cremutius’ rehabilitation, which mirrors Caligula’s efforts “to ensure the social and political stability that would ensure the legitimacy of his reign being approved across the board” (Adams 2007, 148). It is extremely hard to determine with certainty Seneca’s position – for, apart from Dio’s highly dubious story about Seneca’s *maiestas* trial (59.19), “all that we know of Seneca’s public life under Gaius is that the Emperor made adverse comments on his oratory and that, perhaps partly because of this, the orator gave up speaking” (Griffin 1976, 57; cf. Suet. *Calig.* 53.2, Sen. *Ep.* 49.2). Yet, Seneca may be deliberately trying to give a positive picture of Gaius’ cultural policy – out of prudence, if nothing else (cf. also Brutti 1995, 65–124).

a vera illum vindicasti morte: In the traditional Roman view, the collective memory of later generations was the most symbolically powerful form of post-mortem survival. Both the idea of achieving immortality through memorialization and the notion of posthumous *vindicatio* had their roots in the cultural and juridical imagery of Roman aristocracy (Assmann 1992), which was aptly combined with Greek literary ideals at a relatively early stage (see e.g., Enn. *Var.* 17–18 Vahlen). Marcia did for her father what Horace (*Carm.* 3.30.1) had done for himself with his *Odes* – as the former restored to public records (*monumenta*) Cremutius’ *Annales* and the latter built a monument (*monumentum*) more lasting than bronze. Seneca’s main aim here is to remind Marcia that she had already practiced (and benefited from) a much more constructive approach to social and individual memory. Moreover, the choice of Cremutius as a role model is in line with the well-established rhetorical tradition of using a *domesticum exemplum* or *domesticus auctor* – which is eloquently attested in Cicero (e.g., *Mur.* 66) and in Seneca himself (e.g., *Clem.* 1.9). See also Mayer 1991, 144–146.

de Romanis studiis: Marcia’s editorial undertaking is not only an important contribution to the genre of historiography and the study of literature *tout court*. First and foremost, it is a superb service to Roman cultural identity. We can perceive here an echo of the emulative, ‘national’ spirit we often observe in Cicero, Livy, and Pliny, among many others – though, as Hine 2006, 56–59, notes in his reading of the *Natural Questions*, the polarity between Roman and non-Roman is not “a structuring principle” in Seneca.

magna illorum pars arserat: As reported by Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.35), the senate ordered Cremutius’ books to be burned by the aediles (*per aedilis cremandos*), but copies remained (*set manserunt*). Dio (57.24.4) adds that “the books found in the city at the time were burned by the aediles, and those elsewhere by the magistrates of each place” (τά τε ἐν τῇ πόλει εὐρεθέντα πρὸς τῶν ἀγορανόμων καὶ τὰ ἔξω πρὸς τῶν ἐκασταχόθι ἀρχόντων ἐκαύθη)

ad Seianianum iugum: By describing the Tiberian age as a period in which “everyone was forced to bow the head and submit to the yoke of Sejanus”, Seneca subtly downplays Tiberius’ responsibility for the climate of terror that surrounded Cremutius. This choice is consistent with Seneca’s deferential praise of Tiberius and the Julio-Claudians later in his *consolatio* (cf. esp. below, 15).

homo ingenio animo manu liber: With its archaic flavor, the asyndetic series *ingenio animo manu* – which also forms an ascending climax, as Cremutius’ natural freedom of spirit (*ingenio animo*) found full expression in his actions (*manu*) – contributes significantly to Seneca’s portrayal of Marcia’s father as a traditional Roman hero. Cremutius’ “two excellent characteristics” (*duas res pulcherrimas*), his eloquence (*eloquentia*) and outspoken frankness (*libertas*), are the most distinguishing features of republican historiography in the famous reconstruction of Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.1), which echoes Sallustian and Ciceronian ideals. Quintilian (*Inst.* 10.1.104) confirms that even in its expurgated version Cremutius’ *Annales* were admired for their *libertas* as they revealed “a rich store of lofty spirit and bold judgements” (*elatum abunde spiritum et audaces sententias*). Yet, for Seneca’s readers *libertas* was much more than a stylistic choice – it was a political-cum-philosophical value (Wirszubski 1968, Balmaceda 2020). As Manning 1981, 11, observes, Seneca drew Marcia’s attention to “the *libertas* which it was her ancestral inheritance to honor”, and then unfolded to her “other aspects of it, namely the *libertas* which she herself could attain by refusing to be overwhelmed by her son’s death, and the *libertas* which her father and her son had already attained by the liberation from bodily ties accomplished at death”. Remarkably, Cremutius is presented not just as a writer of histories, but as a model of “Roman man” (*vir Romanus*), who has no fear of the passage of time (*vetustatem nullam timet*) and benefits the *res publica* by helping his contemporaries and descendants (*posteritas*) to look back to the achievements of their ancestors (*reverti ad acta maiorum*). This ethical model (in the sense advocated by Giardina/Schiavone 1981 and Narducci 1989), with its attendant social and gender implications, is reinforced by the description of the *damnatio memoriae* awaiting Cremutius’ murderers (*carnifices*) – whose “crimes, the only things for which they deserved to be remembered, will soon be consigned to silence” (*cito scelera quoque, quibus solis memoriam meruerunt, tacebuntur*).

1.5 *magnitudo animi*: A reference to the Stoic virtue of μεγαλοψυχία (see the introductory note to the present section). As Shelton 1995, 188, remarks, “Seneca begins his essay by offering Marcia’s former self as a correct model for her present self and encouraging her not only to emulate the behavior of others who had exhibited *magnitudo animi*, but, more importantly, to regain her own *magnitudo animi* and thus perhaps achieve that highest level of rational behavior where self-control does not require *exempla*”.

***ad sexum tuum*:** On Seneca’s belief that women have the same potential for moral perfection as men, see above, note on *Marc.* 1.1, *ab infirmitate muliebris animi*.

***nec furtum facere adfectibus tuis*:** Since, like other Hellenistic schools of philosophy, the Stoics advocate a rational therapy of the emotions (*adfectus* = πάθη), Seneca makes clear that emotional cheating is never a valid approach. The rehabilitation of Marcia’s faculty of judgement must be achieved by rational means that have an enduring impact on self-awareness. This is also the purpose of Seneca’s re-use of Marcia’s earlier sorrow (*antiqua mala in memoriam reduxi*): to restore Marcia’s awareness of her own inner resources, so as to make her “realize (*scires*) that the present wound also needs healing (*hanc quoque plagam esse sanandam*)”.

***vulneris cicatricem*:** On Seneca’s medical analogies and their cultural background, see the introductory note to the present section.

***Alii itaque molliter agant*:** Seneca is fully aware that the ancient schools of philosophy (and the ancient tradition *sensu latiore*) had proposed different approaches to the therapy of grief, some of which were more lenient than others. As summed up by Cicero in his *Tusculan Disputations* (3.75–76, cf. Graver 2002, 33–34), “the consoler’s duties” (*officia consolantium*) could consist “in removing distress altogether (*tollere aegritudinem funditus*), or in causing it to subside (*sedare*), or in diminishing it as much as possible (*detrahere quam plurimum*), or in restraining it so that it cannot spread any further (*supprimere nec pati manere longius*), or in diverting it elsewhere (*ad alia traducere*)”. Even among the Stoics themselves, the choice between a ‘radical’ and a ‘targeted’ approach remained an issue of debate, for Cleanthes held that “the consoler’s only duty” (*unum officium consolantis*) was “to teach the sufferer that what happened is not an evil at all” (*malum illud omnino non esse*), whereas Chrysippus claimed that “the key to consolation (*caput in consolando*) is to get rid of the person’s belief that mourning is something he ought to do, something just and appropriate (*detrahere illam opinionem maerentis, qua se officio fungi putet iusto atque debito*)”. Therefore, at the start of the earliest of his *consolationes*, Seneca feels the need to take a definite

position: he prepares to “do battle” (*confligere*) with Marcia’s grief and to “repress” (*continebo*) her irrational tears, thus siding with the most ‘radical’ Stoic thinkers. Recent scholarship has already shown that, far from being inconsistently ‘eclectic’, Seneca’s Stoicism is remarkably close to the thought of Cleanthes and other early Stoics (see e.g., Inwood 2005, 83–94, 115–120, 157–160, on the issues of advice-giving, benefaction, and natural theology). The insights of other schools and the most popular arguments of the notoriously heterodox consolatory tradition (Kassel 1958, 49–103) are consciously integrated into a rigorous – albeit gradual – course in Stoic philosophy, which “may be put on a par with the therapy against passions that appears in the rest of Seneca’s work” as “it aims not merely at curing a past wound, but at a lasting transformation of the soul” (Setaioli 2014, 242). In addition, it should be recognized that Seneca’s overtly harsh approach to Marcia’s *maeror* follows the rhetorical conventions of the so-called σχῆμα πλάγιον – “the well-known rhetorical mode ostensibly pursuing a goal opposite to the one expected by the listener or reader” (Setaioli 2014, 241–244) – which can be applied after the initial impact of grief has subsided (Konstan 2017). In fact, the same rhetorical mode resurfaces in Seneca’s consolatory letter to Marullus (*Ep.* 99.1–2). A self-conscious *aemulatio* of the strategies of ‘didactic coercion’ that characterize ancient didactic poetry (from Hesiod to Lucretius, and beyond) may also be implied (Tutrone 2020, 179–184).

magis iam ex consuetudine quam ex desiderio: Insofar as it has lasted for three years (*tertius iam praeterit annus*), Marcia’s sorrow (*dolor* = λύπη) has turned into what the Stoics called a “proclivity” (εὐκαταφορία, εὐεμπρωσία), that is, into an established tendency to grief (ἐπιλυπία). At this stage of human emotional development, the limits of the natural feeling of longing (*desiderium* = πόθος, ἕμερος) – which the Stoics define as “the desire to see someone who is not yet present” (*desiderium libido eius, qui nondum adsit, videndi*, Cic. *Tusc.* 4.21 = *SVF* 3.398; cf. also *SVF* 3.394) – have been dangerously overstepped. Given its customary, ingrained nature (*ex consuetudine*), Marcia’s “erroneous judgement in the process of desire” (δόξαν ἐπιθυμίας, Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.10e) – which is made evident by her willingness to use grief as an emotional surrogate of her son (*in filii locum*) – can also be compared to what the Stoics call a “sickness” (νόσημα). Certainly, it is an established habit (ἔθος), to borrow the terminology of Epictetus (*Diss.* 1.27.3–6). See the introduction to the present section for further details.

1.6 *adlocutiones amicorum*: As attested already in Catullus (38.5–7), *adlocutio* was the Latin translation for the Greek παραμυθία – which Cicero preferred to render as *consolatio* (Traina 1987, 9–11; *pace* Ficca 2019). Clearly, Marcia’s friends had delivered the kind of comforting address for which Catullus asked

in vain. In Seneca's day, the *adlocutio* was one of the social rituals surrounding the experience of death, for in writing to his mother (*Helv.* 1.3), Seneca blames "the words drawn from conventional, everyday consolation" (*verbis ex vulgari et cotidiana sumptis adlocutione*). Since Rome was a patriarchal society, "the influence of great men related to the bereaved" (*auctoritates magnorum et adfinium virorum*) was expected to play a particularly important role in shaping (and making effective) the performance of such a ritualized speech act as the *adlocutio*.

studia: The classical *topos* of the consolatory power of literary studies had been made popular among Roman readers by Cicero's works, especially by the *Tusculan Disputations* written after Tullia's death – though Cicero knew and used the *topos* long before the troubles of his later years (see e.g., *Arch.* 16, and Baraz 2012, 86–95). Since Cremutius Cordus was both an orator and a historian, Marcia could see her love of literature as "a good inherited from her father" (*hereditarium et paternum bonum*), as Seneca notes echoing the language of Roman family law. However, since the cultivation of traditional literary genres such as historiography had proved ineffective, Seneca had one more reason to recommend the therapeutic use of Stoic philosophy.

naturale remedium temporis: The idea that "time is the healer of all necessary evils" (πάντων ἰατρὸς τῶν ἀναγκαίων κακῶν χρόνος ἔστιν) – in the words of Menander (fr. 677 Kock) – had deep roots in folk wisdom (and Menander's often quoted maxim can hardly be taken as its first appearance, *pace* Manning 1981, 58). As for Roman culture and the special experience of grief, already in Terence's *Self-Tormentor* (420–425) a sorrowful father, Menedemus, describes the belief that "time takes away human grief" (*diem adimere aegritudinem hominibus*) as a popular adage (*quod volgo audio dici*). Like Marcia, Menedemus (whose son will turn out to be alive) goes against popular wisdom and protests that "his sorrow grows greater every day on his son's account" (*cotidie augescit magis de filio aegritudo*; cf. also Cic. *Att.* 3.15.2). Seneca does not refrain from reviving this *topos* in his *consolationes*, but when writing to Lucilius about the death of Flaccus (*Ep.* 63.12), he proves perfectly aware that the recurring dictum about the healing power of time is "hackneyed" (*pertritum*) as "it has been repeated by everybody" (*ab omnibus dictum est*). Yet – Seneca implies – it is worth repeating the old adage if this can remind a grieving addressee that "in the case of a sensible person, to grow weary of sorrowing is the most shameful cure" (*turpissimum est in homine prudente remedium maeroris lassitudo maerendi*) – for rational decision-making (*consilium*) is faster and more effective than the mere passing of time (*tempus*). The same argument recurs in Sulpicius Rufus' consolation to Cicero (*Fam.* 4.5.6), and in Cicero's letter to Titius (*Fam.* 5.16.6), on which see Wilcox

2012, 41–45. As a Stoic, Seneca may have agreed with Cicero (*Tusc.* 3.74) that “what heals grief must be the length of time one spends thinking that no evil is in fact present, not the passage of time in and of itself” (*cogitatio igitur diuturna nihil esse in re mali dolori medetur, non ipsa diuturnitas*). In fact, the Stoics seem to have held that “as time passes, most people will cease to view a given circumstance as recent and will accordingly cease to respond to it as such, even while still believing that circumstance to have been a bad thing for themselves” (Graver 2002, 119). However, a person of particular temperament like Marcia (or Cicero’s Artemisia, *Tusc.* 3.75) can continue to regard the same event as ‘recent’ (πρόσφατος = *recens*) for a much longer period. Cf. also Kassel 1958, 38–39, 86–87; Konstan 2013a, 144–145.

1.7 *Tertius iam praeterit annus*: To the Roman reader, this sounded like a transgression of customary norms set up by the community for the sake of social order. A Roman funerary law reported by Paulus, *Sent.* 1.21.2–5, 8–14 (= Bruns 1909, 2.334–335; cf. also Shelton 1998, 94; Konstan 2006, 252–258) prescribed that “parents and children over six years of age can be mourned for a year, children under six for a month. A husband can be mourned for ten months, close blood relations for eight months. Whoever acts contrary to these restrictions is placed in public disgrace” (*parentes et filii maiores sex annis anno lugeri possunt, minores mense: maritus decem mensibus et cognati proximioris gradus octo. Qui contra fecerit, infamium numero habetur*). According to Manning 1981, 2, 33, Seneca’s “statement enables us to set a *terminus post quem* for the work of 39/40”, as Marcia “had earlier republished her father’s histories, something not permitted until the beginning of Gaius’ principate” (37 BC). Yet, Metilius could have died *before* Marcia republished Cremutius’ *Annales*, for Seneca has just made clear that Marcia found no comfort in *studia*. The argument of Griffin 1976, 397, that a date after 39 is likely in view of the laudatory references to Tiberius (3.2; 15.3), “which would not be prudent before 39 (Cass. Dio 59.16.4; Suet. *Calig.* 30.2)”, is more persuasive.

***sibi ius mora fecit*:** The language of Roman law is used to illustrate the Stoic theory about the origin of deeply held beliefs and emotional habits. From the Twelve Tables to Justinian, the *ius civile* recognized that – under specific circumstances – Roman citizens acquired the right of ownership to land and goods after a period of control or use. In fact, this was the general principle underlying the practices of *usucapio* and *longi temporis praescriptio* (Arruñada 2020, 273–274). By way of metaphor, Seneca argues that a delayed response (*mora*) of the legitimate right holder – i.e., Marcia, who, like every human, is entitled by nature to rational self-determination – has enabled another subject –

i.e., grief (*luctus*), metaphorically personified – to establish squatter’s rights (*ius*) on Marcia’s most valuable possession: the faculty of rational judgement. For the Stoics, every emotion arises from the assent (συγκατάθεσις) given by reason to false impressions (φαντασῖαι). Repeated assent to false impressions leads – in Seneca’s words – to the point where “the emotion thinks that it would be shameful to stop” (*ut putet turpe desinere*) and “the unhappy mind finds an unnatural pleasure (*prava voluptas*) in grief” (cf. Epict. *Diss.* 2.18.5–11). In other words, “the Stoic claim is that emotions are habit-forming” (Graver 2007, 151). As Cicero (*Leg.* 1.33) puts it, “such is the corruption of bad habits that it extinguishes the sparks, so to speak, given by nature, and that contrary vices arise and become established” (*tantam autem esse corruptelam malae consuetudinis, ut ab ea tamquam igniculi exstinguantur a natura dati, exorianturque et confirmantur vitia contraria*). This is the cognitive process commonly referred to as “perversion (or distortion) of reason” (διαστροφή τοῦ λόγου, cf. *SVF* 3.228–236; Grilli 1963). Seneca’s use of the adjective *pravus* captures precisely the idea of the deformation (διαστροφή) of a natural being.

1.8 *primis temporibus*: Ancient medicine had long established the principle that the right kind and amount of treatment must be applied at the right time. In the Hippocratics, the sense of *καιρός* is both temporal (‘the right moment’) and quantitative (‘the due measure’), both aspects being essential for the quality and effectiveness of the treatment (Schiefky 2005, 219–220; Bartos 2015, 58). This medical principle – which has roots in the traditional moral concepts of *καιρός* and *μέτρον* – is echoed in Aeschylus’ claim (*PV* 378–380) that “words are the physicians of a temper sick with anger (ὀργῆς νοσοῦσης εἰσὶν ἰατροὶ λόγοι) [. . .] if one softens the heart at the right time (ἐάν τις ἐν καιρῷ γε μαλθάσση κέαρ)”. Significantly, in his discussion of the different therapeutic approaches to grief (*Tusc.* 3.76), Cicero translates Aeschylus’ lines to show that “with sicknesses of the mind, no less than with those of the body, it is important to choose the right moment for treatment” (*sumendum tempus est non minus in animorum morbis quam in corporum*). Seneca’s point that it is easier to heal a wound of the soul when it is fresh is a sub-variant of this motif and has a history of its own, ranging from Theognis’ *Elegies* (1.1133–1134) to Roman oratory (Cic. *Phil.* 5.31) and didactic (Ov. *Rem. am.* 91–92). Like Chrysippus (*ap.* Cic. *Tusc.* 4.63), who had made ample use of medical analogies, Seneca (*Helv.* 1.2) is aware that “overhasty treatment” (*inmatura medicina*) can be equally detrimental, for grief should be “softened by time to submit to remedies” (*ad sustenenda remedia mora mitigatus*; cf. also Ov. *Rem. am.* 123–134). As we learn from Seneca’s *Epistles* (64.8), the art of the philosopher-healer lies precisely in compounding several remedies (*medicamenta*), watching for the right time of their application (*eligas tempus*), and applying the

proper treatment in each case (*adhibeas singulis modum*). In the case of Marcia's exceptionally prolonged grief, a kind of 'shock therapy' is needed, for "chronic diseases must be fought more vigorously" (*vehementius contra inveterata pugnandum est*).

frangedus est: This is not just metaphorical language. As a Stoic, Seneca holds that the human soul is a blend of different physical elements (Wildberger 2006a, I, 211–241). Consequently, every emotion has a material existence on which the advisor-healer must try to impact – by mild or harsh means, depending on the case.

2–5 Teaching Through *Exempla*: Octavia, Livia, and Areus

Considering the special condition (ἔξις) and disposition (διάθεσις, cf. Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.98) of Marcia as a grieving Roman woman, a member of the Julio-Claudian elite, and the learned daughter of a traditionally minded historian, Seneca chooses to devote the first two chapters of his *admonitio* to the contrasting examples of Octavia (2) and Livia (3), Augustus’ sister and wife. The *consolatio* allegedly delivered to Livia by her house philosopher Areus of Alexandria serves as an impressive *pendent* (4–5).

Like Marcia, both Octavia and Livia had lost a young promising son (Marcellus and Drusus, respectively). Both belonged to the *nobilitas* and the milieu of the court. Most importantly, Marcia had been an intimate friend of Livia (*Iuliae Augustae, quam familiariter coluisti*, 4.2) – who is, of course, the good side of Seneca’s diptych. The writer’s focus on the rhetoric of exemplarity at the beginning of his *consolatio* can be explained in several ways (some of which are explicitly mentioned in the text): first and foremost, the persuasive potential of “famous names” (*nomina clara*) and “moral prestige” (*auctoritas*), which is especially remarkable in the case of people whose “mind is captivated by beautiful appearances” (*animum ad speciosa stupentem*, 2.1); second, Marcia’s familiarity with literary *studia* (cf. above, 1.6), particularly with the genre of historiography, for which exemplarity was a defining quality at least from the fourth century BC onwards (Rüpke 2016, 94; cf. also Pownall 2004); third, the cognitive and behavioral impact of role models that have a special affinity with the addressee’s situation in terms of gender, age, and social status (*maxima et sexus et saeculi tui exempla*, *Marc.* 2.2; Shelton 1995; Wilcox 2006).

Above all, Seneca’s discourse of exemplarity relies on his consistent position in the Stoic debate about the usefulness of practical advice-giving and parænetic examples. Unlike Aristo of Chios, who contended against Zeno that individual and situational precepts are useless (insofar as the interiorization of first principles is the only way to think and act wisely), Seneca points out – with Cleanthes and Chrysippus – the importance of “situationally sensitive thinking within the framework of a general rule which is defeasible but at least partly entrenched” (Inwood 2005, 113; see also Mitsis 1993). In *Ep.* 95.65–73, Seneca endorses Posidonius’ claim that not only precept-giving (*praeceptio*), but even persuasion (*suasio*), consolation (*consolatio*), and encouragement (*exhortatio*) are necessary. The philosopher-trainer should offer an “illustrative description of each virtue” (*descriptio cuiusque virtutis*) based on the construction of a concrete example (*exemplar*). If Cato embodies the Stoic ideal of the “brave

and great man” (*vir fortis, magnus vir*, *Ep.* 95.69; cf. Isnardi Parente 2000) that is bound to appeal to an upper-class male audience, Livia is presented to Marcia as an *exemplar* of the rational moderation of maternal grief – a necessary intermediate stage on the path towards Stoic impassiveness (Abel 1967, 21–22). In choosing his *exempla*, Seneca draws on the traditional Roman discourse of family exemplarity and national memory, for he “does not abandon exemplarity as a form of moral discourse and argumentation, but rather proposes revisions to the conventional mode of witnessing and judging, to put exemplarity on a footing consistent with Stoic ethics more generally” (Roller 2018, 266).

2.1 a *praeceptis incipere*: The practice of beginning with instructions (*praecepta*) and ending with examples (*exempla*) is described by Seneca as a conventional pattern (*mos*) of ancient paraenesis (παραινέσις = *monitio/admonitio*) – as a habit of those “who want to give advice” (*qui monere aliquem volunt*) – and Roman readers know that the *consolatio* is a sub-genre of paraenesis – or, as Seneca himself puts it at *Ep.* 94.39, one among the ancient *monitionum genera*. Still, we should be wary of interpreting ancient paraenesis as a clear-cut literary genre with rigid rules, definite models, and unalterable practices – which would turn Seneca’s overt inversion of the traditional order into a kind of cultural anomaly. Rather, it should be acknowledged that “no text falls as a whole under a distinct literary genre of paraenesis”, for what we find in Greek and Roman texts is, more properly, the reflection of a set of *practices* displaying paraenetic *style* (Engberg-Pedersen 2004, 61). Scholarship of the past few decades has convincingly argued for a flexible and inclusive understanding of such traditional discourse modes as ‘diatribe’ (Stowers 1988) and consolation (Scourfield 2013) that have been typically associated with the rhetoric of paraenesis. Since the use of moralizing *exempla* is part of an even broader universe of hortatory communication – of the realm of παράκλησις or *adhortatio*, which Seneca himself puts on a more general level than the *admonitio* (*Ep.* 94.25) – any interpretation of the *praecepta-exempla* sequence (and of Seneca’s inversion) in strictly normative terms would be unfounded. What Seneca aims to do is simply to “change a conventional pattern” (*mutari morem*) for the sake of moral utility (*expedit*). Particularly eloquent is the author’s use of the word *mos*, which, as shown by the paradigmatic case of the *mos maiorum* (Bettini 2011, 87–130), captures “a fluid notion that could even support opposed courses of action” (Arena 2015, 221). What we know about the structure of ancient consolations – considering, for instance, Cicero’s *Consolatio ad se* (Baltussen 2013b, 74–76), Plutarch’s *Consolatio ad uxorem* (Baltussen 2009, 82) and *ad Apollonium* (Boys-Stones 2013a), and Seneca’s later *consolationes* – does not support the idea of a rigid division between ‘preceptive’ and ‘exemplifying’ sections (*pace* Manning 1981, 35). But it is, of course, common practice to begin

an exhortation with general instructions that are later illustrated through circumstantial arguments and examples. This is also the logic underlying the Stoic system of ultimate principles (*decreta*), detailed precepts (*praecepta*), and edifying examples (*exemplaria*), which is discussed by Seneca in *Epistles* 94 and 95 (Annas 1993, 98–108). In the *ad M.*, just as at the outset of the *Consolation to Helvia* (1.2) and in most of his tragedies, Seneca engages in a relationship of *aemulatio* with an established (yet malleable) heritage of earlier traditions – which is precisely what his Roman audience expects from a committed philosopher who is also a self-conscious writer (cf. Seneca’s own theory in *Ep.* 84; 79.6, with the comments of Conte 2017, 10–11).

aliter cum alio agendum est: A straight-forward enunciation of the principle of adaptability that lays the foundations of Hellenistic and Roman psychagogy. As Glad 1995, 65, points out, “the need for adaptability surfaces among moralists in their discussion of different students, a discussion which recognizes the diversity of character types and dispositions and the need for the teacher to be attentive in light of that diversity and have at his disposal a versatile and flexible approach”. Both Seneca (*Ep.* 75.8–18; 72.6–11) and Musonius Rufus (fr. 5.6–7 Hense = 36.1.1–2 Lutz; cf. also Cic. *Tusc.* 4.32) describe different kinds of students, with different needs and levels of expertise, and the opposition between *quosdam* and *quibusdam* in our passage is emblematic of the same line of argument. However, this is by no means a Stoic prerogative, for other philosophical schools (e.g., Phld. *De lib. dic.* fr. 57; 63–65 Olivieri; Plut. *De rect. aud.* 46C–47E) and even rhetorical teachers (e.g., Quint. *Inst.* 2.8.1–14; 2.2.1–15; 2.3.10; 2.4.8–12) agree on the importance of an adaptable and, so to speak, ‘stochastic’ approach to the transmission of contents. On the ancient conception of philosophical pedagogy as a “stochastic art” (τέχνη στοχαστική), that is, as a flexible and conjectural form of knowledge comparable to medicine, see Gigante 1983, 62–67.

quosdam ratio ducit: The most advanced students of wisdom, who are already guided by reason (*ratio* = λόγος).

nomina clara et auctoritas: Those who need to be confronted with famous names and prestige are, in Stoic terms, novices in need of training. Marcia seems to have been one of them. Still, this kind of philosophical downgrading is purposely obscured by the positive meaning of both expressions in ordinary Latin usage (cf. Abel 1967, 21: “der Glanz, der von der Worten *auctoritas* und *clara nomina* ausgeht, verbirgt das für den römischen Blick”). As an aristocratic lady with illustrious ancestors, and as a reader of historical works, Marcia must have been especially sensitive to the influence of the glorious models of the past. This, in turn, offers Seneca an excellent opportunity to engage in an intertextual

dialogue with the genres of historiography and biography – for in Seneca’s day both Octavia and Livia were old and famous enough to be mentioned in the *Annales* and the *Vitae*, and yet they were near-contemporaries of Marcia.

animus ad speciosa stupentem: I accept Traina’s 1987, 52, emendation of the MS reading *stupenti* to *stupentem*. The dative *stupenti* does not fit the context of the sentence and is likely to be the result of the attraction exercised by the following *tibi*. Reynolds 1977 accepts Gertz’s emendation *stupentibus*, thus joining the participle with *quibusdam*. But even so the syntax remains odd. And, above all, Gertz’s correction obscures Seneca’s psychological insight, which centers around the notion of rational soul (*animus* = ψυχή λογική, as in *Ep.* 41.8 and in *Ben.* 2.29.5; cf. Grimal 1992, 147–149). The use of prestigious *exempla* is intended to ‘constrain’ or ‘occupy’ (*liberum non relinquat*) a mind (*animus*) which is still subject to the charm of external appearances, that is, which is unable to process in a rationally correct way the presentations arising from sensation – what the Stoics call φαντασῖαι and Seneca (*Ep.* 113.18) translates as *species*. Seneca’s use of the adjective *speciosus* (comparable to the Greek φανταστικός) points exactly in this direction. Since Marcia’s mind is at a stage of cognitive development in which it “contemplates with wonder” (*stupentem*) the beauty of external appearances (*speciosa*), the teacher will start his re-education course by trying to turn this inclination into an opportunity for self-improvement. In the Senecan battle for self-command which sees three imperative forces at work – “the *animus*, the passions, and the self-directed commands of the agent” (Star 2012, 40, building on Inwood 1985, 62) – some people may need a sort of first-aid therapy based on the interiorization of role models, for “instead of attaching oneself (semi-)permanently to a philosophical school and teacher, one carries one’s role models around with oneself, not even in writing, but in the interiority of one’s soul” (Reydams-Schils 2011, 301).

2.2 *maxima et sexus et saeculi tui exempla*: Manning 1981, 36, points out that “Seneca’s use of almost contemporary *exempla* is unusual but part of his common practice”. We are now in a better position to understand the reasons for this apparently peculiar choice as we know that Seneca’s use of *exempla* – *qua* role models – relies on a conscious revision of the Roman discourse of exemplarity – or, more precisely, on an attempt “to conjoin Stoic virtue, which does not depend on observers, with Roman *virtus*, which does” (Wilcox 2006, 76). Like other ancient traditions of *Seelenleitung*, Stoicism recommends tailoring each paraenetic strategy to the addressee’s personality and specific situation (Glad 1995, 53–71). Considerations of gender (*sexus*) and age (*saeculum*) play an especially relevant role in swaying Seneca’s choice towards two figures of the recent past – which have

“the advantage of providing the addressee with a model whose character she has already personally approved and whose image she can call on as the type of internal mentor recommended by Seneca in *Epistles* 11 and 25” (Shelton 1995, 171). A useful point of comparison is provided by Seneca’s *Consolation to Polybius*, whose concluding section (15–17) focuses on *exempla* drawn from Rome’s recent history (Kurth 1994, 167–231).

se tradidit ferendam dolori: The syntax of the phrase, with its gerundival construction, emphasizes the passive attitude of Octavia’s mind, which had become enslaved to the emotion of grief (*dolor*). The idea that the emotions can subjugate the mind to the point that they acquire “absolute ownership” of one’s inner life (*dominium*, which means much more than *possessio* in Roman legal thought: e.g., Gaius, *Inst.* 2.7) is expressed also through the introductory description of Livia, who, by contrast, “did not allow her sufferings to control her for long” (*non dedit longum in se malis suis dominium*). In fact, Livia is said to have “recovered her usual frame of mind very soon” (*cito animum in sedem suam reposuit*). In Epictetus’ summary of Stoic epistemology (*Diss.* 2.18.8–11), this is the moment in which “the desire ceases, and the governing faculty of the mind regains its authority” (πέπαυται ἡ ἐπιθυμία καὶ τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν ἡμῶν εἰς τὸ ἐξαρχῆς ἀποκατέστη). Epictetus has a good explanation also for the “sickness” (ἀρρώστημα) causing Octavia’s passivity: in Stoic theory, if one develops a desire with the related emotion (πάθος), and one applies no remedy (θεραπεία), “the mind returns no more to its former state, but being again excited by the corresponding appearance, it kindles at the desire more quickly than before (οὐκέτι εἰς ταῦτα ἐπάνεισιν, ἀλλὰ πάλιν ἐρεθισθὲν ὑπὸ τῆς καταλλήλου φαντασίας θάπτων <ἢ> πρότερον ἐξήφθη πρὸς τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν); and by frequent repetitions at last becomes callous (τούτου συνεχῶς γινομένου τυλοῦται)”. Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 75.11–12.

pari casu: Octavia and Livia suffered the same misfortune since at different times their respective sons were regarded as prospective heirs of Augustus (*utraque spe futuri principis certa*) – who nonetheless “seems to have often resisted designating a sole heir in either a public or private sense” (Severy 2003, 70).

maiore damno: It is hard to understand why Seneca considers Livia’s loss greater than that of Octavia – especially because Livia’s other son, Tiberius, ultimately succeeded Augustus, whereas Marcellus was Octavia’s only son (Manning 1981, 36). The most convincing (albeit partial) explanation is that Drusus was older and more famous than Marcellus at the time of his death, for he had already achieved the consulship as well as several military victories (Favez 1928, *ad loc.*). Certainly, in *Ep.* 99.2 Seneca blames Marullus for grieving so much at the death of “a little child of unknown promise” (*filius incertae spei*,

parvulus) and asks him provocatively what he would do if he had lost an adult friend. In Roman culture, grief was expected to be proportional to the merits and the manifest personal potential of the deceased (cf. e.g., Cic. *Amic.* 9). In this respect, no help can be found in Wilcox’s 2006, 86, comment that “it may well have been easier for a status-conscious Roman aristocrat of either gender to overcome grief for a child who had distinguished himself in military service than for one who died out of the limelight”. This explanation would in fact support the view that Octavia suffered a *maius damnum*. Roller 2018, 227–228, makes the (perhaps over-sophisticated) claim that “the raw number of deaths is the same, but the proportional harm is greater (the whole being smaller)”.

2.3 Octavia: Octavia the Younger or Minor (c. 69 BC – 11 BC), daughter to Gaius Octavius and Atia, was Augustus’ older sister (Suet. *Aug.* 4.1). She was directly and intimately involved in the political machinations of her powerful brother, who rewarded her with public honors. Octavia’s first husband, Gaius Claudius Marcellus, gave her two daughters and a son, the highly promising Marcellus, who became Augustus’ intended heir but died too young – to Octavia’s great grief. What we know about Octavia’s life, and what the Augustan propaganda made everyone believe, contribute to creating the image of an ideal Roman woman, acting as an obedient sister, a loyal wife, and a thoughtful mother (Wood 2001, 27–35; Hemelrijk 2004a, 99–103; Hallett 2020). Suetonius (*Iul.* 27.1) tells us that “in order to retain his relationship and friendship with Pompey” (*ad retinendam autem Pompei necessitudinem ac voluntatem*), Julius Caesar – who was Octavia’s uncle – offered him Octavia in marriage, although she was already the wife of Gaius Marcellus. The matrimonial agreement was not reached, and Octavia remained married to Marcellus until his death, but the episode is emblematic of the Julio-Claudian arrangement (and dissolution) of marriages for political reasons. Indeed, when in 40 BC Octavia was asked by her brother to marry Marc Antony, in an attempt to cement the triumvirate after the Treaty of Brundisium, she dutifully obeyed (App. *B. Civ.* 5.64). Octavia strove to bring about peace (with the so-called Treaty of Tarentum) when Octavian and Antony quarreled in 37 (App. *B. Civ.* 5.93–95; Cass. Dio, 48.54.1–5). She remained loyal to Antony even when he left her to live with Cleopatra *more uxorio* (Suet. *Aug.* 69.2), and Antony’s humiliating treatment of such an exemplary wife – who had even travelled to Greece to help her unfaithful husband in 35 – was shrewdly used by Octavian for his propaganda (Plut. *Ant.* 53.1–2, 54.1–3). After her official divorce in 32 and Antony’s suicide in 30, Octavia made a public show of her maternal virtues by raising not only her own children, but also Antony’s children by Fulvia (Antony’s first wife) and by Cleopatra (Plut. *Ant.* 87.1–3). Augustus obtained for his sister – as well as for his wife Livia – the right to be represented in public statuary and the privilege of

sacrosanctitas, the legal protection usually reserved for the tribunes (Cass. Dio, 49.38.1–2). He dedicated to Octavia the elegant and politically meaningful *porticus Octaviae* (Suet. *Aug.* 29.4; Liv. *Per.* 140.2; Cass. Dio, 49.43.8, who, however, confuses the *porticus Octaviae* with the earlier *porticus Octavia*, restored in 33 BC). Remarkably, the *porticus Octaviae* hosted a library dedicated to Marcellus by his loving mother (Suet. *Gram. et rhet.* 21; Plut. *Marc.* 30) and several works of art (Plin. *HN* 34.31; 35.139; 36.15), among which was a statue of Cornelia, the resilient mother of the Gracchii that Seneca holds up to Marcia’s admiration (see below, note on *Marc.* 16.3, *Scipionis filiam, Gracchorum matrem*). In Augustan discourse, Cornelia and Octavia became “paired paragons of wifely and maternal achievement”, and “together with Livia, perfectly symbolized the newly legislated porousness of the old boundary between the civic and domestic spheres” (Roller 2018, 225). It is no accident that, when discussing Augustus’ architectural politics, Suetonius (*Aug.* 29.4) mentions together “the porticoes of Livia and Octavia, and the theatre of Marcellus” (*porticus Liviae et Octaviae theatrumque Marcelli*), which was dedicated by Augustus to his nephew in 13 BC (Cass. Dio, 54.26.1). Livia, Octavia, and Marcellus formed a single cohesive pantheon, which had been deliberately created by the Augustan strategy of memorialization and moralization (Milnor 2005, 53–64). And it is this unity that Seneca intends to breach with his characteristically “selective and inventive reception of Augustan culture” (Ker 2015, 109; cf. also Berno 2013). For even if it is true that in the *ad M.* Octavia does not appear “as a mere caricature of ‘wrong’ behavior”, but rather as a proof of the fact that “even people admired as virtuous may find it difficult to accept bereavement” (Shelton 1995, 172), it is undeniable that “Seneca overtly exhorts his addressee to emulate the virtuous comportment of Livia in particular, but also of Cornelia at a greater remove, and to shun the vicious comportment of Octavia” (Roller 2018, 228–229). Here as well as elsewhere, “Seneca revisits the foundational narratives of the principate and asserts control over the moral and literary discourses by which the principate can be seen to have variously succeeded or failed” (Ker 2015, 120).

Livia: It is no surprise that the first model of womanly and maternal virtue offered to Marcia is Livia Drusilla (58 BC – 29 AD), Augustus’ revered and influential wife, whose self-conscious status as “a public example of acceptable female behavior” (Wood 2001, 77) has been the subject of several scholarly works (e.g., Purcell 1986; Frascchetti 2001; Barrett 2002; Burns 2007, 5–24; Dennison 2010). Although Livia had been the daughter and wife of two of Octavian’s fiercest enemies (for her father, M. Livius Drusus Claudianus, committed suicide after fighting on the side of Caesar’s assassins at Philippi, and her husband, Tiberius Claudius Nero, backed Marc Antony’s wife and brother in the Perusian War), she

played a central role in the construction of Augustan ideology, with its emphasis on civic concord, domesticity, and religious traditions. Although Horace (*Od.* 3.14.5) and Ovid (*Trist.* 2.161–164) go so far as to praise Livia as a sort of *matrona univira* (the ritually pure woman who had been married only once), and the empress’s *pudicitia* is celebrated in the visual language of Augustan portraits (Bartman 1998) and coins (Harvey 2020), it was common knowledge that both Livia and Octavian had precipitously divorced from their earlier marriages to start their union in 38 BC. Octavian had been married twice before falling in love with Livia and “divorced his second wife Scribonia the very day she bore him a daughter” (Σκριβωνίαν τεκοῦσάν οἱ θυγάτριον ἀπεπέμψατο αὐθημέρον, Cass. Dio 48.34.2). The ambitious triumvir – who was certainly eager to marry a woman from one of Rome’s noblest families – “took Livia Drusilla from her husband Tiberius Nero, although she was pregnant at the time” (*matrimonio Tiberi Neronis et quidem praegnantem abduxit*, Suet. *Aug.* 62.2). If we trust Tacitus’ hostile account, Octavian even “mocked the pontiffs asking them if, with a child conceived but not yet born, Livia could legally wed” (*consulti per ludibrium pontifices an concepto necdum edito partu rite nuberet*, Tac. *Ann.* 1.10). The child Livia was expecting at the time of his second wedding was Drusus, whose untimely death Seneca commemorates here (see note on *Marc.* 3.1, *Drusum*). She had already given her first husband another son, Tiberius, who was later adopted by Augustus and succeeded him in 14 AD. Despite Tacitus’ uncomplimentary remarks and innuendoes – which include the description of Livia as “a burdensome mother for the state and a burdensome stepmother for the house of the Caesars” (*gravis in rem publicam mater, gravis domui Caesarum noverca*, *Ann.* 1.10) – Augustus’ matrimonial choice proved to be a wise one, both for himself and his political project. Not only did Augustus “love and esteem Livia in a unique and persevering way” (*dilexitque et probavit unice ac perseveranter*, Suet. *Aug.* 62.2) – for he allegedly died kissing and talking to his wife (Suet. *Aug.* 99.1) – but he also found in Livia one of his most insightful advisors. When lecturing Nero about the art of ruling, Seneca credits Livia with persuading Augustus of the strategic importance of clemency (*Clem.* 1.9.6–7; cf. also Cass. Dio 55.14–22, and Severy 2003, 149). Seneca may be indulging in anecdotal narratives, but there is literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence that Livia consistently supported the Augustan discourse on family, society, and gender roles. Even Tacitus acknowledges that “in domestic virtue she was of the old school” (*sanctitate domus priscum ad morem*, *Ann.* 5.1). Livia’s influence remained considerable under the reign of her son Tiberius (as she survived Augustus and died in 29 AD at the venerable age of eighty-six). Interestingly enough, Seneca may have had especially good reasons for praising Livia and Drusus during Gaius’ principate. The new emperor had no blood connection with Augustus but was a direct descendant of both Livia and Drusus (who were

his great-grandmother and grandfather, respectively). It was Gaius who delivered Livia's funeral oration from the rostra when Tiberius – who clearly regarded his mother's presence as cumbersome – refused to pay his last respects to the dowager empress (Tac. *Ann.* 5.1–2). After Agrippina's banishment the young Caligula lived with Livia (in *Liviae Augustae proaviae suae contubernio mansit*, Suet. *Cal.* 10.1), and after Tiberius' death he ensured the payment of all the bequests requested by the *Augusta* – which Tiberius had annulled (Cass. Dio 59.2.4). The memory of Augustus' exemplary wife was kept alive also by a *senatus consultum* which heaped upon Caligula's grandmother Antonia “whatever honors Livia Augusta had ever enjoyed” (*quidquid umquam Livia Augusta honorum cepisset*, Suet. *Cal.* 15.2; cf. also Cass. Dio 59.3.4). It is thus clear that “Livia was a prominent figure within Gaius' life at the time, clearly recognizing her craftiness and social significance” (Adams 2007, 109). This holds true even if one does not endorse Stewart's 1953, 83 n. 82, unlikely claim that Seneca's glorification of Tiberius' mother reflects “the change in Caligula's attitude toward Tiberius and that side of his ancestral line”. Indeed, it is sufficient to consider that Seneca was aware of Livia's friendship with, and ascendancy over, Marcia (see below, *Marc.* 4.2) to obtain a fuller picture of the genesis of Seneca's *exempla*.

Marcellum: Marcus Claudius Marcellus (42 BC – 23 BC) was the son of Gaius Claudius Marcellus and Augustus's sister Octavia. In 25 BC, he married Augustus' daughter Julia, which made him a likely successor to the *princeps* – apparently in competition with Agrippa (Suet. *Aug.* 66.3; Cass. Dio 53.31–32; Vell. Pat. 2.93.2). Therefore, Seneca can use a hendiadys describing Augustus as Marcellus' maternal uncle (*avunculus*) and father-in-law (*socer*). There were high hopes of what Marcellus could achieve as he had served with distinction during the Cantabrian Wars and had already become pontiff and curule aedile despite his young age (Tac. *Ann.* 1.3). In 23 BC, he fell ill of the same disease from which Augustus had just recovered (Cass. Dio 53.30.4) and died at Baiae, in Campania, at the age of eighteen (*sexto decimo anno*, according to Serv. *ad Aen.* 6.861, which seems more reliable than Propertius' *vicesimus annus*, 3.18.15). Marcellus' fate is lamented by Vergil in the famous ‘prophecy scene’ during Aeneas' visit to the underworld (*Aen.* 6.860–886) and by Propertius in an *epikedion* which is replete with consolatory motifs (3.18; see Walls 2018, 164–186 for a joint analysis of Virgil's and Propertius' texts). There is clear evidence that Marcellus' death and grandiose funeral became a moment of public mourning (Flower 1996, 240–243), which is an important reason behind Seneca's mention of him and Octavia in our *consolatio*. Since Marcellus' memory was honored by several monuments – such as the theater bearing his name on the border of the Forum Holitorium, the library in the *porticus Octaviae* (see above, note on *Marc.* 2.3, *Octavia*), and the imperial mausoleum which, sadly

enough, his burial inaugurated (Cass. Dio 53.30.5) – Seneca’s use of the metaphors of building, anchoring, and foundation in this commemorative portrait sounds strongly allusive. In a sort of crescendo, we hear that, like an old building, Augustus had begun to “lean” (*incumbere*) on Marcellus; that all the burden of imperial power tended to “bend back” (*reclinare*) on the young heir, who was “ready to bear (*laturum*) whatever burdens his uncle wanted to place (*inponere*) and, so to speak, build (*inaedificare*) on him”; at the acme of the metaphor, we are told that Augustus was a kind of Vitruvian architect recognizing in Marcellus the qualities of those “foundations that would not buckle under any weight” (*nulli cessura ponderi fundamenta*). The bitter lesson of Seneca’s allusivity – which is perfectly in line with the *vanitas vanitatum* of the consolatory tradition – is that the stone on which Augustus wanted to build his house ultimately turned into a miserable, albeit glorious, tombstone.

2.4 per omne vitae suae tempus: In Seneca’s reconstruction, Octavia’s mourning lasted twelve years – from the death of Marcellus in 23 to her own death in 11 BC. Like Marcia, Octavia stepped out of the familiar and culturally sanctioned norms through individualistic, self-serving behavior.

ullas admisit voces salutare aliquid adferentis: Just like Marcia (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 1.6, *adlocutiones amicorum*), Octavia rejected the traditional practice of *adlocutio* (= παραμυθία) – to which the noun *voces* and the participle *adferentis* jointly allude.

intenta in unam rem et toto animo adfixa: Here, too, the static and self-absorbed attitude of Octavia, with her whole mind fixed on one thing, recalls the Stoic diagnosis of emotional ‘sickness’ (ἀρρώστημα) and ‘callousness’ (τύλωσις). See above, note on *Marc.* 2.2., *se tradidit ferendam dolori*.

2.5 Oderat omnes matres: Another meaningful consequence of the ‘perversion’ (διαστροφή) of Octavia’s reason brought about by grief – which, like all emotions, is unnatural and particularly detrimental to the bonds of human community arising out of the process of οἰκείωσις. The same pattern of inversion is reflected in Octavia’s preference for darkness (*tenebris*) and solitude (*solitudini*).

in Liviam maxime furebat: A concrete effect of Octavia’s repudiation of natural human bonds is her hatred for a family member, her sister-in-law Livia. Similarly, Octavia is said to have “detested (*exosa*) the excessive brilliance of her brother’s greatness and good fortune” and to have turned her back on her children (*liberis*) and grandchildren (*nepotibus*) – which resulted in “an insult to all her family” (*contumelia omnium suorum*). The verb *furebat* suggests that

another destructive emotion put down roots in Octavia’s mournful soul: deranged anger or *furor*, whose connection with grief is well-known to Seneca and his Stoic sources. In one of his consolatory letters (*Ep.* 63.13), Seneca warns that “nothing becomes offensive so quickly as grief” (*nulla res citius in odium venit quam dolor*). And at the outset of his work *On Anger* (*Ira* 1.2–3), he upholds the Stoic position (based on Aristotle) that anger (*ira/ὀργή*) is the desire to repay suffering – the concept of suffering being rendered not only as *iniuria* (= ἀδικία), but also as *dolor* (= λύπη), one of the Latin words for grief. Grief can result in anger, but in Seneca’s *On Anger* we also hear that “anger can bring grief to a father” (*ira patri luctum attulit, Ira* 3.5.4). In the Senecan corpus, the most instructive embodiment of this connection between the two emotions is Medea’s *dolor furiosus* (*Med.* 139–140; cf. also 445–446). Very much like Octavia’s emotions, “Medea’s emotions – love, grief, anger – fundamentally involve the assignment of high value to external objects and situations” (Nussbaum 1994, 449). As far as historical evidence is concerned, Octavia’s animosity may have been due to the suspicion that “Livia caused the death of Marcellus” (ἡ Λιουία τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ Μαρκέλλου ἔσχευ, Cass. Dio 53.33.4). But throughout her long life Livia was also accused of poisoning Gaius and Lucius (*Tac. Ann.* 1.3; Cass. Dio 55.10a.10), Agrippa Postumus (Cass. Dio 57.3.6), and Augustus himself (*Tac. Ann.* 1.5; Cass. Dio 56.30.1–2) – although such claims are more likely to mirror the Roman elite’s discomfort with Livia’s unprecedented status, a discomfort that could easily draw on an earlier tradition of *matronae veneficae* (Purcell 1986, 95).

carmina celebrandae Marcelli memoriae composita: Together with the suppression of social and family ties, the paradoxical annihilation of memory and its cultural practices – for the sake of an individualized, disruptive form of memory – is the dominant theme of this section of Seneca’s *consolatio*. Prominent among the poems written to celebrate Marcellus were Book 6 of Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Propertius’ elegy 3.8. But given the great impact of Marcellus’ funeral and memorial buildings (see above, note on *Marc.* 2.3, *Marcellum*), it is reasonable to think that other *carmina* (now lost) were composed. According to Donatus (*Vita Verg.* 32), when Virgil gave his first reading of the *Aeneid* for Augustus, he selected Books 2, 4 and 6. Octavia was present at the reading, and when Virgil reached the verses about her son, “she fainted and was revived with difficulty” (*defecisse fertur atque aegre focolata est*). Servius (*ad Aen.* 6.861) says that both Augustus and Octavia “wept beyond measure and ordered Virgil to stop” (*fletu nimio imperarent silentium*). Such accounts are, of course, consistent with Seneca’s claim that Octavia “rejected” (*reiecit*) any poetic celebration – or even any mention (*avocari*) – of Marcellus. By contrast, it is hard to believe that Octavia gave Virgil 10,000 sesterces per verse (*dena sestertia pro singulo versu*) in

return for his tribute – as an interpolation in the manuscript of Donatus suggests (see White 1993, 148, n. 64).

aliosque studiorum honores: Seneca’s mention of other literary tributes to Marcellus – apparently written in prose as they are not included among the *carmina* mentioned earlier – might support the conjecture of Cichorius 1922, 281–282 (followed by Bowersock 1965, 34), that Athenodorus of Tarsus (the Younger, as distinct from the Elder who served as librarian at Pergamum), a Stoic philosopher and advisor of Augustus, addressed a *consolatio* to Octavia. However, the only evidence for this conjecture is Plutarch’s statement (*Publ.* 17.8) that Athenodorus used the surname Postumus for Mucius Scaevola “in his book addressed to Octavia, the sister of the emperor Augustus” (ἐν τῷ πρὸς Ὀκταουίαν τὴν Καίσαρος ἀδελφῆν). The *exemplum* of Mucius Scaevola – which Seneca himself uses repeatedly (e.g., *Prov.* 3.5.1; *Ep.* 66.51; 98.12) – could be appropriate for a *Consolatio ad Octaviam* resembling the *Consolatio ad Liviam* that Seneca ascribes to another court philosopher of Augustus, Areus of Alexandria (see below, 4–5). Yet, “we cannot exclude the possibility that Athenodorus’ philosophical treatise bore no relation to Octavia’s life whatsoever; it may have been dedicated to her during his stay in Rome as a mark of esteem or because of her possible interest in (Stoic) philosophy” (Hemelrijk 2004a, 101).

3.1 *Drusum*: Claudius Drusus (38 BC – 9 BC), “who at first had the forename Decimus and later that of Nero” (Suet. *Claud.* 1.1), was the son of Livia and her first husband Tiberius Claudius Nero. When Livia divorced Tiberius Nero and married Octavian, she was in her sixth month of pregnancy (ἐκύει μῆνα ἕκτον, Cass. Dio 48.44.1) – a fact that, together with Tiberius Nero’s decision to leave Octavian as guardian to the boy, aroused the suspicion that Octavian was the real father of Drusus. Both Suetonius (*Claud.* 1.1) and Dio (48.44.5) report the popular saying – originally written in Greek and thus reflecting the humor of educated circles – that “in three months’ time come children to the lucky” (τοῖς εὐτυχοῦσι τρίμηνα παιδία). The brother of emperor Tiberius and the father of emperor Claudius, Drusus covered himself with military glory and was regarded as a possible heir of Augustus, although he allegedly “made no secret of his intention of restoring the republican form of government, whenever he should have the power” (*nec dissimulasse umquam pristinum se rei publicae statum, quandoque posset, restitutum*, Suet. *Claud.* 1.4). As a matter of fact, his career was favored by Augustus, who “loved him so dearly while he lived that he always named him coheir along with his sons” (*tanto opere et vivum dilexerit, ut coheredem semper filiis instituerit*, Suet. *Claud.* 1.5). Like his brother Tiberius, Drusus was allowed to seek office five years before the legal age and became

praetor in 11 and consul in 9 BC. Seneca’s claim that Drusus “would have made a great emperor and was already a great commander” (*magnum futurum principem, iam magnum ducem*) seems indeed to reflect the *communis opinio* at the time. Particularly renowned were Drusus’ victories against the Alpine tribes of the Raeti and Vindelici in 15 BC – which were celebrated by Horace in *Od.* 4.4 and 14 – and his campaigns in Germany in 12–9 BC. Cassius Dio (54.32–33, 55.1–2) offers a detailed account of Drusus’ bold expeditions against such barely known Germanic tribes as the Sugambri, the Frisians, the Cherusci, the Chatti, the Visurgis, and the Suebi – expeditions which brought Drusus and his sons the title of Germanicus (Γερμανικός μετὰ τῶν παίδων ἔπονομασθεῖς, Cass. Dio 55.2.3). Admittedly, Drusus’ conquests did not last much longer than the time he spent in making them. But the very fact that he reached the river Elbe had a strong symbolic impact (very much like Caesar’s invasion of Britain in 55–54 BC), and Suetonius (*Claud.* 1.2) could proudly assert that Drusus “was the first of Roman generals to sail the northern Ocean” (*Oceanum septemtrionalem primus Romanorum ducum navigavit*), establishing beyond the Rhine the huge canals which bore his name (the so-called *fossae Drusinae*). The same national pride underlies Seneca’s statement here that Drusus “had entered deep into Germany (*intraverat penitus Germaniam*) and had set up Roman standards where there was scarcely any knowledge of the Romans’ existence”.

ibi signa Romana fixerat: Seneca’s celebratory narrative, with its reference to the setting up of military standards (*signa*), may be an embellishment of historical reality, for Dio (55.1.3) reports that when Drusus reached the Elbe, he tried to cross this river, but failing in the attempt, “set up trophies and withdrew” (τρόπαια στήσας ἀνεχώρησε).

In expeditione decesserat: According to Dio (55.1.3–5) and Suetonius (*Claud.* 1.2–3), once arrived at the Elbe, Drusus met a barbarian woman of superhuman size who forbade him to push his victory further. For Dio, the mysterious woman also announced Drusus’ death, which was confirmed by other ominous portents. Legends apart, it is a fact that Drusus died on his way back to the Rhine of “some disease” (νόσῳ τινί, Dio 55.1.4; *morbo*, Suet. *Claud.* 1.3), which Livy’s more accurate account (*Per.* 142) explains as the consequence of “a fracture caused by the fall of his horse on his leg” (*ex fractura, equo super crus eius conlapso*). Drusus seems to have died thirty days after the accident. Tiberius was sent by Augustus to Drusus’ sickbed and found him still breathing, but the only thing he could do was to bring his brother’s body to Rome. See also Plin. *HN* 7.84.

cum veneratione et pace mutua: No other source confirms Seneca’s claim about the Germans’ respectful behavior during Drusus’ illness. Again, this may be

Seneca’s embellishment of the truth, for Dio (54.33.3) says that Drusus’ soldiers were decimated by the ambushes of the enemy and that the Germans would have annihilated them, “had they not conceived a contempt for them, as if they were already captured and needed only the finishing stroke” (εἰ μὴ καταφρονήσαντες σφῶν ὡς καὶ ἐαλωκότων καὶ μιᾶς ἐπικοπῆς ὄντων). Seneca may thus have turned contempt into *veneratio* for eulogistic purposes.

funus triumpho simillimum: For his victories in Germany, Drusus was expected to celebrate an *ovatio* – not a *triumphus* in the proper sense – on his return to Rome. According to Suetonius (*Claud.* 1.3), while still alive, he received the *ovandi ius*, the honor of an ovation, with the insignia of triumphing generals (*triumphalia ornamenta*). It should be recognized that “the *ovatio* and the triumph on the Alban Mount were both ranked below the *triumphus* proper” as “the ovation was often given to a general who, though he had been successful in war, had failed to fulfil the traditional requirements for a *triumphus*” (Östenberg 2009, 48). Dio (55.2.1–5) says that plans were under way to honor Drusus with the same kind of celebrations that had just been offered to Tiberius, who had defeated the Dalmatians and Pannonians and had celebrated “an equestrian triumph” (τά ἐπὶ τοῦ κέλητος ἐπινίκια), that is, an *ovatio* (during which the general rode on a horseback and not on a chariot). In Seneca’s commemorative reconstruction, Drusus’ real *triumphus* was his funeral cortège. The writer’s depiction of “a tremendous sense of loss among the citizens, the provinces, and the whole of Italy” (*ingens civium provinciarumque et totius Italiae desiderium*), with many pyres blazing throughout the country (*tot per omnem Italiam ardentibus rogis*), is a rhetorical amplification of the events described by Dio (55.2.1), according to whom Drusus’ body was first carried by the centurions and military tribunes and after that by “the foremost men of each city” (διὰ τῶν καθ’ ἐκάστην πόλιν πρώτων). Suetonius adds that these were “the leading men of the free towns and colonies” (*municipiorum coloniarumque primores*), who carried the body to Rome, where it was met and received by “the decuries of scribes” (*scribarum decuriae*), that is, by the quaestor’s clerks better known as *scribae quaestorii*. See also *Cons. ad. Liv.* 25–30, 169–178.

3.2 *gratumque extremi sermonem oris*: The hypallage underlies the fact that Livia could not listen to her son’s last words or *novissima verba* – to which ancient culture attached great symbolic importance, as shown by the role of Livia herself in the anecdotal tradition surrounding Augustus’ death (cf. Suet. *Aug.* 99). Seneca’s readers may well have perceived the parallel.

longo itinere: According to Pliny (*HN* 7.84), Tiberius travelled day and night to reach Drusus in Germany, covering a distance of two hundred miles

(*CC passuum*). We know from Tacitus (*Ann.* 3.5) that “in the bitterest of the winter” (*asperrimo hiemis*) Augustus went in person to Ticinum (the modern Pavia) and, “never stirring from the corpse, entered Rome along with it” (*neque abscedentem a corpore simul urbem intravisse*).

tumulo: Drusus’ ashes were buried in the Mausoleum that Augustus had built in 28 BC in the northern part of the Campus Martius, between the via Flaminia and the Tiber (Strabo 5.3.8; Suet. *Aug.* 100.4). Tiberius pronounced a eulogy in the Forum, while Augustus delivered a funeral oration at the Circus Flaminius (Cass. Dio 55.2.2–3; Suet. *Claud.* 1.5). Augustus conceived of his Mausoleum as a dynastic burial place and opened to the public the groves and walks surrounding the building – so as to strengthen the bond between the imperial family and the Roman people after the manner of Hellenistic kings (see e.g., Davies 2010, 13–27). However, not all the members of the Julio-Claudian family were buried in the Mausoleum: Augustus’ daughter Julia as well as Caligula and Nero were deemed unworthy of such a privilege, and their exclusion from the Mausoleum stood as a posthumous act of disinherison from the Julian *gens*. In 9 BC, Drusus was the third family member to enter the Mausoleum after Marcellus (23 BC: Cass. Dio 53.30.5; Verg. *Aen.* 6.873) and Agrippa (12 BC: Cass. Dio 54.28.5). Augustus (14 AD: Cass. Dio 56.42; Tac. *Ann.* 1.8) and Livia (29 AD: Cass. Dio 58.2.3) will follow him, and the Mausoleum will become the official burial site of the Roman emperors until the time of Hadrian – who was the first emperor to be buried elsewhere because the *Mausoleum Augusti* was full (ἐπεπλήρωτο, Cass. Dio 69.23.1).

simul et illum et dolorem suum posuit: Livia’s impassiveness is exaggerated to make her as similar as possible to the model of the Stoic sage, whose perfect control of the emotions should be Marcia’s final goal. Seneca will soon soften his position and reassure Marcia that he does not intend “to dry a mother’s eyes on the very day of the funeral” (*ut ipso funebri die oculos matris exsiccem*, 4.1). Livia herself will be depicted more realistically “in her initial turmoil, when a person’s misery is at its most recalcitrant and extreme” (*in primo feruore, cum maxime impatientes ferocesque sunt miseriae*, 4.2). There is no inconsistency here (*pace* Favez 1928, *ad loc.*), but a carefully modulated strategy of persuasion, for in the introductory presentation of the *exempla* of Octavia and Livia, the basic Stoic distinction between the fool and the wise person needs to be established in clear terms. Soon thereafter, a more gradual approach (and a careful distinction between emotions and ‘pre-emotions’) will be adopted to involve the addressee in the therapeutic process and guide her step by step to the highest ideal of virtue.

aut honestum erat Caesare aut aequum <altero filio s>alvo: The reading of **A** (*aequo malvo*) makes no sense and is clearly a product of textual corruption. Reynolds 1977 (followed by Hine 2014, 9, in his translation) writes *aequum salvo*, which means that Livia “mourned no more than was honorable (*honestum*) or just (*aequum*) while Caesar was still alive (*Caesare salvo*)”. Yet, as Traina 1987, 56, points out, this emendation creates a contrived syntactic structure, with an unnatural separation of the words forming the ablative absolute – which, among other things, does not fit Seneca’s *usus scribendi*. By contrast, Gertz’s emendation *aequum altero filio salvo* explains much more satisfactorily Seneca’s use of a disjunctive structure (*aut . . . aut*) and of two different adjectives: Livia “mourned no more than was honorable while Caesar (i.e., Augustus) was still alive or just while her other son (i.e., Tiberius) was alive”. The difference between the socio-ethical values of *honestum* and *aequum* offers crucial support for Gertz’s supplement. As a Roman woman and wife, Livia was expected to preserve her own and her husband’s dignity (*honor*, whence *honestum*) by continuing to fulfil her duties towards the emperor (*Caesar*), the family, and the state. At the same time, as a mother, she had a special obligation to treat her children fairly and equally, that is, according to the principle of *aequitas* (= ἐπιείκεια). Seneca has just blamed Octavia for neglecting her surviving children (2.5) and will later blame Marcia for the same reason (16.5–6). The argument resurfaces in *Helv.* 18.2, as it effectively conjoins the Roman ideal of *aequitas* with the Stoic virtue of ἐπιείκεια in a unified framework of family ethics (Gloyn 2017, 50–53). We should not allow textual corruption to mar Seneca’s distinction between *honestum* and *aequum*, with its attendant moral and cultural precepts.

cum memoria illius vixit: This is the *pars construens* of Seneca’s argument on grief and memory: the latter can become part of everyday life (*vixit*) and enrich human communication processes (*celebrare, repraesentare, loqui, audire*) only if the former has not become a source of sadness (*tristem*). What Seneca puts forth is an instructive Stoic paradox showing that the active preservation (*retinere*) and revisitation (*frequentare*) of memory relies on the acceptance of death as well as on the awareness of the irrecoverability of the past.

3.3 *probabilis*: The primary meaning of the adjective *probabilis* here is “worthy of approval”. Seneca invites Marcia to choose between the *exempla* of the wise and the unwise person, thus moving to the final stage of his psychagogic process, which consists in rational discrimination and moral deliberation. However, one can also perceive an echo of Cicero’s dialectic method of inquiry, with its quest for epistemic ‘probability’, which skillfully blended Academic and Stoic elements going back to the legacy of Socrates (Lévy 1992, 104–105, Nicgorski 2016,

97–101). As Cicero explains in *Div.* 2.150, the Academy inherited from Socrates its tendency “to put forward no conclusions of its own (*iudicium suum nullum interponere*), but to approve those which seem to approach nearest to the truth (*ea probare, quae simillima veri videantur*); to compare arguments (*conferre causas*); to draw forth all that may be said in behalf of any opinion (*quid in quamque sententiam dici possit, expromere*); and, without asserting any authority of its own, to leave the judgement of the inquirer wholly free (*nulla adhibita sua auctoritate iudicium audientium relinquere integrum ac liberum*)”. Seneca – who shares Cicero’s rhetorical background and interest in philosophical comparisons – is now urging Marcia to think and act as a free inquirer. From a Stoic perspective, Marcia’s choice pertains to the level of ‘ordinary’ or ‘mean’ duties (*communia officia, media officia* = καθήκοντα) – which, quite significantly, Cicero (*Off.* 1.8) defines as the kind of *officia* for the performance of which “an adequate reason” (*ratio probabilis*) may be offered.

triste matribus omen occures: The recurring argument about the breaking of social bonds is reinforced through an allusion to popular religious thought. Roman religion attached great importance to the observation and interpretation of signs (*omina*), good and bad, and divinatory beliefs exerted a strong influence on socio-political imagery (Santangelo 2013, 1–9). Seneca is primarily appealing to Marcia’s culturally ingrained values and fears, but his re-use of the vocabulary of divination is consistent with the Stoic defense of this traditional practice, from Zeno to Chrysippus and Posidonius (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.149), a defense based on the view that “there is a divine power pervading the lives of humans” (*esse quandam vim divinam hominum vitam continentem*), a “principle” (*ratio*) directing all premonitory signs (Cic. *Div.* 1.118). See e.g., Iles Johnston 2008, 12–15, and Seneca’s own treatment of *divinatio* and cosmic ‘sympathy’ in *QNat.* 2.32–51, with the comments of Williams 2012, 295–334.

voluptates honestas, permissas: By withdrawing from correct reason, the grieving mind cannot experience the honorable pleasures deriving from true joy (χαρά) – which is one of the three ‘good’ emotions (εὐπάθειαι) admitted by the Stoics (Graver 2007, 51–59). If Marcia follows the example of Octavia, she will miss the three sub-species of joy described by ps.-Andron. *De pass.* 6 (= *SVF* 3.432), all of which stand on a much higher level than vulgar pleasure (ἡδονή): the “enjoyment” (τέρψις) appropriate to the benefits one has (ταῖς περὶ αὐτὸν ὠφελείαις), the “mirth” (εὐφροσύνη) aroused by the deeds of a sound-minded person (ἐπὶ τοῖς τοῦ σώφρονος ἔργοις), and the “cheerfulness” (εὐθυμία) resulting from an amusing way of life (ἐπὶ διαγωγῇ) as well as from the complete absence of desire (ἀνεπιζητησίᾳ παντός). Like Lucilius, Marcia

should learn the (perhaps unexpected) lesson that “true joy is a serious matter” (*verum gaudium res severa est, Ep. 23.4*). Cf. Wolfsdorf 2013, 182–213.

vivere nolle, mori non posse: This is one of the several points in Seneca’s oeuvre where the notion of will – problematic as it is – is given central prominence. With her stubbornness, Marcia is avoiding moral choice and is turning away from her “rational nature, which is known for its better inclinations” (*animo tuo in meliorem noto partem*). Depending on the circumstances, the Stoic sage can recognize that freely ending his or her life – i.e., “exiting life in accordance with reason” (εὐλογος ἐξαγωγή, cf. *SVF* 3.757–768) – is the best ethical option, for “there can be moral and political reasons, related to obligations to other people, the state and the gods, to commit suicide” (Long 2019, 199). But this is not Marcia’s case. And, above all, Marcia lacks two fundamental qualities needed for moral deliberation which are among Seneca’s main contributions to the development of the Western idea of the will: “self-control, especially in the face of natural human proclivities to precipitate and passionate response”, and “causally efficacious judgement or decision in the process of reacting to provocative stimuli” (Inwood 2005, 155; cf. also Frede 2011, 31–88, and Maso 2013).

3.4 *moderatus, mitius*: The use of the adjective *moderatus* and of two comparative forms in the discussion of Livia’s *exemplum* introduces the Academic and Peripatetic doctrine of the “moderation of the emotions” (μετριοπάθεια), which is mentioned more explicitly shortly thereafter, when Marcia is taught that “even grieving has its own form of modesty” (*est enim quaedam et dolendi modestia*). As Abel 1967, 21–22, has shown, Seneca’s reception of this non-Stoic doctrine in the first section of his *consolatio* is based on “psycho-pedagogical considerations” (“erziehungspsychologische Überlegungen”), for the recourse to μετριοπάθεια is intended to make Marcia “more tractable” (“zugänglicher”) in view of her later initiation into the Stoic ideal of the eradication of the emotions (ἀπάθεια) – an ideal which is more clearly reflected in Seneca’s second series of *exempla* (see below, *Marc.* 12–16). Since several ancient authors – such as Plutarch, *Cons. Apoll.* 102C-D, and Cicero, who endorses Crantor’s criticism of Stoic *indolentia* (*Tusc.* 3.12) and questions Antiochus’ incorporation of Stoic impassiveness into Platonic thought (*Acad.* 2.135) – present the notions (and practices) of μετριοπάθεια and ἀπάθεια as mutually incompatible, one might wonder whether Seneca has pushed his argument too far, with serious detriment to his Stoic orthodoxy. As is well-known, Seneca has often been labeled ‘eclectic’, especially with regard to his relationship to Platonism (see e.g., Grimal 1970, Donini 1970). However, there seems to be no solid ground for bringing into question Seneca’s adherence to Stoic philosophy, for not only is a static idea of Stoic orthodoxy historically

and methodologically unfounded (Inwood 2005, 23–25; Edwards 2009, 14–15), but a gradual and, so to speak, ‘developmental’ view of moral progress (προκοπή) as a product of exercise (ἄσκησις) is deeply rooted in the Stoic tradition. If, as is likely, Marcia was not an adherent of Stoicism at the start of her consolatory therapy, Seneca is faithfully following the pedagogical method of Chrysippus (*ap. Origen, C. Cels.* 1.64; 8.51 = *SVF* 3.474; cf. Tieleman 2003, 166–168), who “in his *Therapeutics Concerning the Emotions* (ἐν τῷ περὶ παθῶν θεραπευτικῷ) wishes to cure the emotions as pressing on and troubling the human soul (βουλόμενον θεραπεῦσαι τὰ πάθη ὡς κατεπείγοντα καὶ ἐνοχλοῦντα τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ψυχὴν), preferably by means of arguments which seem sound to him (προηγουμένως μὲν τοῖς δοκοῦσιν αὐτῷ ὑγιέσι λόγοις) but in the second and third instance even by means of doctrines which he does not hold (δευτέρως δὲ καὶ τρίτως κἂν τοῖς μὴ ἀρέσκουσι τῶν δογμάτων)”. For, in Chrysippus’ words, “one should not at the moment of inflammation of the emotions bother about the doctrine which has previously won over the person troubled by the emotion (οὐ περιεργαζόμενον ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς φλεγμονῆς τῶν παθῶν τὸ προκαταλαβὸν δόγμα τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ πάθους ἐνοχλούμενον): the available therapy should by no means at an inconvenient time be wasted on overthrowing the doctrines which have occupied the soul first (μὴ πως τῇ ἀκαίρῳ περὶ τὴν ἀνατροπὴν τῶν προκαταλαβόντων τὴν ψυχὴν δογμάτων σχολῆ ἢ ἐγχωροῦσα θεραπεία παραπόληται)”. After three years of relentless mourning, Marcia was certainly in need of this kind of ‘first-aid therapy’, which was Chrysippus’ “adaptation of the strict position of Cleanthes” (Inwood 1985, 300 n. 110). Indeed, in Cicero’s *On Ends* (*Fin.* 3.20 = *SVF* 3.188), the Stoic Cato provides a five-stage account of the process by which the human mind achieves “what can truly be called good” (*quod vere bonum possit dici*). And even if, technically speaking, “προκοπή is not situated at the level of the *vere bonum*” but “at the level of what remains essentially bad” (Roskam 2005, 25; cf. also Inwood/Donini 1999, 727–730), it was a major concern of Stoic teachers to guide their students step by step onwards from ignorance to knowledge by selecting the strategies more suitable for each situation. One should not forget that, like most ancient thinkers, the Stoics considered “both λόγος and ἄσκησις necessary components of philosophy conceived as a τέχνη” (Sellars 2003, 115, building on the lesson of Foucault 1986a, 1988 and Hadot 1995, 2002). And, by definition, ἄσκησις – that is, the spiritual exercise of the wisdom seeker – required gradual training and practice, as attested by both Seneca’s arrangement of his *Epistles* and Epictetus’ dissertation on progress (περὶ προκοπῆς, *Diss.* 1.4). Interestingly, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria – whose attitude towards the Stoa oscillated between rejection, re-interpretation, and passionate defense (Niehoff 2018, 225–241) – put the concepts of μετριοπάθεια and ἀπάθεια on a sliding scale and argued that in the Hebrew Bible Moses symbolized the ‘apathic’ sage, whereas

Aaron embodied the ‘man in progress’ (προκόπτων/*proficiens*) who had learned to moderate his emotions (*Leg. All.* 3.128–134). It is more than reasonable for Seneca to try to transform Marcia into Aaron, so as to lead her to the enjoyment of Moses’ calm at a later stage (*pace* Dillon 1983, 515).

malum: This indeclinable interjection is primarily attested in comedy (see e.g., Plaut. *Capt.* 531; *Men.* 793) but is more generally representative of common oral usage and informal language (a good example is Cic. *Off.* 2.53, reporting Philippus’ reproach to his son Alexander). Seneca’s purpose is to “maintain a conversational tone” (Manning 1981, 43) and hence to keep close to the conventional pattern of the genre of philosophical dialogue.

mala sua †non† augere: The reading *non* in **A** makes no sense. It may suffice to follow the *codices recentiores* of the **γ** tradition and write *mala sua augere* (so Hine 2006, 37 n. 13) – which implies that Seneca considers the choice of “punishing oneself for one’s misfortune and adding to one’s own miseries” pure folly (*amentia*). However, one cannot rule out the possibility that *augere* formed an antithesis with another verb which is now lost – possibly because of a homeoteleutic omission, as suggested by Traina 1987, 56. This leaves the door open to such ingenious emendations as those of Koch (*non <minuere sed> augere*) and Waltz (*non <frangere sed> augere*). Koch’s supplement can in fact find support in Seneca’s *usus scribendi*: see *Const. Sap.* 5.4; *Ep.* 66.16; *QNat.* 7.17.3.

dolendi modestia: A translation of the Greek μετριόπθεια, with a special focus on grief (*dolere* = λυπεῖν). On Seneca’s conscious re-use of this Academic and Peripatetic doctrine, see above, note on *moderatus*, *mitius*.

nominatus cogitatusque: Seneca alludes to the linguistic-cum-cognitive process which takes in place in Marcia’s mind when Metilius’ name is uttered and the propositional content associated with it occurs in thought (*occurrit*). In Stoic logic, “language is an expression of rationality” insofar as “reason shapes the articulation of our thoughts, just as it shapes what we have to say” (Bronowski 2019, 216). Central to this theory is the notion of λεκτόν or “verbal expression”, which is “what subsists in accordance with a rational presentation” (τὸ κατὰ φαντασίαν λογικὴν ὑφιστάμενον, *Diog. Laert. Vit.* 7.63). Roughly speaking, λεκτά “are placed between mere vocal sounds or written sentences on the one hand and the objects in the world on the other” (Ierodiakonou 2009, 509): they are the meanings underlying our thoughts and words. It is Seneca’s hope that, through appropriate instruction, the verbal expression associated with the name of Metilius in Marcia’s mind will become again a source of cheerful and joyful inspiration (*hilarisque et cum gaudio*) – a source of εὐπάθεια rather than of πάθος.

4.1 *ad fortiora praecepta*: This and other similar passages are sometimes cited to argue that Seneca tends to avoid the extremes of early Stoic rigorism (see e.g., Pohlenz 1965, I, 430–431; Traina 1987, 58). Certainly, in *Ep.* 13.4 Seneca is aware that, when addressing a *proficiens* at an early stage of her moral development, it is better not to speak “in the Stoic strain” (*Stoica lingua*) but to employ “a milder style” (*summissiore*) and to drop “great-sounding words, although they are true” (*magna verba, sed vera*). Yet, this is also Chrysippus’ position (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 3.4, *moderatus, mitius*). The aim of Seneca’s repeated rejection of “inhuman insensibility” (*inhumana duritia, Helv.* 16.1; cf. *Ep.* 99.15) is not to refute the views of the early Stoa but to show that Stoic ἀπάθεια, properly understood, is not unyielding, cruel indifference insofar as it entails the experience of good emotions (εὐπάθειαι) and pre-emotions (προπάθειαι). Seneca’s claim here that it is impossible to “dry a mother’s eyes on the very day of the funeral” (*ipso funebri die oculos matris exsiccem*) is precisely intended to introduce the Stoic doctrine of pre-emotions, which will be dealt with in more detail in chapter 7.

***Ad arbitrium tecum veniam*:** Another instance of Seneca’s skilled use of Roman legal terms to introduce philosophical and moral concepts (see above, note on *Marc.* 1.1., *tam inimico iudice, tam invidioso crimine*). Marcia’s choice between the *exempla* of Octavia and Livia is presented as an *arbitrium*, not as a *iudicium*, in order to underline Marcia’s status as a rational subject endowed with free will (cf. e.g., *Clem.* 2.7.3, with Bellincioni 1984, 179). As Seneca himself points out in *Ben.* 3.7.5, whereas a Roman *iudex* is constrained by the statement of legal principle (*formula*) that imposes on him limits he must not violate (*certos, quos non excedat, terminos*), an *arbiter* is guided only by his “integrity, which is free and unfettered” (*libera et nullis adstricta vinculis religio*), and “can add or subtract things from the case at will” (*et detrahare aliquid potest et adicere*); he can steer his judgment (*sententiam suam*) not according to arguments based on law or justice (*lex aut iustitia*), but according to the strength of his sense of decency or his sympathies (*humanitas aut misericordia*). Seneca’s statement in *On Benefits* that an *arbiter* is bound only by his sense of integrity may involve a certain dose of “rhetorical exaggeration” (Griffin/Inwood 2011, 196 n. 3). But the legal distinction between the *arbiter* (who had greater personal discretion) and the *iudex* (who was appointed by the praetor and had to follow the *formula* given him in reaching his judgement) is confirmed by Cicero (*Rosc. Com.* 12–13) and seems to have remained valid until the early Imperial period (when usage ceased to strictly respect this distinction: see Bablitz 2016, 242–243). Since an *arbiter* was typically chosen by disputants to put an end to their disagreement, Marcia is now called to adjudicate the case of Octavia and Livia after conducting a *quaestio*

(*hoc inter nos quaeretur*), that is, a rational investigation. Having served de facto as *patronus* of Livia, Seneca tries to influence Marcia’s verdict by providing a tendentious definition of the subject of the dispute in his final *peroratio* – for Marcia is invited to decide “whether grief should be great (*magnus*) or unending (*perpetuus*)”, which implies that, in contrast to prolonged mourning (Octavia’s experience), intense suffering at the death of a love one (Livia’s experience) is entirely legitimate.

4.2 *Iuliae Augustae*: Livia was officially called Julia Augusta after Augustus’ death in 14 AD. Augustus’ will specified Tiberius and Livia as heirs, “Livia to be adopted into the Julian family and the Augustan name” (*Livia in familiam Iuliam nomenque Augustum adsumebatur*, Tacitus *Ann.* 1.8.1; cf. also Suet. *Aug.* 101, and the other sources discussed in Barrett 2002, 307–308). Marcia’s friendship with Livia (*quam familiariter coluisti*) may have dated back to the period before Livia’s adoption as Marcia was probably born around 25–20 BC (see Griffin 1976, 397, and Shelton 1995, 170 n. 30; *contra* Manning 1981, 2, who suggests a birthdate of 15 BC “or even later”). Seneca’s use of Livia’s later and more prestigious name – recalling her membership in the *gens Iulia* as well as her unprecedented, almost sacred status as *Augusta* – is not aimed at offering any chronological clue. Rather, it is a conscious attempt to influence Marcia’s decision by providing the *exemplum Liviae* with further *auctoritas*. This is not surprising since Suetonius – who, as a biographer, is more bound than Seneca to observe chronological order in prosopography – uses inconsistently the name Livia Augusta (*Calig.* 15.2; 23.2; *Galb.* 5.2; *Oth.* 1.1).

***Areo, philosopho viri sui*:** Areus of Alexandria was Augustus’ court philosopher, friend, and advisor. Since the time of the Republic, powerful Romans with an interest in philosophy and Greek culture had been in the habit of employing in their household an educated Greek who served as a teacher and *directeur de conscience*. A case in point is Diodotus, the Stoic who lived with Cicero for many years and trained him intensely in dialectic and other subjects (*Cic. Brut.* 309; cf. also *Luc.* 115; *Att.* 2.20.6). Suetonius (*Aug.* 89.1) reports that Augustus became versed in various forms of learning (*eruditione varia repletus*) by dwelling together (*per contubernium*) with the philosopher Areus and his sons Dionysius and Nicanor. Suetonius’ use of the word *contubernium* – which captures the ancient view of philosophy as everyday practice, cohabitation, and exchange – finds an echo in the emperor Julian’s letter to the Alexandrians (*Ep.* 111 Bidez = 47 Wright), where Areus is mentioned as “Augustus’ companion” (τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ συμβιωτῆς) and “comrade” (ἑταῖρος; see also *Caes.* 27.326B: φίλον καὶ συμβιωτήν). From the same letter we learn that Areus was from Alexandria and persuaded Octavian to

spare his hometown after the battle of Actium in 31 BC (cf. also Cass. Dio 51.16.3; Plut. *Ant.* 80; *Praec. ger. reip.* 814D). According to Plutarch (*Ant.* 81.5), Areus proved much less lenient when it came to Caesarion, the son of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra, for he wittily advised Octavian to kill his potential rival. Augustus' high esteem of Areus is confirmed by Themistius (*Or.* 5.63d; 10.130b; 10.145b) and by Agrippa's speech in Dio (52.36.4). From a passage in Aelian (*VH* 12.15) it might also be inferred that Areus was a member of Maecenas' coterie. What is certain is that Augustus did not hesitate to entrust him with political power, for not only was Areus appointed procurator (διοικητής) of Sicily (Ps.-Plut. *Reg. Imp. Apophth.* 207b), but he was also offered the much-coveted post of prefect of Egypt – which he allegedly turned down (Julian, *Ad Them.* 11.265C: τὴν Αἴγυπτον ἐπιτροπεύσαι παρητήσατο). An unprejudiced appraisal of the extant sources reveals that Areus was a Stoic just like Athenodorus of Tarsus (the Younger) – whom Augustus revered “as his preceptor or rather as his father” (καθάπερ παιδαγωγὸν ἢ πατέρα μᾶλλον, Julian, *Caes.* 27.326b; see also above, note on *Marc.* 2.5, *aliosque studiorum honores*) – and Theon of Alexandria, who is said by the *Suda* (Θ 203) to have succeeded Areus as Augustus' house philosopher. Significantly, when the Stoic Marcus Aurelius (8.31) places before his mind's eye a sketch of the most important figures at “Augustus' court” (Αὐλὴ Αὐγούστου), the only philosopher he mentions is Areus. Most importantly, two manuscripts of Diogenes Laertius (Index Parisinus gr. 1759; Laurentianus 69.13; cf. Edelstein/Kidd 1989, 21) preserve an index with the names of the Stoic philosophers that were discussed by Diogenes in the now lost section of Book 7 of his *Vitae* (i.e., after Chrysippus): the index is arranged in chronological order and mentions Areus after the two Athenodoruses (the Elder and the Younger) and Antipater (the teacher of Cato Uticensis) but immediately before Cornutus (who, like Seneca, lived under Nero). Since there is no other philosopher Areus known from this period, there can be no doubt that the Stoic cited in Diogenes' list is the friend and advisor of Augustus. As Göransson 1995, 203–213, has shown, the identification of Areus of Alexandria with the doxographer Arius Didymus – an admittedly enigmatic figure, to which a strikingly heterogeneous corpus of fragments is attributed – was accepted for more than one century only on the basis of the authority of Diels 1879, 80–88 (see e.g., Hahn 1990). Building on Meineke 1859, 565, Diels created the image of a Platonizing Stoic summoned by Augustus from the ‘eclectic’ philosophical community of Alexandria (*ex hac Alexandrinorum eclecticorum societate Arius in contubernium Augusti vocatus est*). This is the portrait that inspired Waszink's 1947, 38*, description of Areus as a Stoic with “a leaning towards the Sceptics” and – even more interestingly for our present concerns – Manning's 1981, 45, claim that Seneca's Areus “appears to have belonged to the Academy, but collected the teachings of a number of schools in keeping with the eclectic tendencies of the

first century BC”. Indeed, not only has the question of Hellenistic ‘eclecticism’ undergone thorough revision (Dillon/Long 1988, Hatzimichali 2011), but it should be recognized that there is no textual evidence of any connecting links between Areus of Alexandria, the advisor of Augustus (who is always referred to as ‘Areus/Arius’, never ‘Arius Didymus’), and the doxographer excerpted by Stobaeus and Eusebius (who is always referred to as ‘Arius Didymus’ or ‘Didymus’, never ‘Areus/Arius’). There is good reason to reconsider the thesis of Heine 1869, 613–614, (which was influentially refuted by Diels 1879, 86–87) that Arius Didymus is not Seneca’s and Augustus’ Areus, but the Academic ‘Ateius Didymus’ or ‘Attius Didymus’ (Δίδυμος Ἀτήϊος ἢ Ἄττιος) mentioned by the *Suda* (Δ 871) in a textually problematic entry, since “the collection of the views of a number of schools is more characteristic of Academics, who can use them in sceptical debate, than of Stoics” (Sharples 2010, 22; see also Algra 2018, 70–74, according to whom “we cannot move beyond the *non liquet*” advocated by Mansfeld/Runia 1997, 240–242). Noticeably, as Göransson 1995, 221, points out, the only fragment we can safely ascribe to Areus of Alexandria comes from two passages in Tertullian’s *On the Soul* (*De An.* 54.2, 55.4) dealing with the fate of the soul after death – particularly with the fate of the souls of the wise (see below, note on *Marc.* 25.1, *supra nos commoratus*). This is, of course, a perfectly suitable topic for a Stoic who is said to have delivered a *consolatio* and is chosen by Seneca as role model at the start of a work which ends with the description of the heavenly abodes of the departed. As a matter of fact, throughout the Areus-Livia episode, “Seneca encourages Marcia to reflect on both the benefits of philosophical guidance and also the special role which he can serve as her therapist and guide” (Shelton 1995, 180). What is more, “the figure of Areus allows Seneca to play at the role of court philosopher. This lends authority to his consolatory discourse, but it also advertises his consolatory voice to the Julio-Claudian household of his own age, as being of special value for the perpetuation of the dynasty – this, some years before Agrippina would choose him as an adviser” (Ker 2009, 95).

***consolandam se praebuit*:** A hint at the inherently asymmetrical nature of the ancient παραμυθία as a pedagogical intervention. Livia submitted (*se praebuit*) to Areus’ therapeutic treatment like a patient in a doctor’s office.

***plus quam populum Romanum*:** There is clear evidence that Livia was the recipient of an institutionally ratified consolation. According to Dio (55.2.5), “to Livia statues were voted by way of consoling her (ἡ δὲ δὴ Λιουία εἰκόνων τε ἐπὶ παραμυθία ἔτυχεν) and she was enrolled among the mothers of three children (ἐς τὰς μητέρας τὰς τρεῖς τεκούσας ἐσεγράφη)” – which means that, by a legal fiction (possibly by a senate decree), Livia was granted the privileges that belonged to the parents of three children (*ius trius liberorum*) in accordance with

the Augustan legislation on marriage and reproduction (the *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* of 18 BC, which was followed by the *Lex Papia Poppaea* in 9 AD: see Treggiari 1991, 60–80). The pseudo-Ovidian *Consolation to Livia* (*Consolatio ad Liviam* or *Epicedion Drusi*) may allude to the same provision at 79–82. The *Consolation* itself cannot be counted with certainty among the consolatory gifts received by Livia in the immediate aftermath of Drusus' death, as it may be a *pseudepigraphon* written after 13 AD (Ursini 2014) – though dates as early as 9 BC have also been proposed (Heyworth 2020, with further references).

subducto altero adminiculo: The image of Augustus reeling from the loss of one of his two supports resumes the architectural metaphor adopted for the portrait of Marcellus (see above, note on *Marc.* 2.3, *Marcellum*). The most obvious meaning is that Tiberius – mentioned below – was Augustus' other *adminiculum* (so Hine 2014, 37 n. 17). Yet Seneca's re-use of his own earlier metaphor might maliciously imply that the Augustan construction had lost its second support after Marcellus – Tiberius being the shaky pillar of the Roman state that Seneca will often blame in his later works (e.g., *Ben.* 2.7–8, 3.26; *Ep.* 83.15).

acerbo funere: A conventional label for the untimely death (ἄωρος θάνατος) of the young, which was regarded as especially bitter (*acerbo*). The *locus classicus* is Verg. *Aen.* 6.429, but see already Plaut. *Asin.* 595; *Amph.* 190, and the epigraphic evidence in Lattimore 1962, 187–191.

nihil sibi nisi numerum deesse sentiret: When consoling his mother Helvia, Seneca will use almost the same phrasing: “you will lack nothing except the full number of your sons” (*nihil tibi deerit praeter numerum*, *Helv.* 18.3). Tiberius' filial devotion (*pietas*) seems to have been exaggerated to make it fit this consolatory *topos* (*pace* Manning 1981, 45). At best, such devotion diminished throughout the years, for it is true that Tacitus describes Tiberius' “ingrained deference for his mother” (*inveteratum erga matrem obsequium*, *Ann.* 5.3) as the last restraint on the new emperor's tyrannical disposition, but Tacitus also highlights Tiberius' insincerity (*simulatione filii*, 5.1) and arrogant disregard (5.2).

4.3 *ut opinor*: Since the nineteenth century, scholars have disagreed on whether Seneca is quoting from an existing work by Areus of Alexandria or is fabricating a *consolatio* within his *consolatio*. As one can easily expect, in the heyday of the *Altertumswissenschaft* it was quite common to label Areus' *prosopopeia* in Seneca as a textual ‘fragment’. Diels 1879, 84–85, was prepared to argue that “Seneca translates the beginning of the speech then delivered by Areus” (*orationis tum habitae exordium vertit Seneca*) – which, for the rest, Diels considered a jumble of commonplaces (*in tritis versantur praeceptis*). Zeller 1883, 106 n. 1, went so far

as to claim that “Seneca quotes a considerable fragment [. . .] from a consolatory epistle of Arius to Livia” – this even if no ancient source mentions any epistle whatsoever and Seneca explicitly describes Areus’ consolation as a *speech*. The enthusiasm of modern philologists began to decrease in the twentieth century (though scholars like Giusta 1986, 127, continued to uphold Diels’ thesis). Building on Pohlenz 1948–49, II, 125, Kassel 1958, 27, argued that Seneca freely re-adapted Areus’ “Trostschrift” to construct his dialogic fiction – whence the author’s supposed inconsistency (“Ungereimtheit”). Abel 1967, 17–18, conceded that it is highly dubious that a consolatory writing by Areus had ever existed and pointed out that the parenthetical clause *ut opinor* “besagt dass Seneca [. . .] sich die Wörter des Areus von seiner Phantasie eingeben lässt”. The same reasonable interpretation of *ut opinor* is shared by Albertini 1923, 297 n. 2, Grollios 1956, 26–27, and Moraux 1973, 261 n. 18. In Manning’s 1981, 46, words, “the evidence strongly suggests that we are here dealing with something that Seneca has devised to suit his own artistic purposes”. Of course, it is not impossible that at some point Areus published – or at least delivered – a παραμυθητικός λόγος πρὸς τὴν Λιουίαν. But given the absolute lack of any external evidence, we should approach Areus’ speech from an *intratextual* perspective: that is, as a brilliant example of Seneca’s mastery of the rhetorical device of προσωποποιία, which is abundantly attested both in the *ad M.* (see below, notes on *Marc.* 17.6–7; 26) and in other works of the Senecan corpus (e.g., *Polyb.* 14–16; *Const. Sap.* 6.3–7; *Vit. Beat.* 27–28).

***opinionis suae*:** The word *opinio* here has a double meaning, one in terms of Livia’s social reputation and the other in terms of her cognitive background. For the Stoic Seneca, Livia was right in carefully protecting her reputation as a Roman woman, but she needed to overcome her attachment to those erroneous beliefs (*opinio* = δόξα) that prevented her from thinking and acting wisely – which she will do with the help of Areus.

***Iulia*:** The same anachronism as 4.2 (see above, note on *Iuliae Augustae*). The reading *Iulia* is attested in **A**, but it must have sounded problematic as early as the Middle Ages, for the later manuscripts of **γ** have *Livia*. Since the **γ** tradition is independent of **A** (Reynolds 1977, 366–367) and a confusion between the vertical letters of *Livia* and *Iulia* is paleographically plausible (indeed, this would be an easy error in any minuscule script), some editors – from Justus Lipsius to Favez 1928, 16 – have emended *Iulia* into *Livia*. Yet, as Abel 1967, 18, pointed out, chronological inaccuracy alone cannot justify a suspicion of textual corruption in Seneca’s oldest and most valuable manuscript, especially because the same anachronism occurs earlier (and more evidently, with the addition of the title of *Augusta*) in the same work, and several other anachronisms appear in

Seneca's oeuvre – a case in point being Socrates' defense of Aristotle and Epicurus in *Vit. Beat.* 27.5. Once again, it is much more reasonable to regard Seneca's use of Livia's later name as a deliberate psychagogic strategy (“ein sinnvoller psychologischer Kunstgriff”, in Abel's words) and to acknowledge that the approach of ancient moral writers to chronology and prosopography was vastly different from ours – certainly, it was neither ‘positivist’ nor ‘historicist’.

adsiduous viri tui comes: The same relationship of friendship and intimacy is described by the emperor Julian with the words συμβιωτής, ἑταῖρος, and φίλος (*Caes.* 27.326b; *Ep.* 111 Bidez = 47 Wright). Areus' acquaintance with “all the inmost feelings” (*omnes secretiores animorum motus*) of Augustus and Livia mirrors his delicate role as *directeur de conscience* and *Seelenleiter* – the same role Seneca aspires to play for Marcia and the Julio-Claudian elite.

famam: According to Abel 1967, 31, Arius' precept that a woman of high standing should do nothing wrong for fear of public opinion (*fama*) is a non-Stoic piece of advice for beginners – Seneca's deepest conviction (“eigene Überzeugung”) being that the wise person will do nothing for the sake of people's opinions, but everything for the sake of her conscience (*nihil opinionis causa, omnia conscientiae faciam*, *Vit. Beat.* 20.4). In the wake of Abel, Manning 1981, 47, restated the well-known view that “Seneca uses consolatory arguments according to his judgement of their effectiveness in a particular situation rather than on strictly dogmatic grounds”. While this is true on a more general level (as Seneca is completely aware that philosophical pedagogy is a ‘stochastic’ art: see above, note on *Marc.* 2.1, *aliter cum alio agendum est*), there is no reason to question Seneca's adherence to the Stoic tradition or suggest that the present passage betrays Epicurean influence – as Manning does. In Stoic philosophy – as voiced by Seneca's *alter ego* Areus – the determination to act according to conscience in a fully rational manner requires a careful consideration of one's social roles, habits, and aims. The theory of the four *personae* presented by Cicero (*Off.* 1.107–121) shows that, for Stoics like Panaetius, there is no contrast between rational conscience and public opinion, provided that both these dimensions are correctly understood, for a conscience capable of choosing between right and wrong is a conscience consistent with the universal nature of human beings as well as with one's particular *persona* (= πρόσωπον). As Dyck 1996, 269, notices, “within the successive limitations of one's status as possessor of reason and of a certain type of character and of the circumstances of one's birth and other such accidents, the final stage is the individual's own decision as to career; this, like other ‘assents’ (συγκαταθέσεις) to φαντασία, is voluntary” (cf. *SVF* 1.19.1 ff.; 2.35.15, 282.23, 283.27, 291.1). Seen in this light, Areus' suggestion that “in the present circumstances too” (*in hac quoque re*) Livia should “stick to her character” (*servandus mos est*) seems in perfect accord

with Cicero’s precept that “everyone must resolutely hold fast to his own particular gifts, in so far as they are particular only and not vicious” (*tenenda sunt sua cuique, non vitiosa, sed tamen propria*, Cic. *Off.* 1.110). As Cicero’s several *exempla* show (see esp. *Off.* 1.108–109), this precept is of special importance for people of high social status. *Mutatis mutandis*, Livia is urged to react to the hardship of her fate like Cato Uticensis, who remained faithful until the end to his “mode of life and character” (*vita et mores*, Cic. *Off.* 1.112).

liberrimam: Erasmus’ emendation of *uberrimam* (which is the reading of A) into *liberrimam* is both sensible and necessary (*pace* Favez 1928, 17).

4.4 veniam dare: The idea that it is appropriate for “those who are at the pinnacle of society” (*in summo fastigio conlocatos*) to “grant pardon for many things” (*multarum rerum veniam dare*), while being themselves as irreproachable as possible, will be consistently developed by Seneca when, like Areus, he will serve as an imperial advisor, i.e., in his treatise *On Mercy* (see e.g., *Clem.* 1.3.2–3; 5.2–7). Of course, when lecturing Nero, Seneca will focus more on the moral act of *multarum rerum veniam dare* than on the fear of *veniam petere* – which, by contrast, should be Livia’s and Marcia’s major concern *qua* respectable noblewomen.

5.1 difficilem amicis: It is no surprise that one of Areus’ prime interests as a Stoic consoler is Livia’s relational life. By indulging in grief, Livia, like Marcia, can jeopardize the entire process of οἰκείωσις, with its network of relationships ranging from family to friends, and beyond.

intractabilem: The treatment (θεραπεία) of ‘intractable’ or ‘stubborn’ pupils is a topic of special relevance in the ancient tradition of philosophical pedagogy, as shown by Philodemus’ discussion of “strong” students (ἰσχυροί) in *On Frank Criticism* (Περὶ παρηγορίας; see esp. fr. 7 and 10 Olivieri), where it is also made clear that illustrious pupils – such as kings (βασιλεῖς) – are among the most recalcitrant to treatment (cols. 23a–24b). Areus may have feared that empress Livia was no exception. See Glad 1995, 142–146.

aut oblivio aut mentio: The *Leitmotiv* of the value of memory, which was prominent in Seneca’s first address to Marcia (cf. 1.3; 2.5; 3.2), resurfaces in the microcosm of Areus’ intratextual *consolatio*. Since for the Stoics language and rationality are two inseparable aspects of one and the same λόγος, speaking of the deceased, and letting others speak of them, are highly effective ways to restore one’s ὀρθὸς λόγος. *Ex post*, such acts (or speech acts) provide evidence of recovery from the effects of grief. On the contrary, oblivion (*oblivio*) and silence (*silentium*,

5.2) mirror a regression of the human self to a non-human, almost animal state of cognitive underdevelopment, which, as the cases of Livia and Marcia show, may end up extending to one's acquaintances and social environment (again, crucial evidence is provided by Cicero's exposition of Stoic doctrine in *Off.* 1.11–12; 105, on which see Narducci 1987, 20–21). As usual, Seneca is careful in conjoining Stoic thought with the Roman tradition – for Areus' reference to the communal celebration of Drusus' "deeds and words with the respect that he deserves" (*facta eius dictaque quanto meruit suspectu celebramus*), together with the emphasis on the pleasure of praise (*maxima voluptate, filii tui laudibus*, 5.2), alludes to such culturally embedded practices as the *laudatio funebris*, the *tituli*, and the *elogia* (Flower 1996, 128–184).

5.2 *maxima voluptate*: The supreme pleasure deriving from the praises of the virtuous dead like Drusus is not vulgar pleasure, but a characteristic instance of Stoic joy (*χαρά*): an 'eupathic' response consisting in "well-reasoned elevation" (Graver 2007, 52) – or, to use Seneca's own words, in "the elevation of a spirit which trusts in the goodness and truth of its own possessions" (*animi elatio suis bonis verisque fidentis*, *Ep.* 59.2; cf. above, note on *Marc.* 3.3, *voluptates honestas, permissas*). Significantly, Seneca's examples of joy in *Ep.* 23.4 include "disdain for death" (*mortem contemnere*) and "the contemplation of the endurance of pain" (*meditari dolorum patientiam*), two experiences that are conceptually connected with the custom of the *laudatio*. The Senecan corpus offers several examples of the use of *voluptas* as a synonym of *gaudium* (see e.g., *Ben.* 4.13, with the comments of Griffin 2013, 241; *Clem.* 1.1.1; *Ep.* 55.9) – which is, of course, the most appropriate translation for the Greek *χαρά* (after Cic. *Tusc.* 4.13). This is not merely a gratuitous confusion, or an 'eclectic' fusion of Stoic and Epicurean principles. For, on the one hand, as the *Epistles to Lucilius* show, Seneca gradually introduces beginners to the "distinction between the right things in which one should rejoice and pleasures to be avoided" (Wildberger 2014, 452), and on the other hand, as attested in *Ep.* 59.1–4, he openly proclaims his right to "use words in their everyday meaning" (*uti verbis publicis*), without insisting upon their "Stoic import" (*significatio Stoica*). Seneca proudly asserts that he is not the only Stoic to favor didactic efficacy over lexical rigor: "we Stoics hold that pleasure is a vice (*vitium esse voluptatem credimus*)", but "we are accustomed to use the word when we wish to indicate a happy state of mind (*ponere tamen illam soleamus ad demonstrandam animi hilarem adfectionem*)" – that is, *εὐπάθεια*.

5.3 *qui partem mali putant audire solacia*: Those who "regard listening to words of comfort as a part of their suffering" err insofar as they do not recognize that the *consolatio* is an integral part of the body of memorial practices

that benefit both the individual and the society. However, the intolerance of some ancient mourners becomes much more understandable if one considers that the *consolatio* could sometimes degenerate into an empty social ritual, devoid of true moral substance and content (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 1.6, *adlocutiones amicorum*).

5.4 *Nunc incubuisti tota in alteram partem*: Like other addressees of Seneca's writings (*Polyb.* 10.3–6; *Brev. vit.* 10.2–4; *Ep.* 99.3–5), and like Marcia herself at a later stage (see below, note on *Marc.* 22.1, *nihil nisi quod praeterit*), Livia is invited to turn her gaze from present misfortune to the joys of the past. The pleasant recollection of the past is a traditional Epicurean technique of achieving contentment (*Epic. Ep. Men.* 122; *Sent. Vat.* 35, 55, 75; frs. 213, 436, 437 Usener), whose practical usefulness is overtly acknowledged by Seneca at *Ben.* 3.4. In fact, Manning 1981, 47–48, has argued that “the Epicurean argument” is “the major theme of the *consolatio Arei*” – though he elsewhere admits that “the precise significance of this fact is difficult to determine” (Manning 1974, 77 n. 5). In her analysis of the role of imagination and meditation in Seneca, Armisen-Marchetti 2008, 110–112, has persuasively argued against the view that, confronted with the “moral and psychological emergency” of his addressees, Seneca prescribed for them the remedy of Epicurean *voluptas* as if he “forgot for a moment that he was a Stoic” (cf. Manning 1974, 79–81, correcting, but not dismissing, the approach of Favez 1928, 29, and Grollios 1956, 32–33). As the solidly Stoic context of *Ep.* 98.11 demonstrates, it is not “a question here of provisional therapy for the use of non-Stoics, but an exhortation within Seneca's paraenetic project”, which resorts to all the resources of “a ‘good’ imagination controlled by rational will” in full accord with the tradition of spiritual exercises practiced by the Stoics (see Hadot 1995, 182–205, for a joint discussion of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus). In Stoic philosophy of mind, the recollection of past happiness has the same theoretical legitimacy and psychagogic value as the more famous “premeditation of future evils” (*praemeditatio futurorum malorum*) – recommended to Marcia in chapter 9 – which is not dangerous insofar as “suffering cannot result from something that is mere imagination and not a real experience” (Armisen-Marchetti 2008, 111). In a similar way, the Epicurean “diversion from disturbing thoughts” (*avocatio a cogitanda molestia*) and “retrospective contemplation of pleasures” (*recordatio ad contemplantas voluptates*, Cic. *Tusc.* 3.33) can be practiced by a Stoic without fear of doctrinal deviation insofar as such acts rest only on mental images and are incapable of inducing a real emotion. By turning her attention to the life she shared with her son and the enjoyable time spent with him (*convictus filii tui occursusque iucundos*) – to Drusus' “boyish, adorable charms” (*pueriles dulcesque blanditias*) and

“the progress of his education” (*incrementa studiorum*) – Livia will obtain a more complete and balanced understanding of natural time and human existence, for one of the roots of her cognitive mistake is precisely her tendency to forget the better days (*oblita meliorum*) and to focus on the worse aspects of her fortune (*fortunam tuam qua deterior est aspicias*). Hence, what, taken alone, may appear as a pleasing Epicurean trope is instead an instrument for rational self-correction and the achievement of Stoic *χαρά* – an instrument which, according to Seneca (*Ep.* 63.5–7), was taken on by the Stoic Attalus. As Graver 2016, 209, notes, whereas the Epicurean is preoccupied with ensuring “a preponderance of pleasure in any given moment”, for the Stoic “the mental uplift the wise person experiences in considering the friend’s virtues is the only legitimate affective response one can have”.

perversissimam gloriam: A further reference to the Stoic conception of moral vice as *perversio rationis* (= διαστροφή τοῦ λόγου, *SVF* 3.228–236) already introduced at 1.7 and 2.5. As Gill 2019, 64, remarks, “it is standard Stoic doctrine that ‘preferred indifferents’, which include reputation, have a real and positive value and that human beings naturally go for them” (cf. Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.104 = *SVF* 3.104 on δόξα, and Cic. *Fin.* 3.57 on εὐδοξία). Areus’ psychological point is that one of the reasons behind the perseverance of stubborn mourners is an unnatural perversion of the natural desire for glory (δόξα/εὐδοξία). See also Seneca’s caveat in *Ep.* 99.18, that “nothing is more foolish than to court a reputation for sadness” (*stultius vero nihil est quam famam captare tristitiae*).

5.5 *adversi aliquid*: The genuinely Stoic inspiration of Areus’ *adlocutio* is most eloquently reflected in his final exhortation to stand firm (*stabilem gradum*) and calm (*aequo animo*) in the face of adversity like a helmsman in a storm. The providentialist view that “some challenge must arise to test the human soul” (*adversi aliquid incurrat oportet quod animum probet*) lies at the core of Seneca’s treatment of Stoic theodicy in *On Providence*, where the brave man (*vir fortis*) is said to “regard all misfortunes as trials of his firmness” (*omnia adversa exercitationes putat*, *Prov.* 2.2). In the same work (*Prov.* 4.5), we also find the helmsman metaphor employed here by Areus, a metaphor which dates back to Plato (*Rep.* 488A–E) but is widely used in the Stoic tradition from Aristo of Chios’ *Analogies* (Ὅμοιωματα, cf. *Stob. Ecl.* 2.31.95 = *SVF* 1.396) to Epictetus’ *Discourses* (4.3.5–6; see also Plut. *Stoic. absurd.* 1057E). Like the medical analogy, the analogy between sailing and life – or, more properly, between sailing and philosophy *qua* art of living – calls attention to the common points between philosophical knowledge and the so-called “stochastic arts” (τέχνην στοχαστικάι) – those “arts that aim (στοχάζομαι) at a distinct goal (τέλος) but in which the excellent practitioner does not always achieve

that goal” (Sellars 2003, 45). Seneca deploys the steersman metaphor on several occasions (e.g., *Brev. Vit.* 7.10; *Ep.* 14.8; 30.3), and his re-use of it in the very next chapter (6.3) binds Areus’ and his own teachings together. Yet, like other Stoics (cf. Cic. *Fin.* 3.24 = *SVF* 3.11), Seneca (*Ep.* 85.30–37; 95.7–8) is perfectly aware of the epistemological limits of such a popular comparison, for in other respects wisdom is a performative art (πρακτική τέχνη) “like dancing, acting, or music” (Sellars 2003, 74).

5.6 *primo dumtaxat strepitus conterrita*: An allusion to the Stoic doctrine of pre-emotions (προπάθειαι), the first immediate reaction to pain which Areus – like Seneca and the other Stoics – considers entirely legitimate. Since pre-emotions will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7, this is further evidence that Areus’ and Seneca’s consolations – *qua* ‘microtext’ and ‘macrotext’ – stand to each other in a relation of symmetry.

***invidia fortunae*:** An objective genitive glorifying the Stoic sage’s contempt for fortune. In Seneca’s *Epistles*, *fortuna* is often depicted as a tyrant or a military opponent, and Seneca “brings virtue and its ability to withstand external pressures into confrontation with fortune, representing the indifferents” (Baraz 2020, 267; cf. also Asmis 2009). In *Ep.* 76.21, for instance, *virtus* is said to “march proudly between the two extremes of fortune, with great scorn for both” (*inter hanc fortunam et illam superba incedit cum magno utriusque contemptu*). By inviting Livia to display a “calm mind” (*aequo animo*) in the face of death and misfortune, Areus’ conclusion puts into the foreground the Stoic ideal of εὐθυμία, for which see Sen. *Tranq. an.* 2.3–4 (where the navigation metaphor is also given prominence: cf. Fantham 2014, 178–180). On the ancient belief in the “envy of fortune” or “envy of the gods” (*invidia deorum*) and its different Senecan uses, see below, notes on *Marc.* 12.3 and 12.6.

***filium incolumem, ex amisso nepotes*:** Livia’s surviving son was Tiberius, the future emperor. Among the surviving sons of Drusus (*ex amisso nepotes*) was another future emperor, Claudius. Drusus’ other children were Germanicus (the much admired, but prematurely dead, general that Tacitus plays off against the despotic Tiberius) and Livia, also known as Livilla, who married Tiberius’ son Drusus but “was executed in 31 AD for having poisoned him at the behest of Sejanus” (Thibault 1964, 40). Again, Areus’ gesture mirrors that of Seneca, who will later urge Marcia to find consolation in her surviving daughters and grandchildren (*Marc.* 16.6–8).

6–11 Nature, Time, and the Human Condition: General *Praecepta* for the Bereaved

As promised in *Marc.* 2.1, Seneca introduces his *praecepta* after making the most of the paraenetic power of *exempla*. Quite naturally, the first section of Seneca’s *praecepta* has an introductory character and aims to provide Marcia with an overview of the most important ethical topics connected with the experience of bereavement: the immutability of fate (6), the natural limits of grief (7), the role of time and personal will in overcoming sorrow (8), the inevitability of evil as an object of meditation (9), the ephemerality of the goods of fortune (10), and the constitutional weakness of humans (11). These were traditional consolatory *loci* that had been given special significance by the Stoics, who were determined to build their ethics on a physical and cosmological basis. As in his later works, Seneca teaches his readers that within the Stoic system “living according to nature is not a foundation for, but rather equivalent to, and the same things as, living according to virtue” (Annas 2014, 330). For Marcia, this means that grief can be voluntarily suppressed by embarking on a gradual process of reconciliation with the laws of nature and the cosmic fate. There is still room for the conscious incorporation of Peripatetic and Epicurean insights, but Seneca’s didactic framework is even more visibly anchored in the Stoic tradition.

The exact collocation of chapter 6 has been the object of some dispute, since, building on Reid 1973, 7–16, Manning 1981, 50, has suggested that this chapter should be considered “a link section between *exempla* and *praecepta*”, and not the start of Seneca’s new section. However, while it is true that Seneca carefully connects his preceptive discourse with his earlier treatment of *exempla* by reenacting the significance of Areus’ teachings (6.1), there is no reason to dissociate chapter 6 from what follows it. The connective function postulated by Reid and Manning is just one among the many functions of chapter 6 as a well-thought-out introduction to the Stoic doctrine on fate and the uselessness of complaint. One can thus reinstate the traditional view – which goes back to Favez 1928, LXV-LXXI, and Grollios 1956, 16, and is accepted by Hine 2014, 4 – that in chapters 6–11 Seneca offers general advice about death and bereavement by framing some of the most well-known consolatory *topoi* in the context of Stoic philosophy.

6.1 *negotium actum*: Just as Marcia’s choice between Octavia and Livia is presented as an arbitration (*arbitrium*, 4.1), Areus’ speech is described as a forensic affair by means of the idiomatic expression *negotium agere*. By sitting beside Marcia and assisting her (*tibi adsedit*), Areus plays the role of the assistant of a

judge, the *assessor* of Roman legal procedure (see *Dig.* 1.22 *de officio adsectorum*, and Seneca’s own reference to the *assessoris verba* in *Tranq. an.* 3.4).

muta personam: With a further hint at the Stoic theory of social roles (*persona* = πρόσωπα), Seneca makes the meaning of the Areus/Livia episode even more explicit: Marcia should wear the mask (*persona*), and hence play the role, of the *consolanda* in order to allow Seneca to serve as *consolator*. In ancient culture, both the *persona consolandi* and the *persona consolatoris* entailed distinctive behavior and moral codes, which the *exempla* of Livia and Areus have recalled. Though primarily typical of theatrical performances, the practice of “role change” (*personam mutare*) also concern the fields of oratorical display (cf. *Sen. Controv.* 9.3.13) and judicial action (*Dig.* 2.9.1), both of which, as we have seen, exert enormous influence on Senecan imagery. Manning’s 1981, 51, conjecture that Seneca’s diction may have been influenced by *Hor. Sat.* 1.1.69–70, or by Bionian diatribe as a common source of Horace and Seneca, seems to miss the central point – which is not literary imitation *per se* but ethical theory, with its dramaturgical, legal, and rhetorical idiom.

puta: As the verb *putare* shows, Marcia’s belief that she has been “robbed of more than any other mother has ever lost” (*ereptum tibi amplius quam ulla umquam mater amiserit*) is nothing more than that: a belief, that is, a misleading δόξα. Yet, Seneca knows that a good therapist should never make light of his patient’s feeling (*nec extenuo calamitatem tuam*) as this would only crystallize the patient’s will to persist. Like modern therapists, Seneca is aware that “in the initial stages of the patient-physician relationship, the qualities of empathy, respect, and warmth need to be communicated by the physician”, who is required to take “what the patient has to say seriously, no matter how silly it appears to be scientifically or culturally” (Dodge 1983, 179). Seneca’s preceptive strategy is in fact premised on enlarging Marcia’s perspective so that she can interpret her sorrow in the broader context of natural fate.

6.2 *fata*: Seneca’s first *praeceptum* concerns the central Stoic idea of fate (*fata* = εἰμαρμένη), which has the potential to correct Marcia’s narrow understanding of death and existential losses. What is here defined as “an unchanging destiny, fixed for eternity” (*sors inmotata et in aeternum fixa*) is depicted in *Ep.* 77.12 as “a sequence which cannot be broken or altered by any power” (*series invicta et nulla mutabilis ope*), as a set of “unalterable and fixed decrees” (*rata et fixa*) which deprive human weeping and prayer of any usefulness (*quid fles? quid optas? perdis operam*). Seneca’s claim both in *Epistle* 77 and in the *ad M.* that tears are useless demonstrates that he did not regard this theme as a mere consolatory *topos* but as a necessary corollary of the Stoic dogma of fate (though his

quotation of Verg. *Aen.* 6.376 in *Ep.* 77 shows that he was also aware of the wider reception of Stoic thought). According to Diogenes Laertius (*Vit.* 7.149 = *SVF* 2.915), that “everything comes to be by fate” (καθ’ εἰμαρμένην τὰ πάντα γίνεσθαι) was stated by Chrysippus in his *On Fate*, by Posidonius in the second book of his *On Fate*, by Zeno, and by Boethus in the first book of his *On Fate*. The Stoics defined fate as “an endless chain of causation, whereby things exist” (αἰτία τῶν ὄντων εἰρομένη), or as “the reason by which the world goes on” (λόγος καθ’ ὃν ὁ κόσμος διεξάγεται). Seneca’s use of the word *series* for the Stoic concept of “chain of causes” (εἰρημὸν αἰτιῶν, cf. Aetius, *Plac.* 1.28.4 = *SVF* 2.917; Alex. *Mantissa* 185.1–5 = *SVF* 2.920) echoes Cicero’s earlier rendering in *Div.* 1.125 (*ordinem seriemque causarum*, cf. also *Fat.* 20, and Meyer 2009). Clearly, “divine providence and divine fate were not hypostatized by the Early Stoics as distinct entities. Providence was God’s will and fate the unimpeded fulfilment of this will” (Dragona-Monachou 1994, 4432). The early Stoic doctrine of εἰμαρμένη is used here to lead Marcia’s mind from self-centered (and self-destructive) mourning to cosmic awareness.

***lacerato pectori*:** Seneca’s pathetic description of weeping (*fletibus, luctus*), sleepless misery (*sine somno tristitia*), and self-inflicted cruelties (*saevitiae*) such as the laceration of one’s breast and face alludes to the expressions of extended complaint that characterized key ritual moments of Roman culture (cf. *Ep.* 99.16). “Formal laments were expected at the *collocatio*, at the *pompa* and after the *laudatio*. Traditionally such laments were led by senior female members of the family, and a formulaic structure may have been passed between generations. An alternative for the well-to-do was to pay professional lament performers. Limited references survive to so-called *praeficae*, women hired to lead the praises of the dead at the house” (Hope 2019, 66). Such ritualized mourning practices survived for centuries in the Mediterranean area and were pioneeringly explored by De Martino 1958, who, like other anthropologists (from Radcliff-Brown to Lévi-Strauss and Tambiah), showed that in most traditional cultures “an emotion is symbolized when its psychic content is objectified in ‘formalized gestures’ that distance the actors from the spontaneity of the feelings they ‘denote’ through ritualized enactment” (Harrison 2003, 170).

6.3 in naufragio laudandus: The “helmsman (*navigii rector*) who is overwhelmed by the sea as he is still clinging to the rudder and struggling (*clavum tenentem et obnixum*)” is a typically Stoic icon of wisdom and freedom. The same image has already appeared in Areus’ παραμυθία (see above, note on *Marc.* 5.5, *adversi aliquid*). By means of this intratextual allusion, Seneca reaffirms his *persona* as a Stoic consoler of the Roman elite.

7.1 *At enim naturale desiderium suorum est*: Objections and requests for clarification of this kind are quite common in Seneca’s *dialogi* and contribute to creating an atmosphere of dialogic exchange (*pace* Manning 1981, 53, who emphasizes the merely rhetorical or ‘diatribic’ nature of Seneca’s technique). They are typically raised by an unnamed voice that scholars often call the “fictive adversary” (*adversarius fictus*) and that Roller 2015, 60–61, has more aptly called the “generalized interlocutor”. As Roller observes in his analysis of the relationship between Seneca’s *dialogi* and the Aristotelian tradition of dialogue writing (in which a dominant voice introduces the speech of other voices: cf. Cic. *Att.* 13.19.4), “in its propensity to lodge ‘commonsense’ objections or seek clarification, the generalized interlocutor is depicted as an ‘everyman’ who is less well versed in Stoicism than Seneca, is not altogether comfortable with the paradoxology of Stoic argumentation, and hence makes a suitable (if sometimes resistant) object of Seneca’s tutelage and guidance”. In our case, the point of view of the generalized interlocutor is likely to be shared by Marcia herself as an instantiation of the *persona consolandae*. The objection raised concerns a central point of the ancient discussion about the emotions, that is, their natural foundations and moral legitimacy (*naturale* = κατὰ φύσιν). As recalled by Horwitz 2020, 30, the Hippocratics and Aristotle elaborated a thorough distinction “between a variety of normal mood states of sadness on the one hand and disease states on the other”. They claimed that the key distinction was “between states of sadness without cause and those with similar symptoms that arose from actual losses” – only the former being ‘unnatural’ (or unnaturally protracted) mental disorders. The Stoics went beyond earlier paradigms to a much more radical denial of the assumption that grief and other emotions are natural. In their view, which Seneca expounds in his rejoinder to Marcia’s objection, only the so-called “pre-emotions” (προπάθειαι) – involuntary feelings not dependent on assent or rational judgement (Graver 2007, 85–108) – are natural.

***modicum*:** Another allusion to the Peripatetic doctrine of the moderation of the emotions (μετριοπάθεια, see above, note on *Marc.* 3.4, *moderatus, mitius*). However, Seneca is already introducing Marcia to genuine Stoic thought insofar as he argues that the only ‘moderate’ and ‘natural’ kind of grief is a pre-rational response to pain that the Stoics include among their προπάθειαι. Hence, though valued for its didactic efficacy, the Aristotelian idea of the mean (*modicum* = μέτρον) is revisited in light of the Stoic claim that no emotion can be moderate.

***morsus et contractio*:** A Latin rendering of the Stoic terms συστολή (*SVF* 3.386, 394, 412) and δηγμός (or δῆξις, *Gal. Plac. Hipp. Plat.* 4.3.2 = *SVF* 1.209; Plutarch, *Virt. Mor.* 449A) – the involuntary “contraction” and “bite” experienced by the souls of living beings *qua* material aggregates under the effect of external stresses. In Stoic philosophy, this is a merely physical reaction that

does not entail the conscious assent of reason (συγκατάθεσις), or the arbitrary supplement of opinion (δόξα), and hence does not amount to a real emotion (πάθος) but to a pre-emotion (προπάθεια). Manning 1981, 54, acknowledges that “the terminology is Stoic”, but appears to ignore the Stoic theory of pre-emotions (for which see also Gill 2006, 279–281 and Graver 1999). Seneca’s allusion to this theory in our passage is recognized by Hine 2014, 38 n. 21, and Konstan 2016, 3–8. Once again, Seneca’s philosophical vocabulary is indebted to Cicero, who had already used the words *contractio* and *morsus* as well as the verb *contrahere* (corresponding to the Greek συστέλλειν) in his exposition of Stoic psychology (see e.g., *Tusc.* 3.83–84; 4.14 = *SVF* 3.393). If we trust Seneca, whose writing *On Anger* devotes explicit attention to pre-emotions (2.1–4), the theory goes back to Zeno (*Ira.* 2.16.7 = *SVF* 1.215). To be sure, as recorded by Galen, *Plac. Hipp. Plat.* 4.7.12–18, Chrysippus dealt with involuntary tears and the progressive abatement of distress in his work *On the Emotions* (see Tieleman 2003, 123–130; 259–260). As Konstan 2017, 242, has shown, pre-emotions gain special relevance in Seneca’s account of the origins and treatment of the emotions, as Seneca seems to argue that “if we fail to understand the nature of these instinctive responses, and mistake them for shame, fear, anger, or whatever the relevant emotion may be, we are likely to resist altering our judgements and, instead, to justify the sentiments by holding firmly to our false beliefs”.

firmissimorum quoque animorum: Inasmuch as they are natural, involuntary, and inevitable, pre-emotions are experienced even by “the most steadfast minds”, that is, even by the Stoic sage, whose characteristic *firmitas* or *constantia* (= καρτερία or ευστάθεια, cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 5.74; *Fam.* 9.11.1) is not diminished by such reactions. The same point is made by Seneca in *Ep.* 71.27–29, where we learn that “the wise man will tremble, will feel pain, will turn pale, for all these are sensations of the body” (*et tremet sapiens et dolebit et expallescet; hi enim omnes corporis sensus sunt*), and in 99.15–21, where a case is made that tears “often flow without impairing the moral weight of the wise man” (*saepe salva sapientis auctoritate fluxerunt*).

plus est quod opinio adicit: The contrast between *opinio* (= δόξα) and *natura* (= φύσις) – the latter coinciding with *recta ratio* (= ὀρθὸς λόγος) – lies at the core of the Stoic doctrine on the emotions, according to which “evil resides in opinion, not in nature” (*opinionis esse, non naturae malum*, Cic. *Tusc.* 3.65). As Cicero (*Tusc.* 4.12–14) reports, the Stoics hold that “just as it is by nature that we reach out after the good, so also it is by nature that we withdraw from the bad” (*ut bona natura adpetimus, sic a malis natura declinamus*). Yet, “for present evil the wise person has no affective response, while the foolish person responds with distress (*praesentis autem mali sapientis adfectio nulla est, stultorum aegritudo est*). For those

who do not obey reason lower and contract their minds in circumstances which they believe to be evil (*eaque adficiuntur in malis opinatis animosque demittunt et contrahunt rationi non obtemperantes*). Hence the first definition for distress is this: a contraction of mind contrary to reason (*itaque haec prima definitio est, ut aegritudo sit animi adversante ratione contractio*). In more general terms, the Stoics contend that “all the emotions come about through judgment and opinion” (*omnes perturbationes iudicio fieri et opinione*). As for the kind of opinion that may lead us to regard an indifferent (ἀδιάφορον, cf. *SVF* 3.117–123) like bereavement as a real evil, the Stoics offer two fundamental explanations: first and foremost, the unwise person cultivates “the belief, the opinion that some serious evil is present and weighing upon himself” (*opinio et iudicium magni praesentis atque urgentis mali*); in addition, our “belief in the seriousness of our misfortune” (*opinionem magni mali*) is combined with the further belief “that it is right, and an appropriate and proper thing, to be upset by what has happened” (*oportere, rectum esse, ad officium pertinere ferre illud aegre quod acciderit*, Cic. *Tusc.* 3.61–62). This further belief is usually held by people who think that “by being terribly grieved, they are doing something that is pleasing to the deceased” (*gratum mortuis se facere, si graviter eos lugeant*). To this is added “the womanish superstition” (*superstitio muliebris quaedam*) that “it will be easier for them to appease the gods if they profess to be completely crushed by the blow they have received” (*diis immortalibus se facilius satis facturos, si eorum plaga percussi adflictos se et stratos esse fateantur*, Cic. *Tusc.* 3.72). In what follows, Seneca concentrates on gradually demolishing all these erroneous beliefs – womanish or not – which seem to have led Marcia’s mind astray. Cf. also below, notes on *Marc.* 19.1.

7.2 *mutorum animalium desideria*: The use of animal *exempla* and zoological arguments in support of ethical theories was an established practice among the Stoics and other Hellenistic philosophers, who developed in an original manner the insights of Aristotle and Theophrastus (Dierauer 1977, 199–252, Sorabji 1993, 112–133). Seneca’s *muta animalia* are the ἄλογα ζῷα (or simply ἄλογα) often cited by the Stoics as evidence for the natural basis of human behaviors, desires, and values (e.g., *SVF* 1.515–517; 3.714–737). However, while on the one hand the Stoics are prepared to praise animals for their spontaneous adherence to the dictates of providential nature, on the other hand they “denigrate the animal, making it something brutish and inert” (Nussbaum 2001, XXIII), something completely lacking in rationality and emotional affections, a teleologically designed tool in the service of humans (see. e.g., Balbus’ speech in Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.121–161). It has already been shown that Seneca’s oeuvre reflects the complexity and ‘ambiguity’ of the Stoic position (Wildberger 2006a, I, 205–243, 2008; Tutrone 2012, 157–291). As far as our passage is concerned, Seneca’s didactic strategy is to present

animal parents as “mirrors of nature” (*specula naturae*, cf. Cic. *Fin.* 2.31–32, with Dierauer 1977, 194), confirming the Stoic thesis that protracted longing for one’s prematurely dead offspring (*desiderium* = πόθος, cf. *SVF* 3.394; 398; 413–414) is an unnatural inclination entirely dependent on judgement. There is thus no reason to divorce Seneca’s animal *exempla* from the Stoic tradition and consider them “an appropriate argument for a Peripatetic standpoint” (Manning 1981, 55).

vaccarum mugitus: The claim of Grollios 1956, 36, accepted also by Manning 1981, 55, that Seneca’s picture of animal grief has no exact parallel in extant Latin literature is surprisingly misguided. As noted in Mazzoli 1970, 207 n. 95, and Tutrone 2020, the present chapter is an elegant amplification of, and variation on, the Lucretian theme of the mother cow desperately looking for her slaughtered calf (Lucretius 2.355–366). Lucretius’ bovine mother is directly alluded to by means of this initial reference to the cows’ bellowing. The same theme had already been revived by Ovid (*Fast.* 4.455–466), an author with whom Seneca maintains a complex intertextual relationship (Degl’Innocenti Pierini 1990, De Vivo 1995, Schiesaro 2003, 70–85). The other animal species mentioned by Seneca – mares (*equae*), wild beasts (*ferae*), and birds (*aves*) – have strong Lucretian resonances as well (cf. e.g., Lucretius 1.10–20; 4.1197–1200). By using literary allusivity and *aemulatio* to expound Stoic doctrine, Seneca makes another effort to adapt his teachings to the educated profile of Marcia and early imperial readers.

vestigia: Cf. Lucretius 2.356; Ovid *Fast.* 4.463.

silvas pervagatae: Cf. Lucretius 2.355 (*viridis saltus peragrans*); Ovid 4.460.

adest dolori suo: According to the anthropocentric cosmology of the Stoics, which is carefully elucidated by Seneca in *Epistles* 121 and 124 as well as at several points of his *Natural Questions* (Tutrone 2012, 174–195; 274–291), humans alone among mortal creatures are rational and have a conscious understanding of pleasure and pain. The verb *adsum* is used here to indicate the rational participation of humans in the physical experience of pain (as in the more common expression *adsum animo* or *animis*: e.g., Ter. *An.* 24; Cic. *Sull.* 33; *Phil.* 8.30). The case of Marcia demonstrates that this natural privilege is a double-edged weapon, for, insofar as “the emotions of humans depend not on what they feel but on what they decide” (*nec tantum quantum sentit sed quantum constituit adficitur*), moral agents like Marcia can either stop or protract their grief – an option which is beyond the control of other animals *qua* non-rational beings.

7.3 non esse hoc naturale: Seneca’s argument about the unnaturalness of unrestrained grief (*luctibus frangi*) may sound odd to our modern ears – accustomed as they are to the Romantic identification of natural spontaneity with

passionate expression – but is completely consistent with Stoic ethics and natural philosophy. As reported by Cic. *Acad.* 1.38–39, Zeno of Citium opposed the view of earlier thinkers that the emotions are natural (*perturbationes naturales esse*) and serve a useful purpose in human life. From Cic. *Tusc.* 3.71–75, one can deduce that prominent among such earlier thinkers were the Peripatetics. Indeed, when dealing with the emotion of anger (*Ira* 1.9–17), Seneca refers the view opposed by Zeno especially to Aristotle and Theophrastus. As Graver 2002, 117, notes, “from a Stoic point of view, the representation of any emotion as ‘natural’ amounts to an evasion of responsibility for what may be very questionable kinds of behavior. It is better to insist that grief is indeed voluntary, meaning not that one chooses to suffer, but that the emotion is caused by beliefs which we are not constrained to hold, and which we would not hold if we pressed harder for consistency of view”. It should be added that, as Wildberger 2006a, I, 205–243, points out, the Stoic model of nature is inherently hierarchic insofar as it implies a depiction of the cosmos as a vast filigree of lower and higher forms of life – the so-called *scala naturae* – with humans and gods at the top of the pyramid *qua* rational beings (cf. e.g., Sen. *Ep.* 124.13–15). Though living in a mortal body, wise humans have the same rationality as the gods – the gods being “freed from terrors by the bounty of nature (*naturae beneficio*), the wise man by his own bounty” (Sen. *Ep.* 53.11–12). For the Stoics, understanding what is truly natural – i.e., what is truly rational and wise – requires careful study and constant self-improvement, as becoming wise means identifying with the universal λόγος that rules and permeates the cosmos. This is the reason why, as Ps.-Plut. *Plac. Phil.* 874E, and Cic. *Off.* 2.5–6 attest, the achievement of Stoic wisdom (σοφία = *sapientia*) is not possible without the practice of philosophy (φιλοσοφία = *philosophia*), which is defined as the exercise of that art – the art of virtue (ἀρετή = *virtus*) – which leads one to this knowledge (ἄσκησιν ἐπιτηδείου τέχνης). In his *Epistles*, Seneca repeatedly notes that, even if many areas of study are morally useless, the perfection of one’s rational nature can be reached only through philosophical study – that is, by “learning about things divine and human, the past and the future, the ephemeral and the eternal, and by learning about time” (*de divinis humanisque descendum est, de praeteritis de futuris, de caducis de aeternis, de tempore, Ep.* 88.33; cf. also 89.4–8). It is thus not surprising that in our passage the emotion of grief is said to wound “women more than men, barbarians more than people of peaceful, cultured races, and the uneducated more than the educated” (*magis feminas quam viros, magis barbaros quam placidae eruditaeque gentis homines, magis indoctos quam doctos*). As a natural event, bereavement exerts the same pressure on the souls of all human beings (*eadem orbitas*). It is the degree of rational perfection of individuals that makes the difference. Educated people and people born in

civilized countries have more intellectual resources at their disposal and are thus more likely to acquire the degree of rational awareness which is necessary to resist emotions. In the end, naturalism, rationalism, ethnocentrism, and – to a certain extent – sexual discrimination tend to overlap in the view of Seneca and the Stoics. As for the sensitivity of women, here and elsewhere Seneca seems to consider their special condition and disposition as well as the actual gap in female education that afflicted the ancient world – which, however, does not amount to a categorical exclusion of women from the possibility of attaining wisdom (see above, note on *Marc.* 1.1, *ab infirmitate muliebris animi*). With this Stoic background in mind, there is no reason to subscribe to Manning’s 1981, 56, speculative thesis that Seneca’s argument depends on a Peripatetic source. Rather, it seems likely that Seneca is arguing against the Peripatetic idea of ‘natural’ emotions.

non esse naturale quod varium est: The principle that things that derive their force from nature maintain the same force in every instance and never show variation is another corollary of Stoic natural teleology. A thorough discussion of this principle, with special regard to animal and human biology, is offered by Seneca in *Epistle* 121, a text which, as acknowledged by the author in the very first chapter, is indebted to the teaching of the Stoics Posidonius and Archedemus (Tieleman 1996, 179–180). After noting that the art of animals such as bees and spiders “is born, not taught” (*nascitur ars ista, non discitur*), and that “no animal is more skilled than any other” (*nullum est animal altero doctius*), Seneca (*Ep.* 121.23) concludes that “whatever human art communicates is uncertain and uneven” (*incertum est et inaequabile quidquid ars tradit*), whereas “the assignments of nature are always uniform” (*ex aequo venit quod natura distribuit*). Conceptually, the examples of fire (*ignis*) and steel (*ferum*) deployed in the present passage are not different from those of the spider-webs and the honeycomb cells provided by Seneca in *Epistle* 121. Since Seneca has just referred to the exemplary behavior of animals, one can safely assume that the entire chapter is based on earlier Stoic sources.

7.4 *Paupertatem luctum abiectioem*: Following Traina 1990, 45–47, I prefer to correct the MS reading *ambitionem* (which is accepted by Reynolds 1977) into *abiectioem*, as *ambitionem* is at odds with Seneca’s philosophical argument. Seneca is focusing on the Stoic notion of “indifferents” (ἀδιάφορα) – which encompasses all those things that are “neither goods nor evils” (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.102 = *SVF* 3.117) – and on the error of human beings who, misled by “a preformed belief in the frightfulness of things that should not be feared” (*prae-sumpta opinio de non timendis terribilis*), regard indifferents as evils. Among Stoic indifferents, “those objects that tend to attract or repel us are promoted and

dispromoted, respectively, while those that do neither comprise a third category of thoroughly indifferent things. Health and wealth are standard Stoic examples of the promoted, sickness and poverty of the dispromoted” (Klein 2015, 237). Grief (*luctus*) is an inappropriate reaction to death (θάνατος), a dispromoted indifferent that Diogenes Laertius (*Vit.* 7.102 = *SVF* 3.117; cf. also *SVF* 3.119; 122–123) couples with poverty (πενία), ill-repute (ἀδοξία), and low birth (δυσγένεια). Seneca’s reference to *paupertas*, *luctus*, and *abiectio* clearly draws on the same tradition (cf. also below, note on *Marc.* 9.4, *de exilio, de egestate, de luctu*). The writer tries to widen Marcia’s view of, and the conventional consolatory discourse on, grief by drawing attention to other human experiences which fall within the Stoic category of dispromoted indifferents: poverty and social exclusion. With a rather technical re-adaptation of Greek philosophical language, Seneca reminds us that the main reason for the confusion between such indifferents and true evils is a wrong rational judgement, an *opinio* (or δόξα) which arouses unjustified fears (*terribilis*) and is typically preconceived (*praesumpta*) as it tends to arise immediately after birth and in early childhood (cf. *Sen. Ep.* 115.11–12, and Calcidius, *Comm. in Tim.* 165–168 = *SVF* 3.229, with the comments of Tieleman 2003, 160–163, and Graver 2012, 123–127). The variability of individual emotions, which the Stoics consider a sign of their unnatural origin, is also connected by Seneca with the gradual creation of habits (*consuetudo* = ἔθος). Seneca’s preoccupation is shared by Epictetus (*Diss.* 1.27.3–14), who, when dealing with the issues of parental sorrow and untimely death, suggests “opposing to one habit the contrary habit” (ἀντίθεος τῷ ἔθει τὸ ἐναντίον ἔθος). The Stoic view that the emotions resulting from repeated assent to false impressions are habit-forming has already been recalled in the first chapter (see above, notes on *Marc.* 1.5, *magis iam ex consuetudine quam ex desiderio*, and on 1.7, *sibi ius mora fecit*). Here Marcia is taught that the corruptive influence (*infecit*) of *consuetudo* and *opinio* makes the human mind “weak and unable to endure” (*inbecillum inpatientemque*), that is, liable to cowardice (δειλία) and unable to achieve the virtues of courage (ἀνδρεία) and fortitude (καρτερία), which according to Chrysippus are manifested in acts of endurance (ὑπομονά). See Jedan 2009, 163–169.

8.1 *quod naturale est non decrescit mora*: In this section on general *praecepta*, the conventional consolatory *topos* that time heals grief (for which see above, note on *Marc.* 1.6, *naturale remedium temporis*) is approached from the broader perspective of Stoic naturalism. The previously cited idea that things in accord with nature never show variation is further developed with special regard to the effects of temporal variation – which is Seneca’s elegant and philosophically orthodox way of reviving one of the tritest commonplaces of the consolatory genre (cf. *Sen. Ep.* 63.12, *pertritum iam hoc*). In accordance with the Stoic thesis reported by Cic. *Tusc.* 3.74, Seneca considers the disappearance of

grief over time a proof of the unnatural character of this and other emotions *qua* wrong beliefs (δόξα). For the Stoics, as time passes, the truth or falsity – i.e., the ‘naturalness’ or ‘unnaturalness’ – of rational judgements reveals itself.

dies longa: A conventional *iunctura* of the consolatory discourse: cf. e.g., Plin. *Ep.* 8.5.3.

8.2 *duxisse callum*: An allusion to the Stoic theory that, after repeated assent to the same perceptive appearance (φαντασία) and the related emotion, the mind becomes ‘callous’ (τυλοῦται, Epict. *Diss.* 2.18.11). See above, note on *Marc.* 2.2., *se tradidit ferendam dolori*.

animus relaxabitur: Seneca’s description of Marcia’s mind, with its alternation of “tense” and ‘relaxed’ states reflecting different cognitive activities, is based on the Stoic materialist understanding of the soul as “breath” (πνεῦμα = *spiritus*), that is, as a part of the cosmic matter endowed with a particular “tension” (τόνος = *intentio*): see *SVF* 3.429–462. According to Stobaeus, *Ecl.* 2.7.51 (= *SVF* 3.112), knowledge is “a disposition to receive perceptive appearances, which cannot be changed by argument (ἔξιν φαντασιῶν δεκτικὴν ἀμετάπτωτον ὑπὸ λόγου), which they (*scil.* the Stoics) say consists in tension and power (ἦντινά φασιν ἐν τόνῳ καὶ δυνάμει κεῖσθαι)”. As Inwood 1985, 32, points out, “the *tonos* of one’s mind is of critical importance for the nature of one’s impulses and in general for determining how an animal will interact with its environment. [. . .] Individual acts of one’s cognitive powers are determined by the *tonos* of the disposition which governs them”. Seneca expects that Marcia’s mind (*animus* = ἡγεμονικόν) will naturally loosen its emotional tension over time. However, as a rational subject, Marcia can either restrict herself to tolerating the effects of pre-emotions (*permittas maerere*) or prolong her tense state by confirming her assent to the emotion of grief (*imperes*). The same description of the difference between pre-emotions and emotions recurs in *Ep.* 99.16 (*permittamus illis cadere, non imperemus*). Cf. also Sen. *Polyb.* 18.5–6.

8.3 *morum tuorum elegantiae*: Like Panaetius and other earlier Stoics, Seneca recognizes in truly moral behavior an ‘aesthetic’ dimension, an authentic kind of beauty and elegance that can be usefully contemplated by other social actors (Brunt 2013) but can also become a source of anxiety for elite individuals (Bartsch 2006, 216–221). This dimension is particularly evident in the concepts of πρόσωπον (= *persona*) and καθῆκον (= *officium*), which are central to Cicero’s reception of Stoicism and to the Roman cultural discourse *sensu lato*.

finem luctus potius facere quam expectare: That a wise person should abandon grief, rather than have grief abandon him, is a well-known commonplace of the consolatory genre. It is used, among many others, by Sulpicius Rufus (*ap. Cic. Fam. 4.5.6*), Cicero (*Fam. 5.16.6*), and Seneca himself (*Ep. 63.12*).

9.1 in deploratione nostri: The word *deploratio* is first attested in Seneca (see also *Ep. 74.11*, again with reference to the erroneous attitude of the unwise towards the evils and the goods of life). It may be Seneca’s neologism (as suggested by Traina 1987, 66–67), or a concession to colloquial usage (cf. e.g., the use of *deploratus* in the *sermocinatio* at *Ep. 78.14*).

si id non fit naturae iussu: With his doubtful question, the “generalized interlocutor” (Roller 2015, 60–61), who gives voice to the person in progress and hence to Marcia herself, underlines the conceptual connection between the immediately preceding section on the natural basis of grief and the new chapter on the premeditation of future evils. According to Seneca, what is really unnatural is not grief as an immediate physical response, but the prolongation of grief as a reason-based emotion resulting from ignorance of the true order of nature. The premeditation of future evils is thus introduced as a “spiritual exercise” (Hadot 1995, 23) bringing the human mind in closer contact with nature and its divinely established laws.

nihil nobis mali antequam eveniat proponimus: As in his later works (e.g., *Tranq. an. 11.8*; *Ira 2.31*; *Ep. 30.18*, *70.18*, *76.33–35*, *78.29*, *114.27*; *QNat. 6.32.12*), Seneca recommends the traditionally Stoic technique of the “premeditation of future evils” (*praemeditatio futurorum malorum*), which consists in familiarizing oneself in imagination with misfortunes to come (particularly with death), so as to understand the natural condition of all humans – for, in Seneca’s words, we usually “fail to learn from the misfortunes of others that they are common to all” (*alienis non admonemur casibus illos esse communes*), cf. Kassel 1958, 54–56 – fortify the mind in advance, and avoid being caught at a loss. The verb *proponere* describes the mental act of placing future events before one’s eyes and can be compared with the more common *praemeditari*, a calque of the Greek προμελετᾶν (cf. e.g., Plat. *Soph.* 218D; Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 6.71) already used by Cicero (*Tusc.* 3.28–34). According to Galen (*Plac. Hipp. Plat.* 4.7.8), other ‘technical’ verbs employed by the Stoics were προενδμεῖν, προαναπλάττειν, and προτυποῦν. In *Ep. 76.34*, Seneca uses *praecogitare*, which puts even more emphasis on the importance of imaginative-cum-rational thinking. As Armisen-Marquetti 2008, 105, points out, “*praemeditatio*, besides functioning as a spiritual exercise *a priori* – that is to say prophylactic, before the misfortune befalls – lent itself easily to becoming a consolation theme”, insofar as the overwhelming suffering of the bereaved could be explained as a lack of adequate

preparation (cf. Plut. *Cons. Apoll.* 112D; Sen. *Helv.* 5.3; Polyb. 11). The origins of the *praemeditatio* can be traced back to Anaxagoras – who allegedly commented on the death of his son by saying that he knew he had begotten a mortal (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.30, 58; Plut. *Cohib. Ir.* 463D; *Tranq. an.* 474D; Gal. *Plac. Hipp. Plat.* 4.7.9 = DK 46 A 33; but see Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 2.54–55 for a different attribution) – and to the Pythagorean school (Iambl. *Vit. Pyth.* 31.196). Combined with the *topos* of the *communis hominum condicio*, the claim that one must be prepared for death and sorrow appears in ancient tragedy (Cicero, *Tusc.* 3.28–29, quotes from an uncertain work by Euripides, fr. 964 Nauck, and from an unknown Latin tragedy, fr. 45 Ribbeck, possibly by Ennius) and in Roman comedy (Ter. *Phorm.* 241–251). As for philosophical thought, the Cyrenaics are said by Cicero to have argued that “distress is not produced by every misfortune, but only by a misfortune which was not foreseen and anticipated” (*insperato et necopinato malo*, Cic. *Tusc.* 3.28). However, Cicero’s mention of the Cyrenaics may be “on account of their differences with Epicurus” (Graver 2002, 97). What is much more certain is that the *praemeditatio* was recommended by several Stoic philosophers, including Panaetius (Plut. *Cohib. Ir.* 463D = fr. 115 van Straaten) and his pupil Posidonius (Gal. *Plac. Hipp. Plat.* 4.7.7–11 = fr. 165 Edelstein-Kidd; *pace* von Arnim, *SVF* 3.481–482, and Graver 2002, 97; 222–223, I see no solid basis for extending Galen’s *testimonium* to Chrysippus). Marcus Aurelius’ “entire *Meditations* can be read as an extended example of the premeditation of future evils and the examination of conscience” (Colish 2014, 99). Even more notably, while in his *Epistles* Seneca reserves the *praemeditatio* for sages (as a beginner, Lucilius is at first invited to shun it: *Ep.* 13.4–7; 74.33; see Armisen-Marchetti 2008, 107–110; Colish 2014, 100; *contra* Wildberger 2006b, 92–94), Marcia is considered skilled enough to embrace this practice at a relatively early stage. See now also Veillard 2021, 217–222.

9.2 *ducuntur exequiae*: Death was the main theme of the Stoic *praemeditatio futurorum malorum*, but Seneca gives it a distinctly Roman flavor by referring to the funeral procession – the *exequiae* or *pompa funeris* – that typically went through the streets of Rome and passed private houses (*praeter domum nostram*), since the Twelve Tables prescribed that all bodies should be cremated outside the city walls (Cic. *Leg.* 2.58). As acknowledged by Polybius (*Hist.* 6.53–54), the funeral of a Roman *nobilis*, with its display of ancestral wax masks (*imagines maiorum*), hired female mourners (*praeficae*), actors, and musicians, was an impressive social ritual. See Bettini 1986, 176–193, Flower 1996, 91–158, and Graham 2011.

***acerba funera*:** See above, note on *Marc.* 4.2, *acerbo funere*.

togam nostrorum infantium: A symbolically crucial moment in the life of a freeborn Roman boy and his family was when he replaced his boyhood toga, the white and purple *toga praetexta*, with a pure white adult toga, the *toga virilis*. This usually happened when the child was in his mid-teens and marked his official transition to adulthood. A ceremony – a rite of passage taking place both in the house and in the Forum – was held to celebrate the transition (e.g., Plin. *Ep.* 10.116; Apul. *Apol.* 87), and commemorative inscriptions were sometimes carved (e.g., *CIL* 6.41182; 10.688). Probably, in the early republican era “the boy remained *praetextatus* till he was seventeen, the age at which he was legally capable of military service, and he went straight from home to the levy” (Fowler 2020, 94). Seneca’s mention of *militia* in this context shows that a symbolic association between the *toga virilis*, adulthood, and the levy was still perceived in the Julio-Claudian age.

9.3 expositum: As noted by Manning 1981, 62, the use of a masculine participle (here and elsewhere) demonstrates that, while healing Marcia’s grief, Seneca is also addressing a wider audience. Cf. also 17.1 (*genitus*) and 18.4 (*satiatus*).

tela: Seneca is fond of military metaphors describing the heroic struggle between humans (particularly the wise) and the arrows of fortune (see above, note on *Marc.* 5.6, *invidia fortunae*, and Armisen-Marchetti 1989, 313–335). Although such metaphors had become proverbial and had merged with the traditional Roman discourse on *virtus*, they recurred with special frequency in the Stoic tradition – which, already with Zeno and Chrysippus, contested and reinvented the military imagery of the ancient world (Schofield 1991, 49–52; Wildberger 2018, 17–18). Seneca considers warlike metaphors suitable for motivating beginners like Marcia and Lucilius (cf. e.g., *Ep.* 18.6) – who may or may not have ultimately become “Stoic warriors” in the militant sense advocated by a contemporary student of soldierly culture (Sherman 2005).

fortuna: Here the personified entity that the Stoic *proficiens* should address (again, in a self-elevating spiritual exercise) is not the divinely established fate (εἰμαρμένη) but chance (τύχη), the fickle giver and taker of ἀδιάφορα, whose influence on the life and choices of humans is fully acknowledged by earlier Stoics such as Panaetius (Johnson 2014, 151–152, 171, correcting the more deterministic interpretation of Dyck 1996, 285–286). As Beagon 2002, 122, notes, the notion of a contest appears in the early Roman tradition, “the portrayal of fortune as enemy being, of course, enhanced by the existence of military as well as moral connotations in the concept of *virtus*. But it was its adaptation and development in Stoic sources which seems to have generated a strong and distinguished tradition for the analogy”.

9.4 quasi perituras: The comparison with *Marc.* 10.3 (*ut recessura*) and with other Senecan works (e.g., *Ep.* 18.13, *QNat.* 3.praef.14) supports the emendation of *periturus* (which is the reading of **A**, accepted by Reynolds 1977) into *perituras* (as already proposed by Bentley). As Favez 1928, *ad loc.*, observed, Seneca's main concern here is not death *per se* but the idea that all goods – including life itself – are perishable and should be contemplated as such. See also Westerman 1961, 193, and Traina 1987, 69.

de exilio, de egestate, de luctu: This triadic list of ἀδιάρθορα (which are mistakenly regarded as evils by most humans), with its pleonastic repetition of *de*, seems reminiscent of traditional lists of moral topics suitable for consolatory and paraenetic writings. Furthermore, the themes of exile, poverty, and grief find perfect correspondence in the earlier triad of *Marc.* 7.4 (*paupertatem luctum abiectio-nem*) – which furnishes further support for the emendation of *ambitionem* into *abiectio-nem* (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 7.4).

dirum omen: In Roman religion, a *dirum omen* was any inauspicious sign observed in the surrounding environment (cf. Tac. *Hist.* 3.56; Val. Max. 1.6.10). However, Seneca's emphasis on the sphere of language and oral/aural experiences is consistent with the etymological discourse of Varro, *Ling.* 6.76, and Festus, *Gloss. Lat.* 195, as well as with the usage of earlier writers (e.g., Hor. *Carm.* 4.5.13; Verg. *Aen.* 2.190). As Oliphant 1912, 165, remarked, “the Roman *omen* thus corresponds to the Greek κληδών or φήμη”, both words designating a presage contained in a chance utterance. The imagery and language of Roman religious lore is also echoed in Seneca's claim that most people would “spit out” (*respuat*) the advice to meditate on future evils and would “bid the curse fall on the heads (*in capita abire iubeat*) of their enemies, or on the head of the unwelcome adviser himself”. Among other things, this is an opportunity for Seneca to show that Stoic fatalism and theology, though acknowledging the value of divination, diverge significantly from the irrational superstition of popular religion. For a slightly different attitude to the idea of *omen*, however, see above, *Marc.* 3.3.

9.5 Egregium versum: Seneca quotes a line of the late Republican mime-writer Publilius Syrus (C 34 Meyer = 11 Ribbeck²), which appears also in *Tranq. an.* 11.8–9 (again with reference to the *praemeditatio futurorum malorum*). Although Seneca often displays the typical contempt of Greek philosophers and Roman aristocrats for popular theatrical genres like mime (cf. *Ep.* 76.4; 88.22; Staley 2010, 48), he is prepared to admit that “a quantity of sagacious verses lie buried in the mime” (*quantum disertissimorum versuum inter mimos iacet*, *Ep.* 8.8). As for Publilius – a manumitted Syrian slave who was favored by Julius Caesar and defeated the anti-Caesarian mimographer Laberius in a memorable contest (Macrob. *Sat.* 2.7.1–11;

Sen. *Ira* 2.11.3; Sen. *Contr.* 7.3.9; Cic. *Fam.* 12.18.2) – Seneca (*Tranq.* 11.8) concedes that he was “more passionate than tragic and comic writers (*tragicis comicisque vehementior ingeniis*) whenever he abandoned the frivolities of mime and the words aimed at the gallery (*quotiens mimicas ineptias et verba ad summam caveam spectantia reliquit*)”. This, of course, does not cancel the fact that Publilius was a *malus auctor* – which is implied also in Seneca’s statement that the trimeter presented to Marcia “deserved better than to have come from the stage” (*dignum qui non e pulpito exiret*). According to Mazzoli 1970, 203–204, since the collection of Publilius’ *sententiae* (which includes several spurious verses and scribal distortions) was assembled in the first century AD, it is “almost certain” (“è quasi certo”) that Seneca used this collection (and not the original text of Publilius’ mimes) for his relatively frequent quotations – which in fact are mostly anonymous. For other Senecan quotations of Publilius’ *sententiae*, see *Ep.* 8.8, 9.21–22, 94.28–29, 94.43, 108.8–9 and 11–12 (cf. Paré-Rey 2009, 204–207).

effeminat: Seneca’s concluding claim that the unwise are made ‘womanish’ by their unpreparedness, together with the repeated use of *patior* (*patimur, pati*) – “the technical term of the passive role in intercourse” (Adams 1982, 189–190) – carries strong gender overtones. As Grahn-Wilder 2018, 269, points out, an aura of manliness unquestionably surrounds Stoicism and its lofty ideal of virtue. Suffice it to think of the capital virtue of ἀνδρεία, which, as reflected in the recurring *exempla* of Heracles and Socrates, “is congruent not only with an active and practical Greek conception of courage, but also with a heroic conception of that virtue” (Cullyer 2003, 228). Yet, Seneca can confidently propose to Marcia the Stoic model of wisdom insofar as “Stoic manliness is purely attributable to inner qualities such as self-control that can be achieved by both men and women” (Grahn-Wilder 2018, 270). Cf. also Wilcox 2006, 92–93.

10.1 circa nos ex adventicio: A marked reference to the ‘externality’ of worldly goods – to “the goods outside of the soul” (τὰ ἐκτὸς ἀγαθὰ, τὰ ἔξωθεν ἀγαθὰ, cf. *SVF* 3.117–123) that the Stoics, unlike Aristotle, do not consider *real* goods but at best “preferred indifferents” (προηγμένα ἀδιάφορα, Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.103–105; Hahn 1990, 3007–3010; Annas 1993, 282–287). The Latin adjective *adventicius* proves especially suitable for depicting the ‘foreign’ nature of such goods, which in this chapter *de communi hominum condicione* (cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 3.59; Kassel 1958, 54–56) are conventionally presented as precarious and entirely dependent on fortune. The asyndeton *liberi honores opes* gathers what (following Sharples 1983, 141–143) may be termed social and non-social external goods, the former category being exemplified by children, the latter by honors and wealth. However, a descending climax seems also implied.

excluserum clientium turba: This imposing picture of “large atria” (*ampla atria*) and “forecourts (*vestibula*) packed with a crowd of clients who are kept at bay” adds a distinctly Roman touch to Seneca’s treatment of a highly conventional consolatory theme – the *communis incertusque casus* befalling all humans, as Cicero, *Fam.* 5.17.3, has it. As a social institution creating reciprocal bonds between unequal agents, the *clientela* – together with the *patrocinium* and the *patronatus* – had its roots in the exchange practices of the early Republic. Though modern scholars disagree over its political significance throughout the history of Rome (see Lavan 2013, 176–210, for a brief survey), it is clear that the *clientela* underwent a kind of ‘credibility crisis’ in the first century AD. Seneca’s polemical reference to the morning ‘greeting’ (*salutatio*) of Roman clients, with its emphasis on social exclusion (*excluserum clientium*), finds an echo in several other works by early imperial writers – Juvenal is a case in point (Morton Braund 1996, 32–35) – as well as in Seneca’s own later writings (e.g., *Constant.* 10.2; *Tranq. an.* 12.4–6; *Brev. Vit.* 14.3–4; *Ep.* 4.10; 84.12; *Ben.* 6.33.4).

clarum <nomen>: A periphrastic translation for δόξα/εὐδοξία (cf. e.g., Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.102; 106 = *SVF* 3.117; 127), which is another “preferred indifferent”. Madvig’s textual supplement is universally accepted, *et pour cause*.

nobilis aut formosa coniunx: This is further evidence that Seneca is also addressing a male audience and does not feel the need to align all his arguments – most of which are drawn from earlier ‘androcentric’ traditions – with Marcia’s gender (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 9.3, *expositum*). While nobility of birth (εὐγένεια) and beauty (κάλλος) appear in traditional lists of Stoic ἀδιάφορα (such as that of Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.102), Seneca’s application of these concepts to the concrete issue of marriage – from a male perspective – seems to mirror the reality of the Roman world, in which ambitious men often tried to boost their social and political status through matrimonial alliance with the *nobilitas* (Treggiari 1991, 83–100).

alieni commodatique apparatus: With this description of external goods as equipment on loan, Seneca starts a didactic analogy based on commercial and legal notions that extends across the first three paragraphs of the present chapter. Pace Manning 1981, 64, the view of external possessions, and of life itself, as a loan is much older than Bion of Borysthenes (fr. 39A-D Kinderstrand) and the Hellenistic ‘diatribe’. As Millet 1991, 6, points out, “the sentiment that life was a loan to be repaid by death was an almost proverbial saying, appearing in many periods and places”. An epitaph attributed to Simonides (*Epigr.* 10.105 = Edmonds 1924, 370–371) claims that “we are all owed as a debt to death” (θανάτῳ πάντες ὀφειλόμεθα), which is a recurring idea both in the sepulchral epigrams of

the *Anthologia Graeca* (e.g., 337.4; 654.7; 664.8) and in Latin inscriptions (e.g., *CIL* 6.25617). What originally was a folk motif was further elaborated on the Athenian stage (Eur. *Andr.* 1271–1272; *Alc.* 418–419; 782–784; On Chong-Gossard 2013, 38–39) and by Greek philosophers – from Plato’s *Timaeus* (42E-43A) to the late Hellenistic *Axiochus* (367B), which partakes in the consolatory tradition (cf. e.g., Plut. *Cons. Apoll.* 116A). With his characteristic spirit of *aemulatio* and rhetorical *inventio*, Seneca rewrites this traditional argument from the viewpoint of Roman legal practice and juridical thought. In so doing, he follows in the footsteps of Lucretius (3.971) and Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.93), who had already deployed the contrasting notions of *mancipium*, *usus*, and *usura* to claim that life and external goods are not a stable possession, but a temporary loan with no fixed time for repayment. While Seneca’s use of the word *apparatus* (which often refers to the pomp attending public spectacles: Cic. *Off.* 2.55; Liv. 27.6.19) precludes the subsequent theatrical simile, the verb *commodare* evokes one of the two main kinds of loan formalized in Roman law (*Dig.* 44.7.1.1–3), i.e., the loan of things which should be returned in the identical form in which they were borrowed (*commodatum*). Of course, this is a metaphor perfectly suited to the case of human life. However, since many worldly goods – such as those just mentioned by Seneca – are often counterbalanced by losses in other respects, the second type of loan of the juridical tradition, the *mutuum*, is evoked immediately thereafter, when we hear that “we should not be proud of ourselves as though it were our own possessions that surround us (*tamquam inter nostra positi*): we have received them on loan (*mutua accepimus*)”. As a rule, *mutuum* refers to the loan of things (such as food and money) which must necessarily be consumed and can only be returned in a representative form by their material equivalents.

doneo: It may appear surprising that, for all his faith in the Stoic doctrine of divine providence, Seneca does not regard the goods of life as *gifts*. Yet, one of the main differences between the Stoic and Christian theories of providence lies precisely in the fact that the Stoics do not believe in a personal God acting as a supernatural giver of life – they do not even regard life as a good but as a preferred indifferent (Schall 1994, 4914–4915). What is more, Seneca is building on the Roman concept of *donum*, which typically refers to a gift object (Coffee 2017, 16) offered in the framework of an asymmetrical relationship – such as that between gods and humans celebrated in the gift of sacrifice – with no indication as to when and how the gift should be returned and/or reciprocated (Benveniste 2016, 70). For a Roman Stoic like Seneca who holds that life and health depend “on uncertain, fickle chance” (*ex incerta et mobili sorte*) – that is, on τύχη, not on providence (πρόνοια) – the crucial contrast here is that between gift (*donum*) and loan (*commodatum/mutuum*). Later on, however, when it comes to expressing the concept that death is the human way to repay the

gift of life (at an unpredictable time), Seneca purposely uses the word *munus* (*ille arbiter muneris sui*, 10.2), which by definition designates “a gift carrying the obligation of an exchange” (Benveniste 2016, 69).

scaena: The idea that life is a stage, and we are actors performing a role, is deep-rooted in Stoic philosophy and its four-*personae* theory, to which Seneca has already alluded (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 1.2, 4.3, and 6.1). As summed up by Seneca himself (*Ep.* 77.20), the Stoic view is that “it is with life as it is with a play (*quomodo fabula, sic vita*) – it matters not how long the action is spun out, but how good the acting is” (*non quam diu, sed quam bene acta sit, refert*). Early Stoics such as Aristo of Chios (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.160; Ioppolo 1980, 196–197) compare the wise man “to a good actor (τῷ ἀγαθῷ ὑποκριτῇ), who, if called upon to take the part of a Thersites or an Agamemnon, will impersonate them both becomingly (ὄς ἂν τε Θερσίτου ἂν τε Ἀγαμέμνονος πρόσωπον ἀναλάβῃ, ἐκάτερον ὑποκρίνεται προσηκόντως)”. The contrast between the humble mask of Thersites and the towering role of Agamemnon reappears in Epictetus (*Diss.* 4.2.9–10; cf. also 3.22.7–8), who, however, puts much more emphasis on the moral value of consistency (Johnson 2014, 164; Brouwer 2019, 40–43), a preoccupation that goes back at least to Panaetius and Cicero (*Off.* 1.119–120) and is shared by Seneca at *Ep.* 120.22. In the present passage, Seneca’s original development of the world-as-stage metaphor – whose impressive *Nachleben* has been variously explored (e.g., Curtius 1993, 148–151; Link/Niggel 1981) – revolves around the depiction of external goods as “borrowed props that will revert to their owners” (*conlaticiiis et ad dominos redituris instrumentis*). By recalling the practice of returning the stage objects day by day, Seneca frames a conventional philosophical argument with a notably realistic picture of Roman theatrical life. Seneca may have in mind the staging of highly popular genres such as pantomime (cf. e.g., Tac. *Ann.* 1.77), which until well after the triumph of Christianity was performed “in every corner of the Roman Empire” (Hall 2013, 451–452). The *instrumenta* for pantomime – as well as for other kinds of local *ludi* – may sometimes have been borrowed from private *domini*, for, on the one hand, “in terms of external equipment and accoutrements, the pantomime was minimalist” (Webb 2008, 47), and, on the other hand, the upper-class houses of the early imperial era mirrored “a discourse of theatricalism” (Beacham 2013, 362).

10.2 Usus fructusque: In Roman law, the *usus fructus* is a personal servitude consisting in “the right to use and enjoy another’s property without impairing its substance” (*ius alienis rebus utendi fruendi salva rerum substantia*, *Dig.* 7.1.1). With this further allusion to Roman *ius*, Seneca strengthens his point that fortune (*sors*) is the only real giver of life, and that humans cannot change the substance of things.

arbiter: Fortune is an *arbiter*, not a *iudex*, because, as Seneca, *Ben.* 3.7.5, reminds us, an *arbiter* has greater discretionary power than a *iudex* and “can add or subtract things from the case at will” (*et detrahere aliquid potest et adicere*). Cf. above, note on *Marc.* 4.1, *ad arbitrium tecum veniam*.

pessimi debitoris: The relational asymmetry between debtor and creditor – which becomes increasingly prominent in Seneca’s day as the archaic economy of patronage and gift-exchange is rendered more and more obsolete by imperial autocracy and commodity trade (Coffee 2017, 151–164) – is used as a metaphor for the power of fortune. The loan/debt metaphor is developed at length in *On Benefits* (e.g., *Ben.* 1.1.1, 1.4.6; cf. *Cic. Off.* 2.69, 71), where, nonetheless, Seneca is concerned to distinguish sharply between *creditum* and *beneficium* (e.g., *Ben.* 1.1.3, 3.15–14, 4.3.3, 7.14.5; cf. also *Ep.* 81.9–17). See Griffin 2013, 39–40, and Picone 2013, 36–42.

10.3 legem nascendi: As attested by abundant epigraphic evidence, the belief that there is a natural order according to which the younger should outlive the elder was quite common in Roman culture (see above, note on *Marc.* 1.2, *nec scio an et optaveris*). Yet, Seneca’s use of the term *lex* twice in this chapter – for we will now hear that Metilius came into being under a regulation that imposed death on all humans (10.5) – should also be read in light of the fact that the Stoics were the first to formulate a theory of natural *law* as distinct from the more general concept of natural *justice* (Striker 1987, Mitsis 1994).

exemptum tauctore†: Both the reading of **A**, *exemplum auctore*, and Justus Lipius’ minimal emendation, *exemplum ab auctore*, make no sense. Madvig 1873, 348, followed by Reynolds 1977 and Traina 1987, corrects the MS reading into *exempto auctore*, which he considers equivalent to *sine auctore* (“with no guarantor”) on the basis of Seneca’s use of the expression *exempto discrimine* in the same work (16.8; cf. also *Polyb.* 11.6: *exempto modo*). On this reading, Seneca warns that one should treat all of fortune’s gifts “as coming without a guarantee” (Hine 2014, 15). Favez 1928, *ad loc.*, and Manning 1981, 65, accept Pichon’s emendation *exempturo auctore*, which implies that one must possess whatever fortune has given “as if the giver will one day take it away”. However, ablative absolute constructions with a future participle are attested only from Livy on, and, as Manning himself acknowledges, there is no Senecan parallel for such usage. Madvig’s emendation remains more likely than Pichon’s, but it should be admitted that the MS reading *exemplum* could more economically be emended to *exemptum* (the confusion of *t* and *l* being common in minuscule script), which, above all, would give us a parallel for *quidquid* and *datum*. Moreover, in Roman legal language (on which Seneca is largely drawing), the word *auctor* can designate both the seller of a good and the guarantor (or security) brought by the

seller himself – the latter being properly the *auctor secundus* (Dig. 21.2.4). Metaphorically speaking, fortune is more likely to appear as the owner/seller of its goods than as a guarantor. Therefore, Seneca could be suggesting that every good of fortune should be possessed as if it had been taken away (*tamquam exemptum*) in the absence, or without the consent, of the real giver. An ablative absolute such as *absente auctore* (cf. Cic. *Flac.* 93.7) or *invito auctore* may have been lost in the manuscript tradition, but since it is impossible to reconstruct with certainty Seneca’s original phrasing, it may be wise to put a *crux* after *exemptum*. Among other things, interpreting *exemptum* in its proper meaning of “taken away” (and not as an alternative form for *sine* or *nullo*) establishes a better connection with the subsequent paragraph, where Seneca urges his readers to “seize” (*rapite*) the pleasures afforded by their children and describes human life as a “looting” (*rapina*).

10.4 *Rapite ex liberis voluptates*: This is not one of Seneca’s several allusions to Epicurean thought, as a superficial reading might suggest. As Tsouna 2020, 166, pointed out, Epicurus and his followers sharply criticized earlier hedonists such as the Cyrenaics for their “hedonic presentism”, that is, for their “anti-rational and amoral pursuit of day-to-day pleasures” possibly resulting from “superstitious beliefs and fears” (cf. Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 10.131–132; Philod. *De elect.* 2.5–3.18, 17.1–3; Diog. Oen. frs. 2.3.7–14, 44, 49 Smith). Rather, what Seneca is incorporating here is the classical literary motif of *carpe diem* (“seize”, or, more properly, “pluck the day”) – the poetic invitation to contemplate the frailty of the human condition and consequently to enjoy present pleasures. At Rome, such motif had been made famous by Catullus (5) and Horace (*Od.* 1.11) but had its recognizable roots in Greek epic (e.g., Hom. *Il.* 6.146–149) and lyric (e.g., Mimn. frs. 1–2 West). As usual, Seneca carries out a refined strategy of *aemulatio* (Tutrone 2020, 181–184) and innovatively applies the *carpe diem* attitude – which is typical of erotic contexts (Ancona 1994, 56–57) – to the experience of parental love. Traditional themes – such as the lack of, and longing for, children (Mimn. 2.13–14 West), or the awareness of the looming night (Catull. 5.5–6) – are both alluded to and refashioned.

***magnam advocatorem*:** Another technical term of judicial language, usually indicating the time allowed for procuring legal assistance (Cic. *Sull.* 81; *Fam.* 7.11.1; Sen. *Contr.* 3.praef.17.5), or the concept of judicial aid in itself (Cic. *Verr.* 2.1.129; *Fam.* 7.10.2; Sen. *Vit. Beat.* 9.3). But Seneca often deploys *advocatio* in the more general sense of “delay” (*Ira* 1.18.1; *Ep.* 22.11; *QNat.* 7.10.1).

instatur a tergo: Seneca switches to a military metaphor, which is made explicit by the terms *comitatus* (“unit” or “retinue” of soldiers) and *contubernia* (“tent-companionship” and, metonymically, the body of soldiers dwelling together in a tent). Especially effective is the ablative absolute *sublato clamore*, which captures both the loud lamentations of ancient funeral rites and the battle cries of the soldiers assaulted in their tents. Cf. Traina 1987, 72.

Rapina rerum omnium: This is the first metaphorical use of *rapina* in Latin literature. It is framed in a characteristically plain Senecan *sententia*, which conjoins the writer’s judicial and military metaphors. Like Reynolds 1977 and Traina 1987, I do not see any reason for accepting Justus Lipsius’ emendation (*rapina rerum omnium est (miseri nescitis?) et fuga vivere*), which has been more recently revived by Scarpata 1965.

10.5 *crimen*: The legal metaphor continues. Now Marcia is supposed to bring her *cahiers de doléances* to the tribunal of nature but is reminded of the real time when the alleged *crimen* occurred: this is the moment of birth, when every human is given official notice (*denuntiata*) of the content of natural law (*in hanc legem natus est*). By using this legal jargon, Seneca tries to reframe the archaic *topos* of the common condition of humankind – what Kassel 1958, 54, considers the ‘hard core’ of ancient consolatory arguments (the “Gedankenkreis, der aus der frühgriechischen Menschenauffassung erwachsen, den älteren, in allem Wandel stets bewahrten Bestand der *argumenta consolatoria* konstituiert”) – in the context of Roman culture and Stoic naturalism (cf. also below, note on *Marc.* 11.1, *partes deflere*). The same theme is repeatedly presented as a cornerstone of Stoic philosophical anthropology in Seneca’s writings (e.g., *Tranq. an.* 11.6; *Ep.* 4.9; 120.14) and resurfaces in the writer’s later consolations (*Polyb.* 11.2–3; *Ep.* 99.8).

10.6 *In regnum fortunae*: Seneca’s use of the politically resonant word *regnum* introduces a description of fortune as a tyrant which draws on traditional Roman stereotypes. As Smith 2006, 59–62, has shown, the Roman discourse on tyranny and the so-called *adfectatio regni* (“aspiration to kingship”) dates back to a much earlier time than the late Republic (when Cicero and other writers make the negative semantics of *regnum* transparent), for “tyranny at Rome, and more importantly its suppression, was a real phenomenon, and part of a political discourse in its own time”. As a dramatist, Seneca wrote an important chapter in the history of the idea of *regnum* (Picone 1984, Schiesaro 2003) by devising emblematic figures of tyrants such as Atreus (*Thyestes*) and Lycus (*Hercules Furens*). According to Reid 1973, 132, and Manning 1981, 66–67, here Seneca is presenting fortune

as the stock tyrant figure of the rhetorical schools. Certainly, there is a strong rhetorical element in Seneca's recurring portraits of *fortuna*, but the present paragraph seems grounded in a wider cultural discourse. Like Tarquinius Superbus (whose arrogance made the *nomen regium* hateful to the Romans: Cic. *Rep.* 1.62) and Cicero's would-be tyrants (Smith 2006, 49–56), fortune exerts unrestrained power (*arbitrium*) and offends the *dignitas* of her subjects (*digna atque indigna passuri*). The asyndetic series of adverbs *inpotenter contumeliose crudeliter* recalls three typically tyrannical vices: intemperance (*inpotentia*), insolence (*contumelia*) – both of which are ascribed by Cicero (*Phil.* 5.24) to Antony – and cruelty (*crudelitas*), which is the hallmark of wicked kingship in Seneca's treatise *On Mercy* (*Clem.* 2.4.1–3). The *crudelitas* of fortune is the same of Dionysius of Syracuse as later described in the *ad M.* (17.5), for, like Dionysius, fortune burns, beats, kills, and abuses her victims. More characteristically Roman (and Ciceroian) is fortune's love of civil strife (*id nunc hosti licebit, nunc civi*). In the end, however, Seneca's rhetoric of tyranny tries to match more closely the traditionally gendered model of *Fortuna* as an Italic goddess by turning what looked like a *dominus/rex* into “a temperamental, capricious owner (*domina*) who neglects her slaves” (Miano 2018, 125–132).

***in remedium*:** An allusion to the ancient medical practice of cauterization – the *extrema ratio* therapeutic approach (Hippoc. *Aph.* 7.87 = 4.608.1–3 L.) consisting in burning a part of the patient's body with an iron instrument (the so-called *καυτήρ/cauter* or *καυτήριον/cauterium*). In the Roman world, cauterization was often perceived as an invasive and violent treatment (see e.g., Plin. *HN* 29.13, on Archagatus' *saevitia secandi urendique*, and the evidence discussed by Jouanna-Bouchet 2007 and Bertonazzi 2019). The metaphorical implication here is that the evils brought about by bad fortune can ultimately prove beneficial – which is the central assumption of Stoic theodicy as reflected in Seneca's *On Providence* and in Areus' *adlocutio* to Livia (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 5.5, *adversi aliquid*).

***alios per incertos nudos maria iactabit*:** A clear echo of the epic tradition, whose heroes had become icons of the human struggle with destiny. The most obvious example is Odysseus, who at the end of Book 5 of the *Odyssey* is shipwrecked by Poseidon's storm and stranded naked on the island of the Phaeacians. The verb *iactabit* is especially reminiscent of the story of Aeneas, who is described by Dido as “vexed by the fates” (*iactatus fatis*, Verg. *Aen.* 4.14).

***explodet*:** Reynolds 1977 is right in noting in his apparatus that this is a *mirum verbum*. But the ‘surprise effect’, so to speak, is consciously created by Seneca, and there is no need to look for conjectures. Originally, *explodo* was a theatrical verb referring to the practice of driving out an actor by making noise

(Cic. *QRosc.* 30; *De or.* 1.259; Hor. *Sat.* 1.10.77). However, a more general usage is attested in the works of poets such as Afranius (*Suspecta*, fr. 327 Ribbeck = Non. 2.273 Lindsay) and Lucretius (4.710). Since Seneca is re-evoking the atmosphere of epic narration, the use of a poetic verb capturing both the thunderous noise and the expulsive force of a sea storm seems perfectly appropriate. The hapax legomenon *decondet*, which appears immediately thereafter, is part of the same strategy of inter-generic *aemulatio*. It is also possible that Seneca is building on, and alluding to, archaic Latin texts (epic or dramatic) that have not survived to us.

in alicuius immensae ventrem beluae: The epic/Odyssean background of the whole passage prompts comparison with the myth of Charybdis and Scylla (Hom. *Od.* 12.426–446). However, ancient Mediterranean folklore included many stories of travelers being swallowed and buried in the stomach of huge sea creatures. Lucian’s satirical exploration of a belligerent continent hidden inside the body of a whale (*Ver. hist.* 1.30–2.1) is just a late example of “the mythical and literary tradition of heroic encounters with sea-monsters” (Georgiadou/Larmour 1998, 156–157) which is exemplified by the myths of Heracles’ rescue of Hesione (Hellanicus *ap. Schol. AB Gen.* 2 Hom. *Il.* 20.146 = FrGrH 1.4 F26B; Sext. *Emp. Adv. Math.* 1.255) and of Perseus saving Andromeda (Ogden 2008, 68–99). Seneca may be echoing both classical myths and popular travel tales – all of which are based on a cross-cultural motif, variously reframed from the Old Testament Book of Jonah to Sinbad’s voyages in *The Thousand and One Nights*. Cf. also Lawrence 1962, 294–296.

11.1 *partes deflere:* Seneca goes on with his conventional discussion *de communi hominum condicione* (= περὶ φύσεως ἀνθρωπίνης, Men. *Rhet.* 414.2–6), which is aimed at reminding Marcia of the adage (Men. fr. 650 Körte = Stob. *Ecl.* 4.56.6a.2) that “one must bear misfortunes in a human (i.e., sensible and moderate) manner (ἀνθρωπίνως)”. Having dealt with the multiple evils of fortune, Seneca now enlarges his perspective to restate the general principle that “the whole of life requires tears” (*tota flebilis vita est*). This is indeed one of the oldest commonplaces of classical literature, first attested in Homer’s *Iliad* (24.523–526), where Achilles tells Priam that “chill lament” (κρυερός γόος) is useless, for “this is the way the gods spun the thread for wretched mortals (ὡς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι), to live in grief, while they feel no affliction (ζῶειν ἀχνημένοι· αὐτοὶ δὲ τ’ ἀκηδέες εἰσί)”. Seneca’s claim that new misfortunes (*nova incommoda*) will assail Marcia before she has dealt with the old (*priusquam veteris satis feceris*) is reminiscent of Achilles’ concluding advice that mourning will not bring Hector back before Priam suffers some other ill (πρὶν καὶ κακὸν ἄλλο πάθησθα, *Il.* 24.551). The pessimism of Homer and archaic Greek poetry is widely

echoed in later philosophical and consolatory writings, particularly in those of the Socratic movement (in which the Stoics figure prominently: Vander Waerdt 1994, 241–308). Socrates himself seems to have taught that all humans are condemned by nature to die (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 2.35), and his ascetic reflections on death – as reported in Plato’s *Phaedo* and *Apology* – are richly elaborated in the Academic tradition (Scourfield 2013, 13–14). Particularly influential is Crantor’s consolatory re-use of earlier maxims in his work *On Mourning* (Περὶ πένθους), which the Stoic Panaetius recommended to Aelius Tubero to learn by heart (Cic. *Luc.* 135; Graver 2002, 187–194). According to Plutarch (*Cons. Apoll.* 104C = Mullach 1881, 147), Crantor claimed that “even at our birth (φουμένους) there is conjoined with us a portion of evil in everything (μίνυται τις ἐν πᾶσι κακοῦ μοῖρα), for the very seed of life, since it is mortal, participates in this causation (τὰ γὰρ τοι σπέρματα εὐθὺς θνητὰ ὄντα ταύτης κοινωνεῖ τῆς αἰτίας)”. Crantor’s claims could easily be integrated into the Stoic doctrine on cosmic ‘seeds’ and natural causation. Moreover, Crantor found abundant support for his consolatory-cum-anthropological views in ancient poets and made lavish use of quotations from such diverse sources as Homer, Pindar, Euripides, and Menander (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 4.26; Plut. *Cons. Apoll.* 103–105). However, by the time of Seneca, the idea that the whole of life requires tears because of the constitutional weakness of humans was a common refrain shared by many philosophical schools, from Cynicism (e.g., Teles, in the edition of Hense 1909, 49–51; 59–60) to Epicureanism (Metrod. fr. 53 Körte = Stob. *Ecl.* 3.16.21.5). In his philosophical oeuvre, Seneca often invites his readers to meditate upon death and the other evils which are innate in humans since birth (e.g., *Tranq. an.* 1.13; 11.6; *Polyb.* 11.3; *Ep.* 4.9; 37.2; 120.14). Seneca’s meditation will be taken up by Christian writers, who will make use of the same trope in relation to the sinfulness of human beings (e.g., Ambr. *De Poen.* 1.90–1).

vobis maxime: This sudden transition to the second person plural has the purpose of reminding Marcia that, as a woman, she is part of a larger class of *proficientes* with specific inclinations and needs (cf. also *Helv.* 16). Seneca restates that, like most women, Marcia can benefit from the Peripatetic strategy of the moderation of the emotions (μετριοπάθεια), which is alluded to through the contrast between *moderandum est* and *inmoderate*. As mentioned earlier (see above, note on *Marc.* 3.4, *moderatus, mitius*), Seneca seems to regard the moderation of the emotions as a first-aid therapy and an intermediate stage on the path towards Stoic ἀπάθεια. By suggesting that Marcia should be aware of both the common condition of humankind and her special status as a female human being (*suae publicaeque condicionis*), the writer re-interprets the traditional discourse *de communi hominum condicione* from the perspective of Stoic

pedagogy, which devotes close attention to issues of gender and individual dispositions (see above, note on *Marc.* 1.1, *ab infirmitate muliebris animi*). This double focus on humankind and the female gender is faithfully reflected in Seneca’s admonitory statement that Marcia was born a mortal *and* gave birth to mortals (*mortalis nata es mortalesque peperisti*): she was a frail being *and* carried in her womb (*gestasse*) a frail creature.

humani pectoris <vis>: A reads *pectus*, which is certainly a corruption of *pectoris* (required by *humani*). The minimal supplement *vis* (first proposed by Madvig) allows us to restore the form *pectoris vis*, which is consistent with the Stoic view of the soul as a material vivifying substance. Moreover, the verb *dispensare* is often attested in association with *vis/vires* to express the idea of devoting one’s resources to a task (see e.g., Sen. *Controv.* 1.praef. 15; Sil. 9.244; Stat. *Theb.* 6.766). Seneca’s point is that the moderation of the emotions is especially suitable for the situation of women – who are said to be bound to encounter many griefs (*in multos dolores*) in accord with an epic and tragic stereotype.

putre fluidumque corpus: The Stoics hold that, like every worldly being, the human body is made up of perishable matter (ὕλη = *materia*) animated by a divine principle – which is the rational cause of all phenomena but is itself corporeal (cf. Sen. *Ep.* 65.2 = *SVF* 2.303; Wildberger 2006a, I, 3–20). Far from giving in to Platonic dualism, Seneca is thus reminding Marcia of her place in the Stoic cosmos: she is a mortal animal pervaded by fluids and composed of weak material (*inbecilla materia*), and her offspring cannot be as robust and everlasting (*solida et aeterna*) as the undifferentiated cosmic matter (οὐσία). The Stoic practice of meditating on one’s “weak, fragile body” (*inbecillum corpus et fragile*), “formed from feeble, impermanent constituents” (*ex infirmis fluidisque contextum*, 11.3), is shared by other ancient traditions, both within and beyond the Mediterranean basin. Buddhist meditation “on the repulsiveness of the body” (*patikulamanasikara*) as described in the early Theravadin scripture of *Satipatthana Sutta* is a case in point (Shearer 2020, 276).

causis [morbos] repetita: A’s reading *morbos* is deleted by Fickert (followed by Favez 1928, Viansino 1963, Reynolds 1977, and Manning 1981) and is interpreted as a corruption of *morbis* (which was probably a gloss on *causis*). By contrast, Gertz 1886 and Basore 1932 propose the emendation *causis morborum*, taking *morbos* as a corruption of the abbreviated genitive plural. Since the use of *causa* with the meaning of “disease” is widely attested in medical texts (e.g., Celsus, *Med.* 3.3.1; Plin. *HN* 28.218; Cael. *Aur. Tard. Pass.* 5.95; Veg. *Mulom.* 1.25.1) and in Seneca himself (*Ira* 3.10.3) – who “displays in his writings such a command of medicine that he convinced a nineteenth-century medical historian that he must have also

been an experienced medical practitioner” (Nutton 2004, 259; see now Courtil 2015, 147–348; 504–559) – Fickert’s explanation remains the most convincing.

11.2 *properant*: The belief that life is a journey to death – that “we are all being driven to a single end” (*omnes eodem cogimur*), as Horace, *Od.* 2.3.25, has it – is another culturally ingrained stereotype recurring in a variety of contexts, from sepulchral epitaphs to drama and philosophical literature (Kassel 1958, 73–75). Seneca’s earlier use of the image of navigation (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 5.5, *adversi aliquid*) operates within the same metaphorical sphere, which is repeatedly evoked in the *Consolation to Polybius* (9.9; 11.2–4). As noted by Montiglio 2005, 42, “the identification of human life with wandering comes to the fore in the concept of *homo viator*, which is central to the philosophies of the Stoics and the Neoplatonics” – although the terms *homo viator*, *viatores*, and *viagium* are not used in this sense until the Middle Ages. Here the phono-syntactic parallelism between *decessit* and *decucurrit* and the description of Marcia’s children fast approaching (*properant*) the finish line add an athletic overtone to the travel metaphor, while also emphasizing the shortness and speed of the existential journey. The verb *properare* is deployed for the same purpose in *Sen. Herc. fur.* 867–874 (cf. also *Cons. ad Liv.* 359). Of course, the metaphor of life as a race has a history of its own, encompassing such diverse writers as Lucretius (2.77–79) and Paul of Tarsus (Pfitzner 2013).

***in theatris <plaudit>*:** Since **A** lacks the verb after (or before) *in theatris*, several supplements have been attempted. On the basis of *Vit. beat.* 28.1 (*in circo aut theatro desidentibus*; cf. also *Ep.* 7.2: *in aliquo spectaculo desiderare*), Erasmus proposed *in theatris <desidet>*, which has been accepted by Viansino 1963 and transformed by Traina 1990, 47–48, into the paleographically more plausible *<vacat> in theatris*. The chiasitic *variatio* resulting from the supplement of a verb before *in theatris* can be supported by other Senecan examples (e.g., *Marc.* 6.3; *Polyb.* 12.1; *Ot.* 6.4; *Ep.* 9.17). However, it seems more reasonable to fill in the lacuna with a verb describing a characteristic activity of theatrical audiences – so as to restore the continuity with the other two members of the tricolon (*in foro litigat* and *in templis precatur*). Madvig’s *in theatris <plaudit>* (accepted by Reynolds 1977) is an attractive option, but there is no objective reason to discard alternative supplements such as Gertz’s *in theatris <spectat>*.

***et quae diligis [veneraris]*:** Fickert’s deletion of *veneraris* should be accepted with more confidence than Viansino 1963 and Reynolds 1977 have done. The perfect parallelism created by the polysyndeton *et quae diligis et quae despicias* leaves no room for *veneraris*, which is probably a gloss on *diligis* by a later (Christian) reader. See also Traina 1987, 74.

unus exaequabit cinis: “That we are equal in death, that death is the great leveler, was a popular idea with Sceptics and Epicureans; but in Rome individuals were not truly equals in death – in how they died (or were killed), how their remains were treated, how (or if) they were remembered in this world, or how their souls fared in the afterlife” (Kyle 1998, 128). When reminding Marcia that even the most iconic places of Roman law (*in foro*), art (*in theatris*), and religion (*in templis*) are subject to the universal rule of death, Seneca is aware of both the large philosophical consensus behind his views and the disparities created by social appreciation (*quae diligis*) or contempt (*quae despicias*). The list of Hellenistic philosophers using the death-the-leveler motif could be extended to several other schools such as the Cynics – whose claim that “Hades is a ‘democracy’ in which all are equal” is revived in Lucian’s dialogues (Desmond 2008, 66) – and the Stoics, who conceive of, and meditate on, death as an ‘indifferent’ bringing humans back to an undifferentiated world (e.g., Marc. Aur. 4.32–33, 48, 50, 6.24, with the comments of Gill 2003, 134–136). Philosophical meditations have their roots in folk wisdom, for Plautus (*Trin.* 490–494), who is the first Latin author to use the death-the-leveler motif, may simply be echoing a popular or comic adage. A more intellectually sophisticated version of the same *topos* can be found in Horace’s *Odes* (e.g., 2.3.17–28, 2.14; 3.1.9–16). Most notably, Seneca’s *Epistles* show how such popular claims could become part of a consistently Stoic view of nature and human history (cf. esp. *Ep.* 91.16).

11.3 *illa Pythicis oraculis adscripta <vox>*: Erasmus’ supplement *vox* is so simple and convincing that it is almost universally accepted. What is much more difficult is to fill in the lacuna before *illa* (as the sentence lacks a main verb). Erasmus’ proposal *iubet* is accepted by Viansino 1963, but there are, of course, other equally likely possibilities (such as *docet*, printed by Traina 1987). Quite understandably, Reynolds 1977 prefers to put a *crux* between *videlicet* and *illa*.

NOSCE TE: Seneca reports the famous motto “Know thyself” (γνῶθι σαυτόν) etched over the entrance to Apollo’s temple in Delphi. According to Plato (*Prt.* 342A–B) and Pausanias (10.24.1), the authors of this motto – which is often cited with two other Delphic maxims: “nothing in excess” (μηδὲν ἄγαν) and “pledge, and ruin is near” (ἐγγύα πάρα δ’ ἄτα) – were the Seven Sages of Greece. However, Diogenes Laertius (*Vit.* 1.40, quoting Antisthenes of Rhodes) and Porphyry (*ap. Stob. Ecl.* 3.21.26) ascribe the inscription to two different priestesses of Delphi (Phe-monoe and Phanothea, respectively). What is certain – and much more relevant – is that, from Heraclitus (DK B 101; Finkelberg 2017, 216–222) onwards, this archaic piece of religious wisdom was variously interpreted by philosophers and writers (Courcelle 1974). Plato (*Chrm.* 164C–165A) offered his own Socratic interpretation,

which put the main emphasis on the exercise of temperance (σωφρονεῖν) in accordance with divine will. Self-knowledge (τὸ γινώσκειν ἑαυτὸν) is commonly recognized to be a central element of Socratic thought as reflected in the writings of both Plato and Xenophon (Moore 2015). But, as shown already by Wilkins 1917, 14–45, over the course of time the Platonic and Peripatetic traditions developed different aspects of the Delphic-Socratic insight, focusing alternatively on the importance of knowing one’s measure, one’s place in the world, or one’s natural limits (cf. e.g., Plut. *Sept. sapient. conv.* 164B; *De garrul.* 511B). Most importantly, in the words of the emperor Julian (*Or.* 6.6.185D–186A), the Stoics – who were equally eager to revive the heritage of Socrates – “made ‘know thyself’ into the main point of their philosophy (κεφάλαιον τίθενται φιλοσοφίας), [. . .] for they made the end living in consistency with nature (τὸ γὰρ ὁμολογουμένως ζῆν τῇ φύσει τέλος ἐποίησαντο), which cannot be achieved if one does not know who one is, and of what nature one is (οὐ̄περ οὐ̄χ οἶόν τε τυχεῖν τὸν ἀγνοοῦντα τίς καὶ ὁποῖος πέφυκεν)”. The Stoic interest in, and re-interpretation of, the Delphic motto is confirmed by Epictetus (*Diss.* 3.1.18–19; *Diss. fr.* 1 = Stob. *Ecl.* 2.1.31; MacGillivray 2020, 132–134) and Cicero (*Leg.* 1.58–62; *Fin.* 3.73 = *SVF* 3.282, 5.44; *Tusc.* 1.52; 5.70; Brouwer 2014, 34–36), though the latter tends to combine Stoic and Academic materials. Here Seneca follows a line of interpretation which is typical of consolation literature, according to which knowing oneself primarily means recognizing one’s mortal – i.e., human and non-godlike – nature (cf. e.g., Plut. *Cons. Apoll.* 116C–D). Of course, such a ‘consolatory’ reading is in perfect accord with the Stoic idea of natural law and the resulting anthropology as expounded by Seneca himself in his works (Inwood 2005, 237–239). Even more interestingly, according to most modern scholars, this interpretive strand reflects the original, archaic meaning of the maxim – which probably was “know that you are human and nothing more, and that an impassable barrier stands between gods and men” (Nilsson 1948, 47, 55; cf. also Parke/Wormell 1956, 420, Courcelle 1974, I, 12, and Burkert 1985, 148; *contra* Moore 2015, 22–23).

Quid est homo?: With this twice-repeated rhetorical question, Seneca launches into his final *peroratio* about the natural condition of humankind – about what modern theorists call “the anthropological problem” (Ricoeur 2013). In accord with the tradition of ancient consolation literature, Seneca emphasizes the natural limits of human beings, whose constitutionally feeble body is said to be immersed in a hostile environment, often leading to illness and death. This kind of *negative* anthropology was first proposed by fifth-century BC thinkers such as Protagoras (*ap.* Plat. *Prt.* 320C–323A; Manuwald 2013) and Democritus (Cole 1967, Cartledge 1998, 20–25), whose accounts of the beginnings of civilization portrayed humans as physically disadvantaged

animals slowly making progress with the help of cultural and technical instruments. In the Hellenistic era, the materialist tradition represented by Epicurus further elaborated the Sophistic-Presocratic view, often in opposition with the so-called ‘Argument from Design’ which had been originally proposed by Socrates (Xen. *Mem.* 1.4; 4.3, with Sedley 2013, 75–86) and was enthusiastically supported by the Stoics (Sorabji 1993, 78–86; Osborne 2007, 63–97). One might wonder why in the present passage the Stoic Seneca endorses an approach that is the exact opposite of the teleological argument put forward by the Stoic Balbus in Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.133–153 – a text based on earlier Stoic sources which presents both the physical and the mental qualities of humans as a privilege bestowed by divine providence. In fact, in the concluding paragraphs of the present chapter, Seneca goes so far as to echo the Epicurean Lucretius (see below, note on *nudum*). Of course, genre requirements play a major role in Seneca’s choice: the materialist emphasis on human frailty could be easily assimilated to the pessimism of early Greek epic and lyric which had long become part of the consolatory discourse *de communi hominum condicione* (see above, note on *Marc.* 11.1, *partes deflere*). In addition, it should be recognized that, despite their faith in the anthropocentric design of divine nature, the Stoics had a low esteem of bodily goods insofar as they were eager to show that the real essence of humans resides in virtue, reason, and contemplation: as Cato reminds us in Cicero’s *De Finibus* (3.43–45 = *SVF* 3.60; cf. also Sext. *Emp. Adv. Math.* 11.46 = *SVF* 3.96), whereas the Peripatetics “hold that the sum of happiness includes bodily advantages (*corporis commodis compleri vitam beatam putant*)”, the Stoics deny this altogether, for “if the Stoic definition of the end of goods is accepted (*cum sit is bonorum finis, quem Stoici dicunt*), it follows that all the value you set on bodily advantages must be absolutely eclipsed and annihilated by the brilliance and the majesty of virtue (*omnis ista rerum corporearum aestimatio splendore virtutis et magnitudine obscuretur et obruatur atque intereat necesse est*)”. Both Seneca (e.g., *Brev. Vit.* 1.1–3; *Ep.* 124.21–23, 90.4; *Ben.* 4.18) and Epictetus (e.g., *Diss.* 1.16; *Ench.* 3) claim that, as far as bodily qualities are concerned, humans are comparatively weak creatures – which they see as a proof of the natural vocation of humans *qua* rational animals capable of virtue (Tutrone 2012, 222–227, 271–273). This is not a somewhat unorthodox concession of the Roman Stoics to “the sort of body/soul division advocated by Platonism” (Smith 2014, 354), but a consistent application of Stoic physics and cosmology to the anthropological question (Wildberger 2008), which comes into the foreground when the main purpose of a Stoic writer is to draw attention to the proper goal (τέλος) of human existence.

vas: The analogy between the human body and a pot or vessel is employed both in the Platonist and in the atomist traditions – and will greatly appeal to Jewish and Christian writers (see e.g., Philo, *Migr. Abr.* 193; Lactant. *Div. inst.* 2.12.10; August. *Serm.* 109.1). If we trust Iamblichus (*De An.* 36.21–26), already Democritus had claimed that “the soul exists within the body like air in a wineskin” (ἔνεστιν ἡ ψυχὴ τῷ σώματι καθάπερ ἐν ἀσκῷ πνεῦμα), but the atomist source most familiar to Seneca is certainly Lucretius, who twice uses the term *vas* to describe the function of the body (3.440, 554; Epicurus, *Ep. Hdt.* 63, has the concept but not the jar analogy). As for Platonic psychology – whose interaction with Stoic thought between the first century BC and the first AD has been thoroughly studied (e.g., Bonazzi 2007, Long 2013, 29–105, Long 2017a, Long 2017b) – Seneca could draw on a number of sources, from Plato himself (who, for instance, in *Ti.* 45A describes the head as the soul’s vessel) to Cicero, *Tusc.* 1.52 – who depicts the body as “a kind of vessel or receptacle of the soul” (*quasi vas aut aliquod animi receptaculum*) immediately after quoting the Delphic motto (and before mentioning Plato’s *Phaedrus*). It is, of course, possible that Cicero and Seneca depend on a common source, but what is even more noteworthy is that whereas the atomists use the pot analogy to underline the mortal nature of both the soul and the body, the Platonists, the Stoics, and the Church fathers resort to it to show the dominant role of the soul in the body-soul relationship and its ability to survive after death – although, as Long 2019, 152–173, points out, since the time of Cleanthes and Chrysippus the Stoics have disagreed over the precise fate of the soul after death (cf. *SVF* 2.809–822, and below, the introduction to 19.3–25). It is equally important to note that Seneca’s belittlement of the body, here and elsewhere, is not an unorthodox concession to Platonic dualism but is in accord with many other Stoic sources, which describe the body as an ‘indifferent’ and argue that the true self of humans is “not the soul and the body, but rather the soul as a principle of composition for the soul-body compound” (Brennan 2009, 403). As Epictetus (*ap. Marc. Aur.* 4.41.1) seems to have noted, the Stoics contend that every human is “a little soul dragging around a corpse” (ψυχάριον βαστάζον νεκρόν).

nudum: Seneca’s second answer to the anthropological question (*quid est homo?*) is even more clearly indebted to Lucretius, whose confutation of natural teleology includes an influential description of the human baby (*puer*, 5.222–227) as a shipwrecked sailor “tossed ashore” (*proiectum*) by the waves, “naked (*nudus*), speechless (*infans*), needing every help to go on living (*indigus omni vitali auxilio*)”. Like Lucretius, Seneca claims that every human being is “naked (*nudum*) and, in its natural state, unprotected, requiring (*indigens*) external help, exposed (*proiectum*) to all the humiliations of fortune”. A strong Lucretian echo can be perceived

also in Seneca’s remark that humans are “a meal for any wild beast (*cuiuslibet ferae pabulum*), a sacrificial victim for any”, for in his history of early humankind Lucretius (5.990–993) maintains that individuals were assaulted by wild beasts and “provided them with living food for their teeth to tear” (*pabula viva feris praebebat, dentibus haustus*). Moreover, Lucretius’ portrayal of the baby “filling the place with woeful wailing, as is fitting for someone who is waiting to live through so many evils” (*vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut aequumst/ cui tantum in vita restet transire malorum*, 5.226–227) – which is based on a Hellenistic commonplace (Men. Rhet. 413.23–29; Ps.-Plat. *Axioch.* 366D-368A) and will become an icon of Western pessimism, from Pliny the Elder (*HN* 7.2–3) to Shakespeare (*King Lear*, Act 4 Scene 6.187), Wordsworth (*To . . . Upon the Birth of Her First-Born Child*, 1–12) and Leopardi (*Zibaldone*, 2607; *Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell’Asia*, 39–44) – is re-evoked in the subsequent paragraph when Seneca observes that every human “inaugurates his life with tears” (*fletu vitam auspicatum*, 11.4; cf. also *Polyb.* 4.3; *Ep.* 102.26). Even Seneca’s use of the traditionally religious verb *auspicari* sounds reminiscent of Lucretius’ inclination towards the subversion and re-writing of ritual forms.

anxiae sollicitaque tutelae: According to the Stoics, self-preservation (τὸ τηρεῖν ἑαυτό, Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.85) is the first impulse of every living being acting in accordance with natural providence (cf. also Cic. *Fin.* 3.16). *Tutela* is Seneca’s Latin translation for the concept (cf. *Ep.* 14.1; 121.18–23; *Ben.* 4.18), which applies to both rational and non-rational animals. Like the general theme of human physical frailty, this and other principles of natural philosophy which are commonly used by the Stoics to illustrate the distinctive vocation of humans are now approached only from a *negative* side for the sake of the argument.

precarii spiritus et male haerentis: The Platonic idea that the soul is only temporarily imprisoned in the body and is eager to return to its proper place (e.g., Plat. *Phd.* 82E-83A; Ps.-Plat. *Axioch.* 365E-366B) was inherited by the Stoics, who readapted it to their materialist understanding of the cosmos. The Roman Stoics are especially clear in stating that “our ‘origin upward’ is the divine breath (πνεῦμα) that permeates everything, and of which the human mind is a fragment” (Reydams-Schils 2005, 35–36; cf. e.g., Sen. *Ep.* 79.12). Here this doctrinal belief, too, is used *in malam partem* for the purposes of consolatory discourse.

11.4 *quocumque se movit, statim infirmitatis suae conscium*: A *negative* rendering of the Stoic theory of οἰκείωσις – in perfect harmony with the context. As shown by Seneca’s *Epistle* 121 (cf. esp. 121.7–13; 19–23), the first principles of the οἰκείωσις theory focus on the physiological movements of living beings and

the resulting perceptions as well as on the origins of self-awareness and on the immediacy of natural instincts. *Statim* is precisely the term employed by Seneca at *Ep.* 121.20 to characterize the immediacy of nature-guided behaviors.

non omne caelum ferens: One can perceive an echo of the natural determinism of the Stoics (Bobzien 1998; Salles 2005), who recognized the influence of the environment on human nature. According to Cicero (*Fat.* 7–8), Chrysippus dealt with the effects of “the nature of the place” (*natura loci*) on human health and character – a notion going back to the Hippocratic treatise *On Airs, Waters, and Places* – in his discussion of the doctrine of συμπτώθεια (= *contagio rerum*) – i.e., of “the complex interconnectedness of causes which ties the lives of individual humans to things and events in the larger world order” (Graver 2007, 170). Similarly, Posidonius “used the distribution of climatic zones on the earth as an explanation for physical variations among people living in different regions” (Jacob 2003, 159; cf. Strabo, 3.3.8; 3.4.13; Gal. *Plac. Hipp. Plat.* 459–465). However, environmental factors were included by the Stoics among the so-called antecedent causes (*causae antecedentes*, Cic. *Fat.* 9 = προηγούμενα αίτια, *SVF* 2.936), whose negative influence could ultimately be overcome by human rationality.

in nepotes pronepotesque: Seneca’s conventional argument about the threat of death looming over human ambitions (cf. e.g., Hor. *Carm.* 1.4.14–17; 4.7.7–8; Sen. *Ep.* 101.4–9) is made livelier by this reference to the Roman vocabulary of intergenerational continuity (Bettini 1986, 153–193; Tutrone 2019a), which was certainly familiar to the aristocratic Marcia.

12–19.2 On the Bereaved’s Self-Perception: *Praecepta* (and *Exempla*) about Marcia’s Situation

After offering general advice about death and bereavement, Seneca addresses more specifically the situations of Marcia and Metilius, for according to the consolatory tradition the origins of grief may lie either in the bereaved’s perception of her losses or in her belief that the deceased suffers from an evil. This division of the *materia consolandi* finds an exact parallel in Plutarch (*Cons. ad Apoll.* 111E, cf. Kassel 1958, 85–86), who, very much like Seneca at the beginning of this section, asks whether those who mourn the untimely dead “do it upon their own account or upon that of the deceased” (ἐαυτῶν ἔνεκα πενθοῦσιν ἢ τῶν κατοχομένων). The same approach surfaces in Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.111), Lucian (*Luc.* 15) and Seneca’s later *Consolation to Polybius* (9.1), a fact that can be easily explained by assuming that all such authors draw on an earlier consolatory pattern – perhaps on the work of Crantor of Soli, who, as an Academic, was appreciated by Cicero and Plutarch but met with notable success also in the Middle Stoa (Cic. *Luc.* 135).

In what follows, Seneca starts by providing precepts relating to Marcia’s perception of her own condition. Once again, the author’s aim is to modify Marcia’s mistaken understanding of her past and present status, which seems to revolve around the belief that Metilius’ death is a harm and not a common or natural event. Some of the most traditional devices of the consolatory genre – first of all, the rhetoric of exemplarity, with its gender overtones (12.6–16), and the metaphor of life as a journey (17–18) – are used (and creatively re-adapted) by Seneca to adjust Marcia’s self-perception – a cognitive function which, as is well-known, plays a central role in Stoic physics and ethics. For the Stoics, self-perception has its roots in the natural process of οἰκείωσις and primarily mirrors the interrelation of the ἡγεμονικόν with the organic matter of the body. In a broader sense, self-perception attends “every perceptual representation of the soul that occurs in animate organisms above the level of nutrition and growth” (Klein 2016, 172; see also Gourinat 2020). If Marcia *feels* that she has been harmed by an unusual calamity, she has formed a rational *belief* concerning her physical-cum-psychological status, which can be corrected by applying the remedies most suitable for her case. Scholars have often complained about the lack of unity and consistency of this section (e.g., Albertini 1923, 53–55; Grollios 1956, 18–19), and in response to such criticism Manning 1981, 70–71, has proposed recognizing a unifying element in Seneca’s endorsement of the Epicurean principle that “one should turn the mind

of the mourner from its ills to its goods” (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.76). In so doing, Manning has ultimately restated the well-known view of Seneca as an ‘eclectic’ thinker who has no fear of embracing “a perverted application of the Epicurean principle” (*sic*). However, it is much more reasonable to explain the multi-layered structure of Seneca’s *praecepta* about Marcia’s situation as a further reflection of the principle of pedagogic adaptability (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 2.1, *aliter cum alio agendum est*), which, as we have seen, leads the author to value the persuasive power of *exempla* (2.1), the transformative effects of imagination (5.4, 9.1), and the art of literary *aemulatio* (7.2, 10.4). All such elements are consistently represented in, and are consciously intended to enhance, the consolatory message of the present section.

12.1 *si modo ulla illi ratio est*: This conditional/parenthetical clause (with the paronomasiac and alliterating couple *ulla illi*) is a rhetorical concession to the commonsense view of the emotions as irrational. Yet, as a committed Stoic, Seneca knows very well that all emotions have an irreducible cognitive element and goes on to confute Marcia’s erroneous assumptions about her gains and losses.

12.2 *gaudii laetitiaeque*: By using the characteristically Stoic words *gaudium* and *laetitia* – which recall the ‘good’ emotion (εὐπάθεια) of joy (χαρά) with its three subtypes (Graver 2007, 51–59), “enjoyment” (τέρψις), “mirth” (εὐφροσύνη), and “cheerfulness” (εὐθυμία) – Seneca gives a clearer meaning to the general and admittedly ambiguous notion of *voluptas*, which is extensively used throughout this chapter (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 3.3, *voluptates honestas, permissas*). In ancient consolation literature, the balance of pleasures and pains, gains and losses, is typically intended to persuade the bereaved that she has no objective reason to complain or feel regret (cf. e.g., Plut. *Cons. ad uxor.* 608D-F). By virtue of its rigorous logic, this kind of retrospective hedonic calculus proves totally compatible with Seneca’s rational therapy – which may, of course, be reminiscent of Epicurean precedents, for it is too often forgotten that Epicurus authored one of the earliest consolatory epistles in Hellenistic literature and that the Epicureans carried out a sophisticated analysis of the nature of grief (see Plut. *Non posse* 1101A-B; Konstan 2013b, 204–205).

***catulos avesque*:** As Bodson 2000, 27, points out, “pet-keeping was a widespread and well-accepted phenomenon in classical antiquity, raising disapproval only when pets supplanted or were thought to supplant children in human affections, regardless of the owners’ self-respect and consideration for their own species” (cf. also MacKinnon 2014). The word *catulus* can refer to the young of any

animal, but is most used for young dogs, whom the Romans have bred and cherished as house pets at least since the late Republic – and probably earlier (see e.g., Lucr. 4.991–1004, and the evidence in Tutrone 2019b). The list of pet birds commonly (and less commonly) kept in Roman houses extends well beyond Lesbia’s sparrow (Catull. 2–3) and Corinna’s parrot (Ov. *Am.* 2.6), for Pliny the Elder’s lengthy discussion of ornithology in Book 10 mentions such diverse species as nightingales, blackbirds, magpies, and thrushes (cf. also Mart. 14.73–77, Petron. *Sat.* 28.9; 46.3–4; Stat. *Silv.* 2.4). Indeed, the domestic caged bird seems to be “a specifically Roman fashion” (Jones 2016, 101) as it is not a feature of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, or Greek domestic interiors. For a Stoic like Seneca who is always careful in marking the boundary between rational and irrational beings (note here, too, the use of the term *muta* = ἄλογα), the comparison between animal breeding and the education of children is a provocative *ex minore* argument, which aims to remind Marcia of her superior – though at present obfuscated – faculties (cf. *Ep.* 124.13–21).

blanda adulatione mutorum: As Nonius (1.24 Gatti) makes clear, *adulatio* “is, in the proper sense, the fawning of dogs” (*est blandimentum proprie canum*), which is metaphorically used for humans (cf. Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.158: *canum vero tam fida custodia tamque amans dominorum adulatio*). *Blandus* is another traditional term for canine behavior (see e.g., Verg. *G.* 3.496; Nemes. *Cyneg.* 223). Seneca’s phrasing may be reminiscent of Lucretius, who, on two occasions (4.998–1010; 5.1067–1086), mentions together *catuli* and birds and describes the former as a “fawning breed” (*blanda propago*, 4.998).

12.3 *discessura bona*: As a comparison with 9.4 (*quasi perituras*) and 10.3 (*ut recessura*) can easily show, this is a characteristically Senecan description of “preferred indifferents” (προηγμένα ἀδιάφορα), which are not ‘goods’ in the proper sense (Sext. *Emp. Adv. Math.* 11.59 = *SVF* 3.122) but, as Seneca notes here, should be preferred to total deprivation. For the Stoics (Plut. *Comm. not.* 1070A = *SVF* 3.123), ‘indifferents’ like Metilius’ life should be appreciated when present (ληπτά), though they are not choiceworthy for themselves (οὐχ αἰρετά) and hence should not be an object of regret.

degenerem: The old heroic *topos* that a short but virtuous life is better than a long but deplorable one – which, as first attested in Greek epic and epitaphs, proved especially suitable for the celebration of the young dead (Casey 2004, 78–79) – is easily combined by Seneca with the Stoic claim that, in contrast to life and health, virtue is the only true good. Seneca’s praise of Metilius’ early achievements as a son (*iuvenis prudens, pius*), husband (*maritus*), father (*pater*), citizen (*omnis officii curiosus*), and priest (*sacerdos*), with its anaphoric use of *cito* in the

context of an ascending climax, is overtly indebted to the rhetoric of *laudationes* and *tituli*. On Metilius’ priesthood – which, on Weinrib’s 1990, 143, reading of this orderly list of achievements, may have postdated Metilius’ marriage and the birth of his daughters – see below, note on *Marc.* 24.3, *sacerdotio*.

***di immortales*:** Again, Seneca combines Roman mentality and Stoic philosophy, for the assumption that the gods purposely gave Marcia a son of such early success is consistent with both Roman religious discourse and Stoic ideas about providence (πρόνοια). Yet, the archaic belief that the gods deliberately deprive a person of her dear ones or possessions because of their ‘envy’ (φθόνος/*invidia*) – which is widely attested in both Greek and Roman culture (Elliott 2016, 7–46; for the Roman world see e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 6.868–871; Liv. 5.21.15; Stat. *Silv.* 5.1.137–153; Quint. *Inst.* 6.praef. 4–10) – is refuted immediately thereafter (*Marc.* 12.4; cf. also 12.6), when Seneca warns Marcia that she should not believe she was “singled out by the gods” (*electam a dis*) to be refused the chance to enjoy her son. Clearly, Roman religion and folklore can be in accord with Stoic theology. But there are relevant exceptions of which the *proficiens* should be aware.

12.4 *Senserunt ista magni duces*: What Cicero (*Tusc.* 3.60) calls the *enumeratio exemplorum* – the custom of offering a list of famous characters of history and myth who experienced death and bereavement – is as old as Homer, for Achilles consoles his mother Thetis by saying that “not even the mighty Heracles escaped death” (οὐδὲ γὰρ οὐδὲ βίη Ἡρακλῆος φύγε κῆρα, *Il.* 18.117–119). By the time of Seneca, this was a well-established rhetorical practice – a *genus orationis*, in Cicero’s words – which had met with considerable success among writers of different genres and backgrounds, from Lucretius (3.1024–1045) to Horace (*Od.* 2.14.5–12; 4.7.14–16) and Seneca’s own father (*Con. ex.* 8.1; for later evidence see e.g., Mart. 9.86). Seneca’s preference goes to historical *exempla* (Mayer 1991; Roller 2018, 265–289), and he first mentions “great commanders” (*magni duces*) and “emperors” (*principes*) as a prelude to his following gallery of characters (12.6–16.5). As for gods and heroes (cf. Men. Rhet. 414.1–6: ἥρωες καὶ θεῶν παῖδες), Seneca makes a brief but meaningful mention of the mythical narratives (*fabulae*) that were the source and subject of ancient drama – the Latin word *fabula* standing for both the idea of myth and that of drama. Seneca’s reference could bring to the mind of a Roman reader such famous examples as Hercules and Achilles (Hine 2014, 38 n. 30), but in line with the argument developed so far, the writer concentrates on offering a providentialist reading of mythical lore, for Marcia is taught that the traditional tales about divine sorrow are meant to lighten human bereavements (*ut nostrorum funerum levamentum esset*). By using the parenthetical verb *puto*, Seneca signals that this is his own *a posteriori* interpretation, which is

consistent with the interest in mythical exegesis shown by several Stoic thinkers – who, “remaining steadfast in their monist position, looked to myths for revelations about the physical world” (Herren 2017, 107; cf. also Brisson 2004, 41–55).

Circumspice, inquam, omnis: The psychological dynamic behind this invitation to draw comfort from more wretched people is analogous to that behind Seneca’s injunction in *Ep.* 75.15, where Lucilius is urged to contemplate the host of evils around him (*cogita quantum circa te videas malorum*) to realize that he is making considerable progress (*satis consequi*) if he is not numbered among the basest (*inter pessimos*). The roots of similar analogies reside in the cultural connection between the genres of exhortation (παράινεσις) and consolation (παράμυθια), a connection dating back to classical Greek literature (Volo-naki 2016, 128–129).

12.5 *malivolum solacii genus:* Seneca seems to echo Carneades’ objection to the use of consolatory *exempla*, for according to Cicero (*Tusc.* 3.60) the Academic Carneades claimed that only spiteful people (*malivoli*) would find consolation in a speech based upon the misfortunes of others (*ex commemoratione alienorum malorum*). Yet, Seneca ultimately agrees with Cicero, who, notwithstanding his allegiance to the Academy, rejected Carneades’ objection and argued that the purpose of *exempla* is “not to please the spiteful (*non ut animum malivolorum oblectet*) but to encourage the mourner to resolve on enduring his misfortune, when he sees that many others have endured the same thing with calmness and self-control (*ut ille qui maeret ferundum sibi id censeat, quod videat multos moderate et tranquille tulisse*)”. Like Cicero – who could rely on earlier Academic authorities like Crantor as well as on Stoic precedents – Seneca maintains that his aim is to show “that many people have softened a harsh blow (*lenirent aspera*) by bearing it with composure (*placide ferendo*)”. However, as a comparison with Cicero shows, at this more advanced stage of Marcia’s therapy Seneca can omit any reference to the moderation of the emotions (μετριοπάθεια) – a reference which, by contrast, is inherent in Cicero’s adverb *moderate* and underlies Seneca’s own earlier *exempla* (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 3.4, *moderatus, mitius*). Indeed, Seneca recalls straightforwardly the Stoic ideal of peaceful impassiveness (ἀπάθεια) by using the adverb *placide*. There is good reason to agree with Abel 1967, 22, that “in der zweiten Beispielreihe (12.4–16.14), von der starke prägende Kräfte ausstrahlen, wird die mildere Metriopathie immer wieder zur Apathie gesteigert”.

12.6 *A felicissimo:* Seneca’s brief discussion of the ‘good fortune’ (*felicitas*) of Lucius Cornelius Sulla, the bloody dictator, is part of a long-standing debate over

divine gifts, human blessedness, and the limits of power that started in Sulla’s own day – at the time of Cicero’s speech for Sextus Roscius of Ameria (80 BC) – and lasted until the second and third centuries AD (see e.g., Plin. *HN* 22.12–13; Ael. fr. 53 Hercher; Ser. *Med.* 5.58–63). According to Velleius Paterculus (2.27.5), Sulla took “the name of Fortunate” (*Felicis nomen*) after the death of Marius the Younger (late 82 BC), which followed the battle of the Colline Gate and the sack of Praeneste – two of the most remarkable episodes in the history of the *Sullana crudelitas*, as Seneca will later have it (*Ira* 2.34.3; cf. also *Prov.* 3.7–8; *Clem.* 1.12; *Ben.* 5.16.3; Lucan. 1.325–335; Liv. *Per.* 88). Sulla’s splendid triumph over Mithridates VI of Pontus in January 81 seems to have marked the institutionalization of his *cognomen* (Plut. *Sull.* 34; Balsdon 1951; Mackay 2000, 175–177), whose origins, however, go back to the siege of Nola during the Social War (88–87 BC), when Sulla’s soldiers decorated him with the so-called *corona graminea*, a ‘grass crown’ symbolizing life and fertility (Plin. *HN* 22.12, quoting from Sulla’s own memoirs = *FRHist* 22 F16; Versnel 1970, 376–377). According to Appian (*B Civ.* 1.11.97), Sulla used the name of *Felix* (= Εὐτυχής) even in the inscription on his gilded equestrian statue in the Forum, which was reproduced on an *aureus* struck during his consulship in 80 BC (Sehlmeyer 1999, 204–208). Of course, Seneca’s superlative *felicissimus* sounds both allusive and bitterly ironic. As Eckert 2018, 284, showed, there is ample evidence that “the Romans perceived Sulla’s claim to *felicitas* [. . .] as an outrageous offence against ideas at the heart of Roman society: the divine gift of *felicitas* and its close ties to the *salus rei publicae* (the ‘public good of the Romans’)”.

***filium amisit*:** The son of Sulla cited by Seneca is not the more famous Faustus, but another child by Caecilia Metella who, according to Plutarch (*Sull.* 37), died a little while before Metella and allegedly appeared to Sulla in his dreams, foretelling the former dictator’s death. It has been reasonably surmised that Sulla’s son was called Lucius like his father (Druman/Groebe 1902, 432–433), but Seneca and Plutarch are the only sources mentioning him and neither of them mentions explicitly his name. If Seneca is right in claiming that Sulla adopted the name of *Felix* after the loss of his son (*amisso filio*), ‘Lucius’ may have died before November 82 BC. Yet, Seneca may also regard Sulla’s triumph in January 81 as a *terminus post quem* for the dictator’s *cognomen*, and since Metella died between October and November 81 (Plut. *Sull.* 35; Telford 2014, 206–208), the death of ‘Lucius’ can be assigned to any date between the end of 82 and the beginning of 81 BC. Clearly, Seneca uses the untimely death of Sulla’s child as his first *exemplum* because of its analogies with the death of Metilius: above all, both ‘Lucius’ and Metilius were young male heirs of whom their respective parents had high hopes.

invidiam deorum: On Seneca’s criticism of the archaic belief in the “envy of the gods” (θεῶν φθόνοϛ), see above, note on *Marc.* 12.3, *di immortales*. It has rightly been noted that while “the gods of Aeschylus, Pindar and Herodotus are said to feel φθόνοϛ for an Eastern potentate or a Greek tyrant because he seeks or threatens to surpass the lot of the merely mortal and rival the gods themselves”, the *invidia* that Roman texts most often ascribe to the gods “is the feeling that motivates you to deprive another of a good just because it is a good, or just because you do not want the other to have it” (Kaster 2003, 271). In Seneca’s view, Sulla’s *felicitas* blatantly challenges both conceptions.

qualis Sulla fuerit: As attested in Valerius Maximus (9.2.1) – who starts his chapter *de crudelitate* by comparing Sulla with both the ‘good’ Scipio and the ‘wicked’ Hannibal – the ambiguity of the figure of Sulla and the ensuing difficulty in assessing his character had grown into a rhetorical *topos*. Seneca’s statement that Sulla’s true nature is “among those things on which final judgment has yet to be passed” (*inter res nondum iudicatas*) echoes the language of rhetorical schools and declamations. Seneca the Elder (*Controv.* 2.4.4; 9.2.19; *Suas.* 6.3.3) and Quintilian (*Inst.* 3.8.53; 5.10.71) make repeated mention of Sulla as a character-type endowed with both *crudelitas* and *clementia*, and Juvenal (1.15–17) recalls the time when, as a schoolboy, he was instructed to deliver a *suasoria* on Sulla’s retirement. According to Manning 1981, 76, “if *ad M.* were written either under Gaius or as late as 62, it is possible that Seneca’s disenchantment with the workings of the imperial system could lead him to a more favourable estimation of Sulla”. But there is no sufficient ground for such a ‘historicist’ reading as the rhetorical tradition seems to be the greatest source of influence on Seneca’s portrayal of Sulla in this context. Quite revealingly, Seneca’s phrasing (*bene illum arma sumpsisse, bene posuisse*) resurfaces in Quintilian’s example of a conventional rhetorical *initium* (*non dominationis causa Sullam arma sumpsisse, argumentum est dictatura deposita, Inst.* 5.10.71).

ad felicissimos: Seneca’s conclusion implies that the untimely death of children is not a valid argument against the Stoic idea of providence and the traditional faith in the gift of *felicitas*: one may regard oneself as exceptionally blessed by the gods (*felicissimus*) even if one loses a promising young son.

13.1 *illum patrem*: Seneca reports parenthetically the story of Xenophon’s imperturbability at the news of his son’s death, a story reported also by Valerius Maximus (5.10.ext.2), Plutarch (*Cons. ad Apoll.* 118F–119A), Diogenes Laertius (*Vit.* 2.54–55), and Aelian (*VH* 3.3). Xenophon’s son Gryllus is said to have died fighting bravely in the battle of Mantinea (362 BC) – hence Xenophon’s pride and gratitude to the gods during his uninterrupted sacrifice. Seneca chooses to frame

the anecdote in the context of a typical *comparatio* (or σύγκρισις) between Greek and Roman virtue, showing a spirit of *aemulatio* that is widely attested among Roman writers (from Cicero to Quintilian) and underlies also Valerius Maximus’ narration of ancient stories of parental grief (5.10). Diogenes Laertius mentions two earlier sources, which may have been known to Seneca as well: the *Lives of the Philosophers* (Βίοι τῶν φιλοσόφων) by Diocles of Magnesia and Ephorus’ *Histories*. It is thus not unlikely that the anecdote derives from the genres of historiography and biography and was later included in repositories of *exempla* and consolatory writings. However, according to Aelian, “this story was very popular and circulated widely” (ταῦτα μὲν οὖν δημώδη καὶ ἐς πολλοὺς ἐκπεφοίτηκεν) – which also explains why Seneca can allude to it without mentioning either Xenophon or Gryllus by name. Seneca’s spirit of *aemulatio* is equally evident from the fact that, despite his brief treatment, he succeeds in re-evoking Xenophon’s main gesture in the other surviving accounts (the removal of the garland), while also providing an unparalleled detail (the silence imposed on the piper). For the Stoic Seneca, the moral of the story lies in the fact that, as Plutarch (*Cons. ad Apoll.* 119A) observes, Xenophon “mastered his emotion by the power of reason” (τῷ λογισμῷ τὸ πάθος παρακατασχόντα). This is an admirable quality for Platonists like Plutarch – who, like Valerius Maximus, remarks on Xenophon’s Socratic allegiance – but acquires central relevance in a Stoic *consolatio* which, from now on, will put more and more emphasis on the value of ἀπάθεια.

Pulvillus: The story of Marcus Horatius Pulvillus – who, like Xenophon, remained unperturbed at the news of his son’s death and completed his ritual – is related also by Cicero (*Dom.* 139), Livy (2.8.6–9), Valerius Maximus (5.10.1), and Plutarch (*Publ.* 14). The most detailed account is that of Livy, who situates the episode in the first year after the expulsion of the kings (509 BC) and maintains that “we are not informed with certainty, nor is it easy to decide (*nec traditur certum nec interpretatio est facilis*)”, whether Pulvillus “did not believe the news to be true, or possessed great fortitude (*non crediderit factum an tantum animo roboris fuerit*)”. The same alternatives are presented in Plutarch (*Publ.* 14.8). Like Plutarch, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 5.35.3) and Tacitus (*Hist.* 3.72), and in contrast to Seneca and Valerius Maximus, Livy reports that Pulvillus was consul, not a pontifex, when he dedicated the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, whose foundations had been laid by Tarquinius Superbus (Tacitus adds that the dedication happened during Pulvillus’ *second* consulship, which makes the chronology of the event even more confused). Indeed, if we trust Cicero (*Dom.* 120), Varro (*Ling.* 6.61), and several other sources (both literary and epigraphical), a Roman temple was *dedicated* by a magistrate with the assistance of a pontifex who *consecrated* the place. As summed up by Marquardt

1885, 270–273, *magistratus per pontificem* or *pro pontifice dedicat, pontifex consecrat*. Still, as Marquardt himself acknowledges, the verb *dedicare* is employed for both consuls and pontiffs in our sources. Even more notably, according to Livy, it was the partisans of the other consul, P. Valerius Publicola (or Poplicola), who “broke in upon the ceremony with the horrible news that Pulvillus’ son was dead, claiming that whilst the shadow of death was over his house he could not dedicate a temple” (*foedum inter precationem deum nuntium incutiunt, mortuum eius filium esse, funestaque familia dedicare eum templum non posse*, cf. also Plut. *Publ.* 14.6–8). Cicero seems to confirm this story of rivalry, political tricks, and fear of contamination when he says that “many men out of envy endeavored to hinder Pulvillus’ dedication by false pretenses about religion” (*eum multi propter invidiam fictis religionibus impedirent*). As usual, Seneca’s choice of a specific version can be explained in light of his didactic and paraenetic purposes. Pulvillus is portrayed here as an icon of Stoic impassiveness and obedience to divine will, for Seneca points out that, just like a Stoic sage (cf. *Prov.* 5.8–9; *Ep.* 107.9–12), Pulvillus “did not stop worshipping the gods even when they were angry with him” (*colere deos ne iratos quidem destitit*). The whole passage is in fact replete with traditional religious terms such as *pontificium carmen*, *fausta nuncupatio*, and the ablative absolute *love propitiato*. For the rhetorical purposes of Seneca’s ongoing discourse about piety and providence, the figure of a pontifex – as styled by a tradition already attested in Valerius Maximus – is much more appropriate than that of a consul. Yet, whereas Valerius Maximus centers his account around the contrast between public and private spheres – between *publica religio* and *privatus dolor*, between the role of *pater* and that of *pontifex* – Seneca builds on Cicero’s praise of Pulvillus’ exceptional *constantia* (*constantissima mente Capitolium dedicavit*, Cic. *Dom.* 139), suppresses any reference to political rivalry, and transforms his early republican hero into a model of Stoic fortitude (καρτερία), piety (εὐσέβεια), and steadfastness (εὐστάθεια) – the latter virtue being explicitly evoked in Plutarch’s conclusion (*Publ.* 14.8; cf. e.g., Epict. *Diss.* 1.29).

postem tenenti: Seneca recalls the formal gesture of the *dedicator*, who was required to hold the doorpost of the temple and recite clearly the dedicatory formula (*precatio*). Cf. Val. Max. 5.10.1 (*postem tenens*), Liv. 2.8.7 (*postem iam tenenti*); Plut. *Publ.* 14.6 (τῶν θυρῶν ἀψάμενος). Roman priests and magistrates were especially scrupulous in ensuring the correct performance of such rituals, on which Rome’s greatness was thought to depend. However, although it is true that the ‘contract-notion’ of Roman religion “required not a ‘right spirit’ but right performance” (Bailey 1907, 23–24), Seneca’s Pulvillus – *qua* Stoic hero – proves able to combine the two aspects.

pontificii carminis: The MS reading *pontificia carmina* (or *carmini*) is deleted by Viansino 1963, in accordance with Fickert’s suggestion. Much more reasonably, Reynolds 1977 and Traina 1987 accept Madvig’s correction *pontificii carminis*, which presupposes that the scribe created an artificial homeoteleuton through the repetition of the vowel *a*.

13.2 *primus dies et primus impetus*: Seneca praises Pulvillus because he did not even allow the immediate experience of pre-emotion (προπάθεια) – which, as Seneca argued earlier, is perfectly natural and does not amount to grief *sensu proprio* (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 7.1) – to cloud his rationality and hence his public *persona*. This is what makes Pulvillus a truly *worthy* pontiff, a concept highlighted by the anaphora of *dignus*. However, since even the Stoic sage goes through the involuntary experience of pre-emotions (cf. *Sen. Ep.* 71.29; 99.15–21), Seneca makes clear that, once returned to the private space of his *domus*, Pulvillus wept and moaned – though, of course, in a moderate manner (*aliquas voces flebiles*) and for a limited amount of time. Insofar as Stoic pre-emotions are, by definition, temporary, Pulvillus quickly “resumed the expression he had maintained on the Capitol” (*ad Capitolium illum redit vultum*), offering a further proof of his imperturbability (*constantia*).

13.3 *Paulus*: Lucius Aemilius Paulus or Paullus (229–160 BC), who earned the surname of Macedonicus for his victory in the Third Macedonian War, defeated Perseus, the last king of Macedonia, in the battle of Pydna in June 168 BC (see Burton 2017, 214–218, for a reappraisal of the extant sources). In November 167, Paulus celebrated a grandiose triumph in Rome, with Perseus and his three children led as slaves in the procession. However, Livy (45.40.4–42.1), Plutarch (*Aem.* 33–36), and Valerius Maximus (5.10.2) agree with Seneca that Aemilius Paulus’ military glory coincided with his personal disgrace, for he lost two young children in the days immediately before and after the triumph. Precisely for this reason, Cicero included Paulus among the Roman *exempla* in his *Consolation to Himself* (cf. *Tusc.* 3.70). Cicero’s treatment may have inspired Seneca’s mention of Paulus both here and in *Polyb.* 14.5.

nobilissimi triumphi: Both Livy (45.40) and Plutarch (*Aem.* 33–34) indulge in descriptions of the splendor of Paulus’ booty and triumphal procession (though Livy’s account is unfortunately incomplete in the manuscripts). Plutarch (34.6), for instance, describes Paulus as “mounted on a chariot of magnificent adornment (ἄρματι κεκοσμημένῳ διαπρεπῶς ἐπιβεβηκῶς), [. . .] a man worthy to be looked upon even without such marks of power (ἄνῆρ καὶ δίχα τοσαύτης ἐξουσίας ἀξιοθέατος), wearing a purple robe interwoven with gold (ἀλουργίδα χρυσόπαστον

ἀμπερόμενος), and holding forth in his right hand a spray of laurel (καὶ δάφνης κλώνα τῇ δεξιᾷ προτείων)”.

[*incliti regis nomen*]: A scribal gloss on Perseus, which was deleted as early as the sixteenth century by Pincianus.

***duos filios in adoptionem dedit*:** Plutarch (*Aem.* 5) reports that Aemilius Paulus had two sons and two daughters from his first wife Papiria. When he divorced Papiria and his second wife bore him two other children, he gave up Papiria’s sons for adoption. This choice clearly reflected a strategy of political and ‘dynastic’ alliance, for one son was adopted by Quintus Fabius Maximus (Verrucosus or Cunctator) and became Quintus Fabius Maximus Aemilianus, while the other child was adopted by the son of Scipio Africanus and became Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, the future destroyer of Carthage and literary patron. In order to increase the pathetic force of his consolatory argument, Seneca creates an artificial temporal parallelism between the two children given for adoption and the two dead in 167 BC. Yet, Plutarch’s account unequivocally attests that the adoption took place after Paulus’ second marriage, that is, about ten years before the triumph of 167 BC. In all likelihood, Seneca is aware of the true chronology of events but feels entitled to rearrange it in the present context – as the *consolatio* genre attached a very different value to temporality and cultural memory than did other genres such as historiography and biography.

***duos extulit*:** Aemilius Paulus’ sons were twelve and fourteen years old, respectively, when they died. However, Livy (45.40.7), Plutarch (*Aem.* 35.2), and Valerius Maximus (5.10.2) provide different reconstructions of the exact time of their deaths. According to Livy, the twelve-year-old boy died five days before Paulus’ triumph and the elder boy three days after it. For Plutarch, the younger son died three days after the triumph and the fourteen-year-old child five days before it. Valerius Maximus does not mention the age of Paulus’ children but maintains that one son died four days before his father’s triumph and the other on the third day after it. What is more, whereas Seneca claims that “the Roman people watched Paulus’s empty chariot” (*vacuum Pauli currum populus Romanus aspexit*), Valerius Maximus asserts that one son – the one who died after the procession – “was looked at with admiration in the triumphal chariot” (*in triumphali curru conspectus*). The sources available for the middle republican period must have been ambiguous already in Livy’s and Seneca’s days, and it is not difficult to imagine that in this case, too, Seneca is primarily interested in the pathetic effect of his *exemplum*. Still, it is pointless to remark, as Manning 1981, 79, does, that Seneca’s considerations about the moral qualities of Paulus’ children are “quite unfounded”, since in the Roman world there is hardly any political or

kinship strategy which is not presented in moral terms by its own creator. As in *Polyb.* 14.5, Seneca adjusts the story to make it fit his argument, but a moralizing reading is expected by his audience and may have its roots in earlier Roman accounts.

Contionatus est: Seneca’s use of the verb *contionari* is consistent with the account of Livy (45.40.9), according to whom a few days after his triumph Aemilius Paulus delivered a “memorable speech” (*memorabilis oratio*) about his deeds during a meeting of the assembly (*contio*) that had been summoned by the tribune of the plebs M. Antonius. Plutarch (*Aem.* 36.2) is more straightforward in saying that Paulus “gathered the Roman people into an assembly (συναγαγὼν εἰς ἐκκλησίαν τὸν Ῥωμαίων δῆμον) and spoke to them as a man who did not ask for consolation (ἐχρήσατο λόγοις ἀνδρὸς οὐ δεομένου παραμυθίας), but rather sought to console his fellow-citizens in their distress over his own misfortunes (ἀλλὰ παραμυθουμένους τοὺς πολίτας, δυσπαθοῦντας ἐφ’ οἷς ἐκεῖνος ἐδυστύχησεν)”. Even if Paulus is depicted by Plutarch as “a paradigm of human weakness” (παράδειγμα τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἀσθενείας, 36.9; cf. also Liv. 45.41.10), he ends up embodying a model of the resilient man who, though in need of a παραμυθία by conventional social standards, manages to transform the returning general’s traditional address to the people (*contio*) into a collective παραμυθητικὸς λόγος. There is good reason to believe that Seneca’s inclusion of Paulus among his *exempla* of ἀπάθεια found support in an earlier tradition.

compos voti: The story of Aemilius Paulus’ prayer to the gods at the top of his success – which mirrors the archaic fear of the *invidia fortunae* or *invidia deorum* – appears also in Livy’s (45.41.7–8) and Valerius Maximus’ (5.10.2) accounts of Paulus’ address to the people. According to Livy, after his victory in Macedonia, Paulus started to regard his good fortune as too great (*nimia*) and expressed his wish (*illud optavi*) that with the usual turn of Fortune’s wheel (*cum ex summo retro volvi fortuna consuisset*) the change might affect his house (*domus*) rather than the commonwealth (*res publica*). Valerius Maximus goes so far as to specify that Paulus prayed to the Capitoline triad (Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno Regina, and Minerva), who nodded assent to the general’s vows (*annuendo votis meis*). This looks like a distinctively Roman tradition (probably preserved by ‘patriotic’ narratives), for, very much in the style of earlier Greek writers, Plutarch describes Fortune (Τύχη) as “a most untrustworthy and variable thing” (ἀπιστότατον καὶ ποικιλώτατον πρᾶγμα, 36.3) always seeking to satisfy its wrath (νέμεσιν, 36.9) – as “a divinity” (τι δαίμονιον) whose task is “to diminish whatever prosperity is inordinately great (τῶν μεγάλων καὶ ὑπερόγκων εὐτυχιῶν ἀπαρῦτειν), and to mix up the affairs of human life (καὶ μειγνύνασι τὸν ἀνθρώπινον βίον, 34.8)” – but makes no mention of Paulus’ prayer. When

summarizing Paulus’ speech, Seneca chooses to remain faithful to the Roman tradition and incorporates in his summary the old belief in “the envy aroused by a great victory” (*ob ingentem victoriae invidiae*) that he had criticized in the preceding chapter (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 12.3 and 12.6). However, Seneca’s ultimate goal is to present Paulus as a Stoic hero displaying his μεγαλοψυχία (*magno animo*, 13.4) in the face of untimely death and bereavement.

13.4 tanta mutatio: Cf. Liv. 45.41.8: *mutationem eius* (scil. *fortunae*).

tristem: Perseus had hardly any chance to see Paulus after the triumph and the death of Paulus’ second child, for our sources report that the defeated king was imprisoned in Alba and died soon thereafter – either because he starved himself to death or because he was cruelly kept from sleep by his guards (cf. Plut. *Aem.* 37.1–3; Liv. 45.42.4; Diod. Sic. 31.9.1; Polyb. 36.10.3). Of course, the aim of Seneca’s concluding remark is to show that Paulus’ virtue was not impaired by the detrimental emotion of *tristitia* – i.e., that the Roman general showed μεγαλοψυχία and ἀπάθεια at the same time.

14.1 magnorum virorum exempla: This introductory remark on the conventional theme of the common misfortune of humans also serves to remind readers that Seneca is still focusing on models of “great men” (*magni viri*), i.e., on male *exempla*. Female *exempla* will be discussed in a special section (16.1–5).

[in qua non aliquid turbatum sit]: Reynolds 1977 includes this sentence in his text, but Waltz’s deletion (accepted by Traina 1987) seems more than reasonable. Seneca’s earlier ‘biological’ metaphor – comparing a *domus* to a natural body which is likely to lose some of its parts before the final *exitus* – may have required an explanation and the gloss provided by a late antique or medieval reader may have easily resulted in the present reading of **A**. In his apparatus, Viansino 1963 admits that Waltz deleted the sentence *fortasse recte*. Certainly, there is no need to go as far as Madvig, who changes *sit* into *est* and writes: *quota enim quaeque domus usque ad exitum omnibus partibus suis constitit? in qua non aliquid turbatum est?*

magistratus cita: Seneca refers to the traditional temporal scheme of the consular *Fasti*, which is overwhelmingly familiar to his Roman audience. This allows him to situate the apparently atemporal dimension of grief and human misfortune within the more reassuring framework of Roman cultural history.

Lucium si vis Bibulum et C. Caesarem: Marcus Calpurnius Bibulus (102–48 BC) and Julius Caesar were consuls in 59 BC, a stormy year in which Caesar’s policy of distribution of public land was fiercely opposed by Bibulus as a champion of

the senate and the *optimates* (Chrissanthos 2019). All our sources except Seneca and Appian (*B Civ.* 2.2.9) use the praenomen Marcus for Bibulus (Caes. *BCiv.* 3.5, 7; Liv. *Per.* 103; Val. Max. 4.1.15; Dio 37.8; Suet. *Iul.* 19.1). Since such sources include Caesar’s own *commentarii*, there can be no doubt that Marcus is the right praenomen. Seneca and Appian may be following a different (erroneous) branch of the ancient tradition, for it is hard to imagine that the manuscripts of both Seneca and Appian are corrupt.

inter collegas inimicissimos concordem fortunam: For early imperial readers – who are accustomed to regard the period of the First Triumvirate as a paradigm of civil discord (Gowing 2005, 34–41) – Caesar and Bibulus are a typical pair of rivals. Yet Seneca’s chiasmus, with its oxymoronic juxtaposition of *inimicissimos* and *concordem*, puts the main emphasis on the idea that the universal rule of the fate has the power to submit to a common destiny even such archetypal enemies.

14.2 *melioris quam fortioris viri:* Seneca’s ambivalent depiction of Bibulus as a ‘good’ man but not a ‘strong’ one stands in stark contrast with Cicero’s repeated praise of Bibulus as a *vir fortissimus*, *praestantissimus*, or *summus* (e.g., Cic. *Dom.* 69.7; *Fam.* 15.1.5; *Har. resp.* 48.9; *Phil.* 2.23; 11.35). Seneca’s judgement is based on Bibulus’ failure to stop Caesar’s rising ambitions and agrarian legislation – which was the main task entrusted to Bibulus by the *optimates* (App. *B Civ.* 2.2.9–12; Suet. *Iul.* 19–20; Dio Cass. 38.4–6; Vell. Pat. 2.44.4–5). Together with his father-in-law Cato the Younger, Bibulus spoke vehemently against Caesar in the Forum, but was overwhelmed by the tumult aroused by Caesar’s plebeian supporters. Since Bibulus’ attempts to block any legislative action by announcing adverse omens proved unsuccessful, “he did not leave his house until the end of his term, but merely issued proclamations announcing adverse omens” (*quoad potestate abiret, domo abditus nihil aliud quam per edicta obnuntiaret*, Suet. *Iul.* 20.1; cf. also Dio Cass. 38.6.5). According to Suetonius, humorous Romans started to refer the legal acts of 59 BC to “the consulship of Julius and Caesar” (*Iulio et Caesare consulibus*). Like Suetonius, who stresses Bibulus’ “despair” (*desperationem*), Seneca describes the defeated consul’s sorrow (*luctum . . . luxerat*) but has no reticence in adding that Bibulus lurked at home on account of his ill-will to, and jealousy of, Caesar (*in invidiam collegae*) – the term *invidia* perfectly capturing this emotional mixture. Cf. Vell. Pat. 2.44.5 (*augere vult invidiam collegae*).

duo simul filii interfecti sunt: In 51 BC, Bibulus took the post of proconsul of Syria, which was under the increasing threat of raids by the Parthians after Crassus’ disastrous defeat at Carrhae in 53 BC. Valerius Maximus (4.1.15) reports that when Bibulus was in Syria, “he received news that two of his sons, of high hopes,

had both been slain by the soldiers of Gabinius in Egypt” (*duos egregiae indolis filios suos a Gabinianis militibus Aegypti occisos cognovit*). Seneca’s claim that “the source (*auctor*) of the loss called for tears just as much as the loss itself (*ipsa orbitate*)” can be better understood if one considers Caesar’s depiction of the *Gabiniani*, Roman soldiers and Gallic and Germanic cavalymen left behind in Egypt by Aulus Gabinius after his restoration of Ptolemy XII to the throne in 55 BC (Fischer-Bovet 2014, 111–112). According to Caesar (*BCiv.* 3.110), the Gabinians “had habituated themselves to Alexandrian life and license and had unlearned the name and discipline of the Roman people” (*in consuetudinem Alexandrinae vitae ac licentiae venerant et nomen disciplinamque populi Romani dedidicerant*); in Egypt they were joined by freebooters (*praedones*), brigands (*latrones*), condemned criminals (*capitis damnati*), exiles (*exules*), and runaway slaves (*fugitivi*), with whom they carried out several operations, including the assassination of Bibulus’ children. It is generally believed that Bibulus had sent his sons to Egypt to return the Gabinians to active duty (Gray-Fow 1990, 183, followed by Roller 2010, 54–56, and many others), but although we know that Bibulus’ troops in Syria needed reinforcements (as Bibulus asked Cicero for help: *Cic. Att.* 6.5.3), no ancient source mentions explicitly the reasons for the Egyptian expedition. What we do know is that Bibulus continued to fight diligently despite his great sorrow (*in tanto maerore suo*, *Cic. Att.* 6.5.3), and that when Cleopatra sent to him the murderers in chains, “he forced his grief to give way to his moderation (*dolorem moderationi cedere coegit*) and immediately sent back to Cleopatra these murderers of his own flesh and blood, informing her that the power of revenge did not belong to him, but to the senate (*carnificesque sanguinis sui intactos e vestigio ad Cleopatram reduci iussit, dicendo potestatem huius vindictae non suam, sed senatus esse debere*, *Val. Max.* 4.1.15)”. This can hardly be interpreted as the response of a man on the verge of a “mental breakdown” (as Gray-Fow 1990, 184–185, argues). Rather, Bibulus’ rational control of parental grief and attachment to duty – as crystallized in Roman cultural memory – seems tailored to suit the needs of Seneca’s Stoic project. Even Bibulus’ death by “a serious disease caused by cold and hard work” (*gravioere morbo ex frigore ac labore*) during the civil war of 49 BC and his strenuous refusal to abandon “the duty he had undertaken” (*susceptum officium*, *Caes. BCiv.* 3.18) must have ultimately turned him into a miniature version of Cato the Younger – a version especially suitable for consoling a grieving aristocratic mother who had republished a history of the civil wars.

Aegyptio quidem militi ludibrio habiti: As in other authors of the Augustan and post-Augustan period (e.g., Verg. *Aen.* 2.495; Liv. 22.57.12; Vell. 1.15.1; Tac. *Ann.* 1.2; Juv. 10, 155), the singular *miles* stands for the general idea of ‘soldier’ or ‘army’. Caesar’s account of the ethnic assimilation of the *Gabiniani*

(*BCiv.* 3.110) – who even married Egyptian wives and had children from them – is sufficient to explain why Seneca labels an army originally composed of Romans, Germans, and Gauls as ‘Egyptian’. We do not know from any other source how Bibulus’ children were killed, but Seneca’s use of the word *ludibrium* seems to imply an act of scornful violence, which perfectly suits Caesar’s description of the Gabinians’ *licentia*. One can also perceive an echo of the anti-Egyptian prejudice which pervades several Roman texts – Juvenal’s fifteenth satire is a case in point – partly as a consequence of the Augustan propaganda against Cleopatra (who, as we have seen, was involved in the Bibulus affair). Yet Seneca – who regained his health in Egypt when his uncle Galerius was *praefectus Aegypti* (*Helv.* 19.2), wrote a work *De situ et sacris Aegyptiorum* (fr. VII [12] Haase), and owned large estates in Egypt (Griffin 1976, 43–48; 287–288) – does not overplay his hand.

<in> ***invidiam collegae***: An objective genitive, contrasting with the subjective genitive of Vell. Pat. 2.44.5 (see above, note on *Marc.* 14.2, *melioris quam fortioris viri*). **A** has no preposition before *invidiam*, whereas the more recent manuscripts of γ read *ob invidiam* – which may be Seneca’s original phrasing or a supplement by a later hand. Törnell’s *in invidiam* sounds more elegant and is accepted by Reynolds 1977 and other editors. But since the MS of γ can provide independent evidence about Seneca’s text, *ob invidiam* remains a plausible option.

processit ad solita imperatoris officia: Seneca may be exaggerating Bibulus’ impassiveness and may also be compressing the time Bibulus actually needed to recover from grief, in an attempt to match this late Republican figure with the other *exempla* in the same section. Yet Bibulus’ sense of duty is pointed out also by Cicero and Caesar – Bibulus’ friend and enemy, respectively (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 14.2, *duo simul filii interfecti sunt*). All in all, Seneca’s Bibulus serves to remind Marcia that even a person with a history of complicated emotions – such as enmity, sorrow, and envy – can turn out to become a model of appropriate behavior (καθήκον) and imperturbability (ἀπάθεια).

14.3 C. Caesar: The praise of the diehard anti-Caesarian Bibulus, who fell fighting for Pompey and the republican *libertas*, is promptly followed by a eulogy of Julius Caesar – who was bound to embody the essence of imperial autocracy in Julio-Claudian memory (Gowing 2005, 100–101) – as well as by a criticism of Pompey’s self-conceit. Seneca’s diptych in the present chapter can thus be seen as a delicate exercise in political tightrope walking – a necessary skill for an emerging writer living under Gaius.

Britanniam: During his campaigns in Gaul, Caesar invaded Britain twice, in 55 (*BGall.* 4.20–36) and 54 BC (*BGall.* 5.1–22). We know from several sources that the death of Caesar’s daughter Julia occurred in 54 BC, but, in contrast to Seneca, Plutarch reports that Caesar heard of the sad event *per litteras* once he had gone back to Gaul. Likewise, Velleius Paterculus (2.47.2) claims that Julia died when “Caesar lingered in Gaul” (*Caesar morabatur in Galliis*). Seneca’s choice of connecting Julia’s death with Caesar’s pioneering expedition to Britain is intended to draw an instructive contrast between human ambitions and luck (*felicitas*), on the one hand, and the inevitable experience of death and bereavement, on the other. All sources attest that, though scarcely profitable in material terms, Caesar’s crossing of the Ocean and landing in Britain made a particularly strong impression on ancient commentators for cultural and symbolic reasons (e.g., Dio Cass. 39.50–53; Plut. *Caes.* 23.2–4; Salway 1993, 20–33), as Britain’s position beyond the Ocean was itself a source of immense fascination (e.g., Catull. 11.11–12; 29.4; Verg. *Ecl.* 1.66; Hor. *Carm.* 1.35.29–30). The same reasons played an important role in the emperor Claudius’ decision of invading Britain in 43 AD, which Seneca recalls in *Polyb.* 13.2. As in several other cases, Seneca makes the most of the commonly recognized difference between the genres of historiography and *consolatio* and rearranges his materials to encourage meditation on the presence of *felicitas* and grief in human life – a topic already broached in Seneca’s chapter on Sulla (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 12.6).

peragraret: The same (relatively rare) verb is employed by Lucretius (1.72–77) to describe Epicurus’ brave and pioneering journey “far beyond the flaming battlements of the world” (*extra . . . longe flammantia moenia mundi*). Since Caesar was often associated with Epicureanism by his own contemporaries (Pizzani 1993, Benferhat 2005, 285–293, Garbarino 2007) and his invasion of Britain was regarded as a most daring crossing of the Ocean (which the ancients considered to be a river surrounding the landmass of Europe, Asia, and Africa), Seneca’s text may contain a subtle Lucretian allusion based on the contrast between fire and water, philosophical wisdom and political power.

filiam publica secum fata ducentem: In 59 BC, Caesar had married his daughter Julia to Pompey with the overt purpose of reaching a political alliance (Plut. *Caes.* 14.7; *Pomp.* 47.6; Suet. *Iul.* 21). Julia was, as Velleius Paterculus (2.47.2) puts it, a “token of concord” (*concordiae pignus*). Cato the Younger could “cry out that it was intolerable to have the supreme power prostituted by marriage alliances” (βοῶντος οὐκ ἀνεκτὸν εἶναι γάμοις διαμαστροπευομένης τῆς ἡγεμονίας, Plut. *Caes.* 14.8), but this was common practice in the late Republic (and in fact Cato himself lent his wife Marcia to the orator Q. Hortensius to strengthen their alliance: Plut. *Cat. Min.* 25; 52). It is a matter of fact that the marriage

between Pompey and Julia brought some stability in Rome’s *publica fata* – to borrow Seneca’s own words. If we trust Plutarch (*Pomp.* 53.1–4), Pompey and Julia even bore a sincere love for one another. Hence, when Julia died in childbirth in 54 BC, “great was the grief of Pompey, and great the grief of Caesar (μέγα μὲν αὐτὸν ἔσχε Πομπηϊὸν, μέγα δὲ Καίσαρα πένθος), and their friends were greatly troubled too, since they felt that the relationship which alone kept the distempered state in harmony and concord was now dissolved (οἱ δὲ φίλοι συνεταράχθησαν, ὡς τῆς ἐν εἰρήνῃ καὶ ὁμοιοῖα τᾶλλα νοσοῦσαν τὴν πολιτείαν φυλαττοῦσης οἰκειότητος λελυμένης, *Plut. Caes.* 23.6)”. This perception of imminent danger, which Seneca considers unequivocal (*in oculis erat*), is reported by several other authors (e.g., *App. B Civ.* 2.19; *Vell. Pat.* 2.47.2; *Luc. Phars.* 1.111–120). Its origins also lie in the fact that Julia’s baby – who is described as a boy by Livy (*Per.* 106), Velleius (2.47.2), and Suetonius (*Iul.* 26.2) and as a girl by Plutarch (*Pomp.* 53.4) and Cassius Dio (39.64) – died immediately thereafter. Seneca may be thinking of Julia’s baby when in *Polyb.* 15.1 he explains the dissolution of the “bonds of the peace” (*pacis vincula*) with the death of Sextus Pompeius’ sister – Julia’s baby being a half-sister of Sextus Pompeius (Abel 1962, 376–377). Alternatively, Seneca may have confused – or deliberately overlapped (Russo 2022) – Pompey’s daughter Pompeia with Caesar’s daughter Julia, whose political role is correctly recalled in the present passage

magnum: An allusion to Pompey’s surname *Magnus* (‘The Great’), which seems to have been first used by Pompey’s soldiers in Africa in 81 BC. The acclamation, which was intended to assimilate Pompey to Alexander the Great, was probably ‘institutionalized’ by Sulla, who, according to Plutarch (*Pomp.* 13.4–5), “saluted Pompey in a loud voice as ‘Magnus’ and ordered those who were by to give him this surname” (μεγάλη φωνῇ Μάγνον ἡσπάσατο, καὶ τοὺς παρόντας οὕτως ἐκέλευσε προσαγορεῦσαι, cf. also *Plin. HN* 7.96; *Liv. Per.* 103; *Cass. Dio* 37.21.3). Plutarch’s claim that Pompey began to use the surname in his letters and ordinances when he was sent as proconsul to Spain against Sertorius seems confirmed by a triumphal *aureus* with the inscriptions ‘*Magnus*’ and ‘*Procos*’ (Palmer 1990, 2). The fact that Pompey was jealous of any possible rival is remarked on by several other authors, including Caesar himself (*BCiv.* 1.4.4) – which makes Seneca’s description of Caesar’s fear particularly realistic. Perhaps in an attempt to correct the impression of republican nostalgia that Bibulus’ portrait may have given, Seneca is more explicit than other authors (e.g., *Vell. Pat.* 2.29.3–4; 2.33.3; *Luc. Phars.* 1.125–126) in observing that Pompey’s jealousy turned out to operate at the expense of the common good. Cf. also *Sen. Ep.* 94.64–65.

crecserent: Like Gertz, Reynolds 1977 accepts the reading of **A** and writes *crecseret*, thus considering Caesar the subject of the concessive clause. However, it seems preferable to follow the choice of other editors (such as Viansino 1963 and Traina 1987) and accept the reading of **γ** (*crecserent*), which makes the sentence much more natural and allows us to restore Seneca’s etymological wordplay between *incrementa* and *crecserent*.

imperatoria obit munia: Caesar’s *imperatoria munia* recall Bibulus’ *imperatoris officia* (14.2). But it is the figure of Caesar as a universal conqueror (*quam omnia solebat*) that fills the foreground of Seneca’s finale.

15.1 Caesarum: The *exemplum* of Julius Caesar at the end of chapter 14 also serves as a transition to the stories of “the other Caesars” (*aliorum Caesarum*), that is, of Augustus and Tiberius. Together with other political allusions (such as an evocation of the evil Sejanus, Cremutius Cordus’ persecutor), this is another clear indication that the *ad M.* was written under Gaius. Moreover, coming at the end of Seneca’s gallery of male *exempla*, Augustus and Tiberius inevitably appear as the acme of human endeavor and resilience – as the culminating point of a history of public and private heroism which sees no discontinuity between Republic and Empire. Seneca’s emphatic reference to the deification of Roman emperors (*dis genitis deosque genituri . . . Divus Augustus*) corroborates such an appreciative view of imperial power, for “to strive to be a Stoic is to labor at self-deification” (Stephens 2007, 115). In a sense, by achieving a divine status Julius Caesar and Augustus appear to have reached the goal that every human should set up for his life.

qui dis geniti deosque genituri dicantur: An overt allusion to Verg. *Aen.* 9.642, a *locus classicus* of Augustan discourse (Quint 2018, 91–92), where Apollo addresses the victorious Ascanius, Aeneas’ son, as “offspring of gods and sire of gods to be” (*dis genite et geniture deos*). Virgil and the Augustans could build on “the propaganda of the *gens Iulia*, which, at least since the second century BC, had stressed the family’s close ties to the mythical Trojan past of the founders of the Roman world, and its descent from the goddess Venus, Ascanius’ grandmother” (Rogerson 2017, 45). For Virgil’s readers, Apollo’s prophecy about the future deification of Ascanius’ descendants was manifestly allusive to the fate of Julius Caesar – who took pride in his divine ancestry (e.g., Cic. *Fam.* 8.15.2; Suet. *Iul.* 6.1) and was in fact deified in 42 BC – as well as to the demigod figure of Augustus. Seneca’s quotation further extends the allusive range of Virgil’s words by projecting into Rome’s future the image of other deified Caesars – an admittedly predictable perspective after the official deification of Augustus in 14 AD (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 1.10–11). Pace Manning 1981, 83, Seneca’s insertion of the

verb *dicantur* does not imply any “scepticism about the consecration of deceased *princeps*” (any comparison with Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis* is out of place here), for *dicantur* is just a typical “Alexandrian footnote” (Ross 1975, 78; Hinds 1998, 1–5) signaling Seneca’s intertextual weave and its cultural-cum-political resonances. Seneca is consciously taking on the Augustan and early imperial discourse on kingship, which, in turn, reenacts (and transforms) two basic assumptions of Hellenistic political rhetoric (Walbank 1984, 78–84): the divine (or semidivine) nature of the ruler and his virtuous inclination to philanthropy (φιλανθρωπία) and magnanimity (μεγαλοψυχία) – the latter point being aptly combined by Seneca with Stoic providentialism in his introductory claim that fortune (*fortuna*) attacks the emperors in order to allow them to confer a further benefit on the human race (*ut sic quoque generi humano prosint*).

in potestate habere: As Epictetus points out at the start of his *Handbook* (*Ench.* 1.1–2), what fortune can do to our body, possessions, reputation, and power is “not up to us” (οὐκ ἐφ’ ἡμῖν). What is “up to us” (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν) is our rational judgement, choice, desire, and aversion – that is, what pertains to our inner life. Seneca renders this Stoic idea through a Roman juridical expression that is commonly employed to designate a person’s control over other people or goods (cf. e.g., Gaius, *Inst.* 1.104–107). The implicit claim is that not even the emperors – whose *potestas* is typically regarded as unlimited and who in fact exert overwhelming control over the lives of their subjects – can escape this rule, from which not even the sage is exempt.

15.2 *Divus Augustus*: Since Marcia had been a friend of Augustus’ wife Livia (cf. above, 4.2), Seneca’s mention of Augustus and Livia’s son Tiberius seems intended to raise Marcia’s level of interest at a crucially transitional point in the *exempla* section. Seneca’s description of Augustus’ repeated bereavements is deliberately hyperbolic, especially because Augustus’ daughter Julia, who was exiled in 2 BC for her allegedly immoral lifestyle (Tac. *Ann.* 1.53; Dio 55.10.12–15; Sen. *Ben.* 6.32; Fantham 2006, 85–91, with other sources), died in 14 AD a few months *after* her father. As usual, Seneca’s intention is not to offer a detailed historical account, but to remind Marcia of the several promising heirs that the god-like *pater patriae* Augustus had prematurely lost (cf. *Polyb.* 15.3–4). At the top of such a sad list of deaths are Gaius and Lucius, Julia’s sons by Agrippa, whom Seneca may have included among both Augustus’ *liberi* and *nepotes*, for, although they were Augustus’ grandchildren, they were adopted by the *princeps* in their childhood (in 17 BC: Dio 54.18.1; Suet. *Aug.* 64.1; Tac. *Ann.* 1.3; Vell. Pat. 2.96.1) and are called *filius meos* at *Mon. Anc.* 14.1. Lucius died suddenly of a disease at Massilia in 2 AD, when he was about to join the Roman armies in Spain.

While trying to install a new ruler in Armenia, Gaius was traitorously wounded and died in 4 AD at Limyra in Lycia, on his way back to Italy (Vell. Pat. 2.102.2–3; Tac. *Ann.* 1.3; Dio 55.10a.6–10). Augustus adopted another son of Julia and Agrippa, Agrippa Postumus, together with Livia’s son Tiberius in 4 AD. But Postumus was exiled as early as 7 BC and was eventually put to death by Tiberius upon his accession to the throne (Tac. *Ann.* 1.3; 6; Suet. *Aug.* 65.4; Pettinger 2012, 47–60). Among Augustus’ *nepotes* who never became his *liberi* are Agrippina the Elder, who married Germanicus in 5 AD, was banished by Tiberius and starved herself to death in 33 AD (Varner 2004, 90–91), Julia, who, like her homonymous mother, was charged of adultery and died in exile in 28 AD (Tac. *Ann.* 4.71; Flower 2006, 167–169), and Marcellus, the son of Augustus’ sister Octavia, whom Seneca warmly praised in the first part of his *consolatio* (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 2.3, *Marcellum*).

adoptione: Although Augustus adopted several of his younger kin, Seneca must be mainly thinking of Tiberius here. Since Tiberius did not carry Augustus’ blood in his veins and was already known for his controversial character, his adoption was seen by many (cf. e.g., Suet. *Tib.* 21.2; Tac. *Ann.* 1.10) as a last resort measure (or, even worse, as a cynical move) due to the exhaustion of Augustus’ “supply of Caesars” – as Seneca emphatically puts it (*exhausta Caesarum turba*). At the very start of his will (Suet. *Tib.* 23.1), Augustus states laconically that since cruel fortune (*atrox fortuna*) snatched away from him (*eripuit*) his sons Gaius and Lucius, he designated Tiberius as his heir. As reported by Suetonius, the malicious saw this preamble as a further proof that the emperor acted “from necessity rather than from choice” (*necessitate magis quam iudicio*)

cuius iam res agebatur: Augustus’ fortitude and resilience, which are given emphasis by alliteration (*tulit tamen tam fortiter*), are teleologically explained by suggesting that the living emperor was already aware of his future divine status – a view expressed by Augustan poets like Virgil as early as 36 BC (cf. *G.* 1.24–42, with the chronology of Donat. *Vit. Verg.* 25). Manning’s 1981, 85, claim that “Seneca alludes semi-humorously to the deification of Augustus in 14 AD” finds no support in the text – which, as a consolatory work, leaves little room for humor, least of all with regard to the archetypal model of Roman imperial power, whose wife Marcia had befriended. Yet it is true that the *exemplum Augusti* here is a bit overshadowed by the surrounding figures of Tiberius and other Roman generals (as Berno 2013, 188–189, points out).

15.3 Ti. Caesar: Tiberius lost his only natural son Drusus (*quem genuerat*) in 23 AD and his adopted son Germanicus (*quem adoptaverat*) – empress Livia’s grandchild (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 5.6, *filium incolumem, ex amisso nepotes*) –

in 19 AD. Tiberius adopted Germanicus in 4 AD in the context of a dynastic strategy that contemplated Augustus’ adoption of Agrippa Postumus and Tiberius himself (Cass. Dio 55.13.1a–2; Swan 2004, 140–142). After Drusus’ death there were rumors that he had been poisoned by Sejanus in a kind of Machiavellian conspiracy involving Drusus’ own wife Livilla, the eunuch Lygdus, and Tiberius, but both Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.10–11) and Dio (57.22.1–4) dismiss such rumors as fictions (see Flower 2006, 171–172) – although Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.8) holds that Sejanus and Lygdus did poison Drusus. An objective basis for similar speculations was Tiberius’ lack of paternal affection (*patria caritate*, Suet. *Tib.* 52.1) towards Drusus and Germanicus, which became embarrassingly conspicuous in the period of Drusus’ illness and death, for according to several sources (Suet. *Tib.* 52.1–2; Tac. *Ann.* 4.8; Dio 57.22.3) the emperor refused to change any of his habits and even forbade others to express their grief. Suetonius (*Tib.* 52.2) adds the scathing anecdote that “when a deputation from Ilium offered Tiberius somewhat belated condolences (*Iliensium legatis paulo serius consolantibus*), he replied with a smile, as if the memory of his bereavement had faded from his mind, that they, too, had his sympathy for the loss of their eminent fellow-citizen Hector (*quasi obliterate iam doloris memoria, irridens se quoque respondit vicem eorum dolere, quod egregium civem Hectorem amisissent*)”. These historical reports are at odds with Seneca’s meliorative reading in our chapter, according to which Tiberius was sincerely touched by Drusus’ death and simply imposed restraint on himself. Gloyd 2017, 147, has argued that Seneca’s use of the adverb *patienter* “to describe Tiberius’ behavior at Drusus’ death also hints at moral imperfection”, for *patienter* implies that Tiberius was “firm or unyielding” – a detail that, combined with the elision of Germanicus from our text, should prompt us “to consider whether Tiberius’ reaction to the death of either of his sons was in fact praiseworthy”. However, *patienter* is often attested in a positive moral sense (Cic. *Amic.* 91; *Phil.* 11.7; Caes. *BCiv.* 3.15.5), and a positive meaning seems implied in our passage too. Moreover, Seneca’s omission of Tiberius’ reaction to Germanicus’ death is just a matter of tact and good sense, for it was widely known (Tac. *Ann.* 2.69–73; Dio 57.18.9–11; Suet. *Tib.* 52.2–3) that Tiberius detested Germanicus to the point of discrediting his military achievements, was suspected of being involved in his death in Syria – possibly by poisoning, aggravated by witchcraft, “on account of the wickedness of Piso and Plancina” (*scelere Pisonis et Plancinae*, Tac. *Ann.* 2.71) – and eventually oppressed Germanicus’ widow and children. By contrast, it was a historical fact (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 4.12) that Tiberius pronounced the funerary eulogy on Drusus. And although Tiberius’ audience in the Forum may have “assumed the attitude and accents of mourning from hypocrisy more than impulse” (*habitum ac voces dolentum simulatione magis quam libens induebat*), exulting

in secret for the house of Germanicus, at least in the case of Drusus Seneca had a factual basis for his rhetorically embellished narrative.

pro rostris laudavit filium: The same detail is provided by Tacitus (*laudante filium pro rostris Tiberio*, *Ann.* 4.12). Seneca does not need to specify which of Tiberius’ two sons was praised by the emperor before the Rostra since Germanicus died in Syria (not in Egypt, as Manning 1981, 85, claims), was entitled to a first funeral in Antioch (*Tac. Ann.* 2.73), and then was transported by ship to Italy, where amid impressive manifestations of public mourning (*Tac. Ann.* 3.1–6; *Suet. Calig.* 5–6) “Tiberius was with difficulty dissembling his joy at Germanicus’ death” (*laetam Tiberio Germanici mortem male dissimulari*, *Tac. Ann.* 3.2; cf. also *Cass. Dio* 57.18.6: ὁ μὲν Τιβέριος καὶ ἡ Λιουία πάνυ ἤσθησαν). Not only did Tiberius fail to attend any public ceremonies in honor of his adopted son, but he also issued an edict (*monuit edicto*, *Tac. Ann.* 3.6) that tried to curb the public expression of grief using the hortatory language and *exempla* style of consolation literature. Seneca had no other choice than to focus on the later death of Drusus, and there was no danger that his readers might be misled by the word *filium*.

interiecto tantummodo velamento: As Servius (*ad Aen.* 11.2) points out, “it was a Roman custom (*consuetudo Romana*) that those who had polluted themselves in funeral rites could not offer sacrifices (*polluti funere minime sacrificarent*)”. This prescription was applied particularly rigorously to *pontifices*, “who could not make sacrifices or dedications after learning of the death of a family member and were prohibited from viewing corpses” (Shannon-Henderson 2019, 86). Servius cites the story of Horatius Pulvillus, which Seneca has just mentioned (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 13.1, *Pulvillus*), as a case in point, and elsewhere (*ad Aen.* 3.64) he adds that Roman houses in mourning were decorated with a cypress branch to prevent any pontiff from entering and polluting himself. Like his predecessor Augustus, Tiberius was *pontifex maximus* and had to avoid being contaminated by the sight of his son’s corpse. Thus, just as Augustus delivered his eulogy over Agrippa “after first hanging a curtain in front of the corpse” (παραπέτασμα τι πρὸ τοῦ νεκροῦ παρατείνας, *Cass. Dio* 54.28.3–4), so Tiberius shielded his eyes with a veil at Drusus’ funeral. Tiberius seems to have been particularly scrupulous in observing this kind of taboo, whose relevance in archaic cultures has been discussed by anthropologists like Douglas 1966 (see now Duschinsky/Schnall/Weiss 2017). In fact, according to Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.62), Tiberius rebuked Germanicus for burying the bones of Varus’ soldiers six years after the battle of Teutoburg Forest, protesting that “a commander endowed with the augurship and its most ancient sanctities should not have handled funereal things” (*neque imperatorem auguratu et vetustissimis caerimoniis praeditum adtrectare*

feralia debuisse). Tiberius’ criticism of Germanicus may have been due to other hidden reasons (as Tacitus suggests) – especially because it is not clear whether the same prohibition attested for the *pontifices* and the *flamen Dialis* applied to the *augures* (Rüpke 1990, 63–66, Shannon-Henderson 2019, 85–87) – but the same fear of ritual defilement continued to influence the decisions of other Roman emperors, since, for instance, Claudius ordered the removal of a statue of Augustus for fear that it might be polluted by the blood of public executions (Cass. Dio 60.13.3).

flente populo Romano non flexit vultum: The paronomasiac play on *flente* and *flexit* serves to emphasize the contrast between the people’s grief and Tiberius’ firmness – a virtue that the emperor seems to have actually exhibited on occasion of Drusus’ death, for even such a relentless critic as Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.8) maintains that Tiberius continued to visit the senate, “either unalarmed or to advertise his firmness of mind” (*nullo metu an ut firmitudinem animi ostentaret*), when Drusus was still unburied (*etiam defuncto necdum sepulto*).

suos perdere: There is a wordplay here as the verb *perdere* means both “destroying” and “losing”. By enduring his grief with steadfastness (*patienter*), Tiberius allegedly showed Sejanus how resolutely he could endure the ruin of those closest to him. Sejanus, who had been Tiberius’ all-powerful right-hand man for many years, fell to his ruin eight years later in 31 AD, when Tiberius sent “a verbose and magniloquent letter” (*verbosa et grandis epistula*, Juv. 10.71–72) to the senate from Capri, ordering his former favorite to be imprisoned and later put to death (Cass. Dio 58.9–11; Suet. *Tib.* 65; McHugh 2020, 160–190). Since Sejanus was the persecutor of Marcia’s father, Seneca’s reference to his death “may have been designed to make Marcia more receptive to the idea of Tiberius as an exemplar” (Manning 1981, 86). However, Seneca’s attempt to dissociate the figure of the deceased emperor from that of his long-standing lieutenant may have also looked like an act of political prudence – especially if the *ad M.* was written after 39 AD, when Caligula radically changed his previously negative attitude towards Tiberius and started to eulogize and emulate his predecessor (Cass. Dio 59.16.1–7; Suet. *Calig.* 30.2; Griffin 1976, 397; see *Introduction*, 5–6).

15.4 *hic omnia prosternens casus*: In the conclusion of this chapter, Seneca resumes the conventional theme of the indiscriminate violence of fortune (*casus* = τῶχη), which has been repeatedly mentioned in the first half of the *consolatio* (see esp. above, notes on *Marc.* 9.3–4). As in other similar contexts, fortune is described as a storm (*tempestas*) – which recalls the common metaphor of sailing as analogous to life (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 5.5, *adversi aliquid*).

16.1 *feminam*: Marcia’s imagined objection revives a dialogic process towards the end of Seneca’s gallery of ‘apathic’ *exempla*, so as to alert the reader to a central issue in the pedagogic dialogue: the gender-specific features of *exempla* and the gendering of moral wisdom. Seneca, who has been dealing with gender-related issues since the start of his *consolatio*, now feels the need to go into greater detail and expounds with clarity the orthodox Stoic view that, as Musonius Rufus (*ap. Stob. Ecl.* 2.31.126.5–8) puts it, “women have the same rationality as men have, for interacting with one another and morally assessing every action” (see above, notes on *Marc.* 1.1, *ab infirmitate muliebris animi*, and on 9.5, *effeminat*, for further evidence). Seneca’s anaphoric repetition of the adjective *par* forcefully emphasizes the equality of men and women when it comes to their natural inclination to *virtus* – a polysemic term which, unlike its Greek equivalent ἀρετή, is etymologically connected with the concept of masculinity (McDonnell 2006; Goldberg 2021, 13–34). For Seneca, this is also an opportunity to reaffirm the Stoic providentialist view of nature, since anyone denying that women can achieve ethical virtue is implicitly making the case that “nature has been stingy in its treatment of women’s characters” (*naturam maligne cum mulierum ingeniis egisse*). As the subsequent *exempla* of Lucretia, Cloelia, and the two Cornelias show, Seneca does not believe that Marcia’s gender “is a thing to be gotten over” for the sake of a uniformly masculinized ideal (as Gunderson 2015, 81, has argued). Rather, Seneca self-consciously constructs his Stoic discourse about female virtue on the solid basis of the Roman cultural tradition, which – as attested in several archaic myths as well as in epigraphic evidence (Eisenhut 1973, 210–211) – had long acknowledged that under special circumstances women can (and should) display moral virility in the interest of the public good. As Hemelrijk 2004b, 196–197, has shown in her study of the *Laudatio Turiae*, this apparently gender-deviant behavior does not affect the norm of female domesticity insofar as Roman women who exhibit *virtus* “uphold their families and support the exercise of virtue by men, or offer a corrective reaction to male vice” (Wilcox, 2006, 92–93). In response to Marcia’s doubts about the gender limits of Stoic exemplarity, Seneca can confidently build on a glorious world of ‘manly’ maidens and pugnacious *matronae* – whose “manliness itself is parallel, but not identical to that of men” (Roller 2018, 82). Cf. also Foley 2001, 161–164 (on Greek culture and its female heroines).

16.2 *loquimur*: The use of the first person plural is usually taken as evidence that Seneca wrote his *consolatio* when he was still in Rome, that is, before his exile to Corsica in 41 AD (see, most recently, Sauer 2014, 135). As Manning 1981, 2, reasonably observes, “it is pressing words too far to insist that both author and recipient must have been within the pomerium at the time of writing. But it

is not likely that an exile, banished from Rome by imperial decree, could use such a phrase without seeming to write incongruously” (see also *Introduction*, 4–5).

Lucretia et Brutus: In accordance with his earlier statements about gender equality, Seneca puts Lucretia and Brutus on a par as liberators of Rome from the tyranny of the Tarquins in 509 BC. This is a cunning rhetorical move designed to impress the reader, since traditional accounts of the birth of the Roman republic tend to place an emphasis on Brutus and Collatinus as male liberators and basically portray Lucretia as “the figure of violated Rome” (Donaldson 1982, 9). The story of the rape of Lucretia goes back at least to Fabius Pictor, the third century BC historian whom Dionysius of Halicarnassus (4.64) repeatedly cites as his source. There are several variations of the story, and Livy (1.57–60) reports a more rhetorically elaborated version than that of Dionysius which has become deservedly famous – from Shakespeare and Machiavelli to contemporary feminist theorists (Jed 1989, Matthes 2000). According to Livy, Sextus Tarquinius, the son of the Etruscan king of Rome Tarquinius Superbus, was inflamed by “the beauty and exemplary purity” (*cum forma tum spectata castitas*) of Lucretia, the wife of the noble L. Tarquinius Collatinus, and raped her at night while he was her guest. Lucretia, “overwhelmed with grief at such a great outrage” (*maesta tanto malo*), summoned her father and her husband, who came with two friends, Publius Valerius and Lucius Junius Brutus. They found Lucretia “sitting in her room prostrate with grief” (*sedentem maestam*), listened to her appalling story, and witnessed her heroic suicide, for after asking the bystanders to punish Sextus Tarquinius and rejecting any attempt to console her (*consolantur aegram animi*), Lucretia plunged a knife into her heart. Brutus – who had so far pretended to be a ‘fool’ to escape Tarquinius Superbus’ cruelty (Bettini 1987) – drew the knife from Lucretia’s wound, swore revenge, and led the revolt that marked the end of the monarchy and the beginning of the republic. Together with Collatinus, he was to become the first consul of the newborn Roman republic. Here Seneca uses the *exempla* of Lucretia and Cloelia to demonstrate that women have been endowed by nature with the same capacity as men to achieve virtue, thus temporarily departing from his focus on the *constantia in morte suorum*. Yet, as Livy’s account shows, Seneca’s readers are also accustomed to seeing Lucretia as an example of brave reaction to grief, for, in a sense, it is her own inescapable death that Lucretia must endure to prevent “any unchaste woman from living by Lucretia’s example” (*nec ulla deinde impudica Lucretiae exemplo vivet*, Liv. 1.58.10). Lucretia’s distinctive virtue as a *matrona* is *puđicitia*, which is often translated as “chastity”, “modesty”, or “sense of decency”, but properly indicates “a moral virtue that pertains to the regulation of behavior (either of oneself or of other people) specifically associated

with sex” (Langlands 2006, 31). Elsewhere (10.23.7–8), Livy has another of his female heroes, Virginia, argue that Roman women should compete in *pudicitia* just as male citizens compete in *virtus* – *pudicitia* clearly being a gender-specific equivalent for *virtus* (cf. also Edwards 2007, 187–188). When the standards of competition are raised particularly high – as happens in emergency situations which put the survival of the entire community at stake – women are culturally entitled to emulate especially closely the modes of manly *virtus*. This is precisely the message conveyed by mythical archetypes like Lucretia, whose ‘manliness’ is praised by Ovid and Valerius Maximus: the former describes Lucretia as “a lady of manly spirit” (*animi matrona virilis*, *Fast.* 2.847), while the latter (6.1.1) goes so far as to depict Collatinus’ wife as “the leader of Roman modesty (*dux Romanae pudicitiae*), whose manly spirit by a perverse twist of fate was allotted to a woman’s body (*cuius virilis animus maligno errore fortunae muliebri corpus sortitus est*)”. When addressing Marcia, Seneca praises Lucretia’s inner strength but avoids making explicit mention of her rape and suicide. With a sharp rhetorical move resembling the genre of declamations – where the *exemplum Lucretiae* is variously used (e.g., *Sen. Con. ex.* 6.8.1; *Ps-Quint. Decl. Mai.* 3.11) – Seneca points out that Lucretia’s ‘masculine’ (and hence apparently gender-deviant) behavior eventually results in a salvific and maternal act of generation, for it is only thanks to Lucretia’s self-imposed sacrifice that Brutus takes off his mask of foolishness, is born to his public life, and establishes freedom (*libertas*) for the Romans: as Seneca puts it, “we are indebted to Brutus for liberty, to Lucretia for Brutus”. Joplin 1990, 67, has even claimed that Lucretia’s “showable wound serves as a double for the vagina”. Certainly, Lucretia’s virile heroism is not in contrast with, but rather complementary to, her social status as a faithful, life-bearing *matrona*, and in his consolations (cf. e.g., *Helv.* 16.5–7) Seneca is remarkably keen to use womanliness and manliness as “categories which anyone may slip into and out of” (Edwards 2007, 191).

Cloeliam: Seneca’s second example of female fortitude and capacity of virtue is Cloelia, the brave *virgo* who, in the second or third year of the Republic (hence shortly after Lucretia’s death), was among the noble girls demanded as hostages by the Etruscan king of Clusium Lars Porsenna. Like Lucretia, Cloelia figures prominently in the traditional Roman discourse on female exemplarity, and her story is told, with a few variations, by a number of sources (*Liv.* 2.13.4–11; *Dion. Hal. Ant. Rom.* 5.33.1–4, *Flor.* 1.4, *Serv. Ad Aen.* 8.646; *Val. Max.* 3.2.2, *Plut. Publ.* 19.1–8), which have been carefully discussed by Roller 2004, 28–50, and Briquel 2007, 123–125. Cloelia allegedly succeeded in eluding her Etruscan guards, swam across the Tiber together with other girls amidst the enemy’s javelins, and safely reached Rome. Although her escape risked breaking the truce between the

Romans and Porsenna, the Etruscan king was so full of admiration for Cloelia’s courage that he made a gift to her of a portion of the hostages. According to Servius (*ad Aen* 8.646), Porsenna even asked the Romans to decree “some manly reward” (*aliquid virile*) for Cloelia – a request which resulted in the erection of the equestrian statue mentioned here by Seneca. Quite tactfully, Seneca chooses to couple the story of an archetypal *matrona* (Lucretia) with that of an archetypal *virgo* (Cloelia) – the two stories being already associated in the edifying repertoire of republican historiography – so as to cover the entire range of Roman femininity. As a *virgo*, Cloelia is a transitional being with both feminine and masculine traits and shares with properly constituted males “the characteristic of never having been sexually penetrated” (Roller 2018, 80) – which, among other things, explains the efforts of ancient etymologists to connect *virgo*, *virago*, and *vir* (Maltby 1991, 648). It is thus not surprising that – in Seneca as well as in other sources – Cloelia displays distinctively ‘masculine’ qualities to a greater extent than does Lucretia. Building on the frequent ascription to Cloelia of *virtus*, ἀνδρεία, and other cognate qualities (e.g., Liv. 2.13.11; Val. Max. 3.2.2; Manil. 1.780; Flor. 1.4.7; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.34.3; Polyæn. 8.31.1; Plut. *Publ.* 19.8), Roller 2018, 77–94, has shown that Cloelia perfectly incarnates the cultural paradox of the “manly maiden”, which is reflected in Seneca’s assertion that “for her outstanding boldness” (*ob insignem audaciam*) the Romans have virtually treated Cloelia as a man (*tantum non in viros transcripsimus*). Yet, Cloelia’s apparently gender-deviant traits are balanced by other actions attributed to her which are both gender- and age-appropriate (e.g., her leadership of a female-only group, her ability in deception, and her concern for the bodily integrity of freeborn children). When inviting Marcia to emulate Cloelia’s fortitude, Seneca is fully aware that “in spite of the talk of manliness, the larger thrust of Cloelia’s actions is to reinforce traditional gender roles and relations. She does not overturn a stereotype about girlhood but rather drums hard the idea that a girlhood involving an inculcation in courage is admirable. Ideally, it lays the groundwork for a virtuous womanhood” (Caldwell 2015, 40–41; cf. also Malaspina 1996).

equestri insidens statuæ: Cloelia’s equestrian statue “at a busy spot on the Sacred Way” (*in sacra via, celeberrimo loco*) is mentioned by several sources, but its history is rather controversial, and doubts have been cast on its original meaning. In republican Rome, equestrian statues were usually dedicated to gods and male heroes, and the association with a horse – which emerges also from the variant tradition that Cloelia crossed the Tiber on horseback (Val. Max. 3.2.2; Plut. *Publ.* 19.2; and Flor. 10.7) – is clearly aimed to reinforce Cloelia’s masculine traits. Pliny the Elder (*HN* 34.28–29) considers Cloelia’s monument one of the oldest equestrian statues in Rome and locates it “opposite the temple of Jupiter

Stator in the vestibule of Tarquinius Superbus’ house” (*contra Iovis Statoris aedem in vestibulo Superbi domus*), that is, where the Sacred Way enters the Forum. Pliny may be drawing on the same historiographic (and folkloric) tradition as Seneca, for in the same context he credits Lucretia and Brutus with expelling the kings and creates an artificial connection between their story and that of Cloelia. Even more important, Pliny attests that the attribution of the equestrian statue to Cloelia goes back at least to the Gracchan-era annalist Piso Frugi (fr. 27 Forsythe = fr. 24 Cornell), whereas other sources such as Annius Fetalis seem to ascribe the statue on the Sacred Way to Valeria, the daughter of the consul Valerius Publicola, who replaces Cloelia as a national heroine in an alternative tradition – possibly under the influence of the historian Valerius Antias (cf. Plut. *Publ.* 18.3; 19.8; *Mulier. virt.* 250C-F; Cornell 2013, I, 629–630). However, the statue that Seneca and Pliny saw – and was still seen by Servius (*ad Aen* 8.646) as late as the fourth century AD – is not the same described by Piso, for in the early Augustan era Dionysius of Halicarnassus (5.35.2) found that the monument (which was of bronze) had been destroyed by a fire and no longer stood. Sehlmeier 1999, 100–101, has reasonably conjectured that the early republican statue was rebuilt by Augustus in the framework of his ideological program of “Kanonisierung der römischen Geschichte”. Thus, quite interestingly, while it is highly dubious that the original statue represented the Cloelia of legend (Sehlmeier 1999, 100, is inclined to regard it as the portrait of a goddess such as Venus Cloacina, Fortuna Muliebris, Venus Equestris or Vica Pota; Hemelrijk 2005, 312, thinks of “an equestrian statue of an unidentified boy or young man”; cf. also Valentini 2011, 207–213) – “the re-erected statue represented what the original statue had come to be believed to represent” (Roller 2018, 89). In Seneca’s discourse, which tries to impress Marcia with the visual materials of the Augustan strategies of memorialization, Cloelia’s bronze figure serves as embodiment and memory of a gendered model of *virtus*: just as Cloelia has the authority to rebuke the demasculinized young men “climbing into their cushioned litters” (*pulvinum escendentibus*) – a practice considered “unnatural” (*contra naturam*) by Seneca (*Ep.* 55.1), for nature “gave us legs with which to do our own walking” – so too Marcia has the potential to surpass both men and women in the natural ability to regain virtue.

16.3 *quae suos fortiter desideraverint*: Seneca’s rhetorical formulation marks the transition from general *exempla* of female virtue to role models of women who displayed fortitude (*fortiter* = καρτερία) in bearing the suffering of longing (*desideraverint* = πόθος/πένθος).

Scipionis filiam, Gracchorum matrem: Having decided to focus on the house (*familia*) of the *Cornelii* – a choice inspired by the aristocratic custom of enumerating and connecting the examples of different generations of the same family – Seneca has no other choice than to start with Cornelia, the daughter of Scipio Africanus, universally celebrated as “the mother of the Gracchi”, Tiberius and Gaius (*mater Gracchorum* = μήτηρ Γράγχων: e.g., Cic. *Brut.* 211; Juv. 6.167–168; Plut. *Gracch.* 8.7; 25.4). Every Roman reader regarded Cornelia as a “legendary super-mother, a *grande dame* whose name adorned rhetorical litanies of feminine perfection rattled off in every Roman schoolroom; a woman revered by subsequent ages as exemplary wife, mother, widow, *mater dolorosa* and prose stylist *extraordinaire*” (Dixon 2007, xii). As a *matrona univira* who remained faithful to the memory of her husband Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (to the point of declining king Ptolemy’s matrimonial proposal: Plut. *Gracch.* 1.7) and devoted extraordinary care to the education of her children (Cic. *Brut.* 211; Tac. *Dial.* 28.6; Plut. *Gracch.* 1.7), Cornelia came to be admired for what even the caustic Juvenal called her “great virtues” (*magnis virtutibus*, Juv. 6.168). Of course, Cornelia’s admission into the pantheon of Roman feminine *virtus* is the product of a gradual cultural construction, which is likely to have begun as early as the end of the second century BC (with or without the efforts of her daughter Sempronia, *pace* Dixon 2007, 12–14) and is reflected in both literary and artistic media (Roller 2018, 197–232). Cornelia’s frugality and love for her children is most famously illustrated by the anecdote that when a Campanian lady paraded her gems, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus were proudly presented by their mother as her true jewels (Val. Max. 4.4). However, among the several virtues that the Roman tradition ascribed to Cornelia as a “prudent, affectionate, and high-souled mother” (σώφρονα καὶ φιλότεκνον καὶ μεγαλόψυχον, Plut. *Gracch.* 1.6), Seneca naturally emphasizes the quality that best suits his consolatory purpose, that is, Cornelia’s capacity of “bearing all her misfortunes in a noble and magnanimous spirit” (τά τ’ ἄλλα τῆς συμφορᾶς εὐγενῶς καὶ μεγαλοψύχως ἐνεγκεῖν, Plut. *Gracch.* 40.1). According to Plutarch (*Gracch.* 40.3) – who, like Cicero, could draw on a number of now-lost earlier sources, including Cornelia’s own writings – Cornelia was “most admirable when she spoke of her sons without grief or tears” (θαυμασιωτάτη δὲ τῶν παίδων ἀπενθῆς καὶ ἀδάκρυτος μνημονεύουσα), so that she aroused in some the suspicion that “old age or the greatness of her sorrows had impaired her mind and made her insensible to her misfortunes” (ἔκνους ὑπὸ γήρωσ ἢ μεγέθους κακῶν γεγονέαι καὶ τῶν ἀτυχημάτων ἀναίσθητος). Still – Plutarch protests – “such persons themselves were insensible how much help in the banishment of grief humankind derives from a noble nature and from honorable birth and rearing (αὐτοῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ἀναισθητοῖς οὖσιν, ὅσον ἐξ εὐφυΐας καὶ τοῦ γεγονέαι καὶ τεθράφθαι καλῶς ὄφελός ἐστι πρὸς ἀλυπίαν ἀνθρώποις), as well as from the fact

that while fortune often prevails over virtue when it endeavors to ward off evils, she cannot rob virtue of the power to endure those evils with calm reason (καὶ ὅτι τῆς ἀρετῆς ἢ τύχη φυλαττομένης μὲν τὰ κακὰ πολλάκις περίεστιν, ἐν δὲ τῷ πταῖσαι τὸ φέρειν εὐλογίστεως οὐ παραιρεῖται). The overtly Stoic color of such description is likely to be much more than a side effect of Plutarch’s acquaintance with philosophical issues, for it is well-known that Cornelia grew up in contact with the Hellenizing circle of Scipio Africanus’ villa at Liternum, entrusted the Stoic philosophers Blossius of Cumae and Diophanes of Mytilene with the education of her children, married her daughter Sempronia to such a strong supporter of Stoicism as Scipio Aemilianus, and eventually displayed the impassiveness praised by Plutarch in her Misenum villa, where “she always had Greeks and other literary men around her” (ἀεὶ μὲν Ἑλλήνων καὶ φιλολόγων περὶ αὐτὴν ὄντων, *Plut. Gracch.* 40.2). Hence, it is difficult to doubt that Cornelia was “conversant with the concepts and terminology of the Middle Stoa and that her famous imperturbability might have owed something at least to her educated understanding of what enabled the ‘wise man’ to rise above the vicissitudes of fortune” (Dixon 2007, 43) – a fact that made her a perfect candidate for Seneca’s gallery of ‘apathic’ female *exempla*, both here and in *Helv.* 16.6. In addition, another reasonable explanation for Seneca’s interest in Cornelia’s character is her notable role in the Augustan discourse on womanhood and motherhood, which was rich in visual and memorial symbols. Seneca’s magniloquent introduction of Cornelia as daughter of Scipio and mother of the Gracchi is strikingly reminiscent of an Augustan-era inscription carved on the marble base of a (now-lost) statue of Cornelia, which was discovered on the site of the *porticus Octaviae*: *Cornelia Africani f(ilia)/Gracchorum* (*CIL* 6.10043 = Degrassi; *InscrIt* 13.3.72 = *ILLRP* 336 = *ILS* 68). The lost statue – which is mentioned by both Pliny (*HN* 34.31) and Plutarch (*Gracch.* 25.4) and may or may not be the portrait of a Greek goddess later identified as Cornelia (Coarelli 1978; Flower 2002, 175–179; Sehlmeier 1999, 187–188; Hemelrijk 2005, 313–315) – originally stood in the *porticus Metelli* but was relocated to the *porticus Octaviae* to serve the purposes of Augustan propaganda – which was eager to associate the women of Augustus’ family with the most revered icons of Roman feminine *virtus*. Yet, given Seneca’s refashioning of Octavia as a negative *exemplum* in the first part of our *consolatio* (see above, notes on *Marc.* 2.3–5), what Marcia is invited to share is an *ex post* revision of the Augustan canon: as Roller 2018, 227, points out, “if the Augustan programming of the *porticus Octaviae* equated Cornelia and Octavia as canons of female virtuosity in their loyalty to husbands and in their bearing and raising of children, in the *ad M.* Seneca drives a wedge between these figures by focusing on maternal deportment following the deaths of sons, particularly sons who could be counted as ‘great men’”.

duodecim illa partus: That Cornelia had twelve children is reported also by Pliny (*HN* 7.57) and Plutarch (*Gracch.* 1.3), but since the time of Mommsen 1866, 203–205, a scholarly debate has arisen over the sex and birth dates of Cornelia’s and Tiberius Gracchus *père*’s children – especially because the date of Cornelia’s marriage itself is uncertain (Moir 1983). Doubts have also been cast on Seneca’s assertion that Cornelia survived all her children. Since Cornelia’s daughter Sempronia was alive in 101, when she refuted L. Equitius’ claims to be her nephew (Val. Max. 3.8.6), Manning 1981, 90, has argued that Seneca “is probably in error here”, for “it is unlikely that one who was of marriageable age in 183 BC would have still been alive in 101” (cf. also Dixon 2007, 7–12). However, as Moir 1983, 139–145, has shown, Cornelia may have married Tiberius Gracchus as early as 181 or as late as 170, and Plutarch (*Gracch.* 19) is unequivocal in stating that Cornelia lived until very old in her villa at Misenum – which makes the possibility that Cornelia survived her daughter Sempronia at least plausible. The more well-known story of Augustus’ long-lived wife Livia, which Seneca mentioned earlier, should prompt caution in charging Seneca with error – even if, as usual, Seneca’s principal aim as a consoler is not historical accuracy.

facile est: A colloquial expression, contributing to the dialogic tone of Seneca’s *argumentum per exempla* (cf. e.g., Mart. 1.18.5; Ps.-Quint. *Decl. min.* 371.6). The underlying assumption that only active engagement in *negotium* makes a human life worthy of being remembered (and eventually regretted) is one of the basic premises of Roman civic ideology.

Tiberium <Gaiumque>: The name of Gaius is missing in the MSS but is clearly implied in Seneca’s phrase and was already added by Erasmus. As elsewhere in the ancient tradition, the Gracchi are portrayed as a closely matched pair embodying the Roman “norms of fraternal complementarity” (Bannon 1997, 127). In 133 BC, as a tribune of the plebs, Tiberius Gracchus proposed an agrarian bill for the redistribution of the public lands to Rome’s poorer citizens at the expense of large landowners. The bill was approved despite the fierce opposition of the conservative senatorial faction, but when, quite unusually, Tiberius stood for election to a second tribunate, his political opponents accused him of aspiring to kingly power and killed him in a riot led by the elderly senator Scipio Nasica (von Ungern-Sternberg 2014, 78–81; Capogrossi Colognesi 2014, 182–186, with further references). Seneca’s remark that Cornelia saw her children “murdered and denied burial” (*occisos et insepultos*) refers to what Plutarch aptly terms the lawless and savage outrage of Tiberius’ corpse (ὠμῶς καὶ παρανόμως ὑβρισθεὶς ὁ νεκρός, *Gracch.* 20.3), which was thrown into the Tiber with the bodies of three hundred other people (cf. also Vell. Pat. 2.3; App. *B Civ.* 1.2.16–17). Likewise, in 121 BC Tiberius’ younger brother Gaius, who had re-enacted Tiberius’ agrarian

reforms and had equally aroused the hatred of the *nobilitas*, was forced to kill himself when an armed mob led by the consul Lucius Opimius assaulted him and his followers on the Aventine. Gaius’ head was stuck on a spear, brought to Opimius, and weighed on a balance. His corpse, like that of his brother twelve years earlier, was thrown into the Tiber (Plut. *Gracch.* 35–38; Vell. Pat. 2.6; App. *B Civ.* 1.3.26). Seneca’s claim that Tiberius and Gaius “will be acknowledged as great men (*magnos*) even by those who deny that they were good (*bonos viros*)” is a carefully worded attempt to mediate between rival historiographical traditions, for while a conservative strain of thought – most famously endorsed by Cicero (e.g., *Sest.* 103; *Amic.* 40–41; *Brut.* 103–104) and his upper-class milieu of ‘good men’ (*boni viri*) – regarded the Gracchi as dangerous (albeit educated) subversives, a more sympathetic tradition nurtured by the political culture of the *populares* acknowledged Tiberius’ and Gaius’ heroic-like ‘greatness’ (Rieger 1991). Seneca’s relatively positive judgement here is primarily determined by his focus on Cornelia as *exemplum virtutis*, for in *Brev. vit.* 6.1 he does not hesitate to blame the so-called “Gracchan evils” (*mala Gracchana*) of Roman republican history in a more Ciceronian fashion.

Consolantibus: By portraying Cornelia’s proud reaction to the words of the consolers who called her “wretched” (*miseram*), Seneca distances his Stoic understanding of the *consolatio* genre – ideally aiming at the ἀπάθεια shown by Cornelia – from other more traditional forms of consolation that attached great symbolic importance to lamentation and commiseration (Suter 2008).

16.4 Cornelia Livi Drusi: This second Cornelia is the wife of M. Livius Drusus, one of the tribunes of 122 BC, whose story is closely connected with that of the Gracchi. Described by Cicero (*Brut.* 109) “as a man eminent for his mode of speaking and his reputation” (*vir et oratione gravis et auctoritate*), Drusus vetoed Gaius Gracchus’ proposed laws at the instigation of the conservative senatorial faction and was accorded the privilege of founding twelve colonies to conciliate the people – who were so much pleased with this initiative that “they scoffed at the laws proposed by Gracchus” (τῶν Γράκχου νόμων κατεφρόνησεν, App. *B Civ.* 1.3.23). Because of his “distinguished services against the Gracchi” (*ob eximiam adversus Gracchos operam*, Suet. *Tib.* 3.2), Drusus *père* was granted the title of “Patron of the senate” (*patronus senatus*) and continued his *cursus honorum* until he reached the consulship (112 BC) and died as censor in 109 BC (Plut. *Quaest. Rom.* 50). The use of a possessive genitive indicating the husband after a woman’s name is common in Latin inscriptions (see e.g., *CIL* 8.4193; 6.4349), but could also be perceived as a “colloquialism” (Ferri 2003, 397, commenting on Ps.-Sen. *Oct.* 941, *Livia Drusi*), which fits Seneca’s dialogic tone. It has been speculated that Cornelia

was a daughter of the Scipiones – perhaps of P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica Serapio, cos. 138 – and married Drusus *père* no later than c.125 BC (Treggiari 2019, 39–40), but the evidence is admittedly scanty. Much more is known about Cornelia’s son M. Livius Drusus (homonymous with his father), whom Seneca tendentiously describes as “marching on in the footsteps of the Gracchi” (*vadentem per Gracchana vestigia*). A connection between Drusus, who became tribune in 91 BC, and Gracchan politics is established by Seneca also in *Brev. vit.* 6.1–2, where Drusus is less favorably presented as an *exemplum* of the misuse of time – as “a fierce and violent man” (*vir acer et vehemens*), “a troublemaker and a burden to the Forum from his boyhood” (*puero seditiosus et foro gravis*). However, the analogy between Drusus and the Gracchi (for which see also Sen. *Ben.* 6.34) should not be pressed too far since, as a tribune, Drusus was initially backed by the senate and tried to restore the senators’ control over the juries of the law-courts, which after Gaius Gracchus’ reform were recruited from the equites. Drusus also carried laws on the distribution of land and grain and on the extension of the Roman citizenship but ultimately lost the support of both the senate and the Italian peoples (Liv. *Per.* 70–71; App. *B Civ.* 1.5.36–37; Vell. *Pat.* 2.13–14; Diod. *Sic.* 37.10). Seneca’s positive portrayal in the present passage is remarkably close to that of Diodorus Siculus and Velleius Paterculus – the latter (2.14) sharing even Seneca’s description of Drusus as *clarissimus iuvenis* – and seems part of the careful reception of Augustan discourse characterizing the *ad M.*, for Drusus *filis* was the grandfather of Livia, Augustus’ wife and Marcia’s friend.

imperfectis tot rogationibus: Properly speaking, Drusus’ bills did not remain incomplete or in progress. Rather, one of the consuls for 91 BC, L. Marcius Philippus, “had all of Drusus’ laws annulled by a single decree of the senate as having been passed despite inauspicious omens” (Dillon-Garland 2015, 421; cf. Cic. *Dom.* 41; *Leg.* 2.31).

intra penates interemptum suos: According to Appian (*B Civ.* 1.5.36), one evening Drusus, who used to receive his clients “in the poorly lighted atrium of his house” (ἔνδον ἐν περιπάτῳ βραχὺ φῶς ἔχοντι), was sending the crowd away when he suddenly exclaimed that he was wounded and fell down while still saying the words. A shoemaker’s knife was found thrust into his thigh, but the identity of the murder remained a mystery. See also Liv. *Per.* 71 (*incertum a quo domi occisus est*); Suet. *Tib.* 3.2 (*diversa factio per fraudem interemit*); Vell. *Pat.* 2.14.1–2 (*in atrio domus suae cultello percussus*). Among our sources, only Seneca (*Brev. vit.* 6.2) maintains that “it is unclear whether Drusus died by his own hand” (*disputatur an ipse sibi manus attulerit*) and that “some doubted whether his death was self-inflicted” (*aliquo dubitante an mors eius voluntaria esset*) – a version of the facts probably circulated by Drusus’ political opponents. Quite naturally,

when writing to a woman of Livia’s entourage under the reign of Livia’s great-grandson Gaius (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 2.3, *Livia*), Seneca prefers to follow the more favorable tradition surrounding the *Augusta’s* grandfather.

tam magno animo: A further reference to the Stoic virtue of μεγαλοψυχία, which Seneca regards as a key spiritual tool for overcoming grief (see above, note on *Marc.* 1.5, *magnitudo animi*). Seneca’s point is made more appealing by the polyptoton *tulit/tulerat*, which plays on the double meaning of the verb *fero*.

16.5 *Caesares*: Together with the reference to the Scipios and the mothers and daughters of the Scipios, the mention of the Caesars serves as a retrospective summary of, and an attempt to capitalize on, the *exempla* section extending from 12.6 through 16. Furthermore, while remarking on the high social prestige and authority of his *exempla* – which combine the *auctoritas* of republican aristocracy (*Scipiones*) with that of imperial power (*Caesares*) – Seneca resumes the military metaphor for *virtus* and the evils of fortune (*tela, pax, indutiae, agmen*, et sim.) that he often exploits in the *ad M.* and elsewhere (see above, notes on *Marc.* 5.6, 9.3 and 10.4).

Quattuor liberos: Seneca’s assertions at 16.5–6 allow us to gain a fuller picture of Marcia’s family and its losses. We hear that Marcia had another son besides Metilius, whose earlier death she had stopped grieving (*prioris oblita*). Marcia also had two living daughters (*duas filias*), which explains Seneca’s reference to four children. Both Metilius and Marcia’s daughters had their own children – Marcia’s *nepotes* – but while we know nothing about the sex of the children of Marcia’s daughters, we are told that Metilius left only two female children (*ex illo duas filias*). The lack of male heirs was often perceived as a curse in Roman culture, especially after the *lex Voconia* (169 BC) “flatly forbade any registered in the first census class to nominate a woman – even an only daughter – as his or her heir” (Evans 1991, 73). Marcia’s reported complaint – which further enhances the dialogic character of the text and had already been adumbrated at 12.4 (*electam a dis*) – that fortune did not merely take her children away (*eripuit*) but picked them out (*elegit*) mirrors this culturally ingrained view. Equally related to the common cultural assumption that women are not desirable heirs is Seneca’s claim that Marcia may tend to regard Metilius’ daughters as “great burden” (*magna onera*). By suggesting that Marcia should instead consider her granddaughters “great comforts” (*magna solacia*), and by presenting this change of perspective as a sign of Marcia’s transition from wrong (*si male fers*) to right (*si bene*), Seneca confirms that his Stoic therapy of grief entails a substantial revision of irrational social prejudices and gender stereotypes.

16.6 *In hoc te perduc:* Seneca advises Marcia to practice an exercise in self-transformation based on the Stoic doctrine that both emotions (*doloris*) and memory (*admonearis*) are rational acts of will. Marcia’s mind should regain control of her perceptions to turn the currently unpleasant sight of Metilius’ daughters (*illas cum videris*) into a reassuring and constructive recollection.

16.7 *Agricola:* Given the central importance of agriculture for the development of ancient civilizations, it is anything but surprising that agricultural metaphors, analogies, and symbolism play a central role in classical texts. Seneca is no exception as he seems to have been fond of farming (e.g., *QNat.* 3.7.1; *Ep.* 12.1–2; 86.14–21) and often uses the cultivation of trees and vines as an explanatory image of such ethically relevant acts as teaching (*Ep.* 34.1), the correction of vices (*Ep.* 112.2), and the loss of loved ones (*Ep.* 104.11; cf. also Armisen-Marchetti 1989, 149–150; 235). The passage from *Epistle* 104 just mentioned offers a distinctive point of comparison for the farmer analogy developed here, for in warning Lucilius against the error of grief, Seneca compares friends to trees which lose their leaves, both friends and trees being liable to “be replaced even though they cannot be born afresh” (*reparantur etiam si non renascuntur*). The use of this line of argument in consolatory contexts goes back at least to the fourth/third century BC, for in his work *On Freedom from Emotions* (Περὶ ἀπαθείας, 59–60 Hense; see also O’Neil 1977, 66–67; 94), epitomized by Theodorus and Stobaeus, the Cynic philosopher Teles of Megara mentions a strikingly similar argument by Stilpon – the head of the Megarian school who lectured Zeno of Citium in the mid-fourth century BC (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 2.114). According to Stilpon, “neglecting the living because of the dead (διὰ τοὺς ἀπογενομένους τῶν ζώντων ὀλιγωρεῖν) is the mark of a man who does not reason correctly (οὐ ὀρθῶς βουλευομένου)”, and “a farmer does not do this” (γεωργὸς οὐ ποιεῖ τοῦτο), for “if one of his trees becomes withered, the farmer does not chop down the rest, but tends those that are left and tries to compensate for the one that has died” (οὐδ’ ἂν τῶν δένδρων ξηρόν τι γένηται, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα προσεκκόπτει, ἀλλὰ τῶν λοιπῶν ἐπιμελόμενος πειράται τὴν τοῦ ἐκλελοιπότητος χρεῖαν ἀναπληροῦν). The main point behind both Stilpon’s and Seneca’s arguments is that a person neglecting her social life on account of grief acts against nature, that is, against correct reason. By assimilating an originally Megarian/Cynic argument which is fully consistent with Stoic naturalism – and even bears the mark of Zeno’s teacher – Seneca shows once more his allegiance to the Stoic tradition.

ut ad damna, ita ad incrementa: The general physiological principle often repeated in antiquity is that, as Tacitus (*Agr.* 3.1) puts it, “by the nature of human frailty remedies take longer to act than diseases” (*natura infirmitatis*

humanae tardiora sunt remedia quam mala), for “just as our bodies, which grow so slowly, perish in an instant, so too you can crush the mind and its pursuits more easily than you can recall them to life” (*ut corpora nostra lente augescunt, cito extinguuntur, sic ingenia studiaque oppresseris facilius quam revocaveris*). In *Ep.* 91.6, Seneca endorses this more common (and less optimistic) view by arguing – with words very similar to those employed here – that “increases are of sluggish growth, but the way to ruin is rapid” (*incrementa lente exeunt, festinantur in damnum*). Likewise, in *QNat.* 3.27.2, Seneca maintains that “everything needs plenty of protection to survive and flourish, but it disintegrates swiftly and suddenly” (*magna tutela stant ac vigent omnia, cito ac repente dissiliunt*) – the sudden destruction of trees being a case in point (*momento fit cinis, diu silva*). We need not charge Seneca with inconsistency since, as has been widely shown (e.g., Pollo 2008), arguments based on nature or natural law are among the most rhetorically malleable in both ancient and modern debates, and Seneca may well have wanted to adjust his interpretation of the *topos* after more than twenty years to suit his primarily moral purposes. As a rule, Seneca’s principal interest lies in human nature and ethics; and in fact, after the farmer analogy the focus of Seneca’s ‘physiological’ argument switches quickly back to the often-recurring theme of the common condition of humans (*natura mortalium*, 16.8).

16.8 *Dic illud quoque*: At this more advanced stage of Seneca’s therapy, the dialogic structure of the *consolatio* can attribute to Marcia different roles and functions than that of the *adversaria*. Seneca can involve Marcia in one of the most psychologically compelling “technologies of the self” developed by ancient philosophers (Foucault 1986a; see now Renger 2019, 58–60): the internal repetition of a concept offering a rational reassuring response to a potentially disturbing situation. Epicurus’ τετραφάρμακος is a case in point, but similar psychagogic techniques are by no means an exclusive prerogative of the Epicureans. Among the Stoics, Epictetus (e.g., *Ench.* 3.1; 46.2) and Marcus Aurelius (e.g., 5.16) wholeheartedly share Seneca’s recommendation (often recurring in the *Epistles*) to drum Stoic beliefs into oneself by repetition. Here Marcia is invited to internalize, and ruminate on, a piece of wisdom whose roots go back to early Greek epic and lyric: the absence of a ‘theodicy’, so to speak, establishing a clear causal correlation between human merit and the evils of fortune. As Versnel 2011, 162, points out in his survey of such influential (and controversial) authors as Solon, Simonides, and Herodotus, already the Greeks of the archaic period “seem to have shared one general feeling more than any other: that there is not one universal and monolithic principle of causation, or if there is, that no single definition would suffice in a world of great complexity” (see also Lloyd 2005, 87–112). For a

Stoic like Seneca who will devote one of his last works to the problems of evil and divine providence (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 5.5 and 10.6), it is essential to instill in Marcia the awareness that death and suffering are not true evils designed to punish the wicked, the only real evil being the lack of wisdom.

17.1 *iam matri iam patri*: Marcia’s further objection – which confirms her status as a student in progress – centers around the common belief that the death of an adult child of recognized virtue is especially regrettable. In ancient consolations, and in Seneca’s own consolatory letter to Marullus (*Ep.* 99.2), this belief is exploited *in bonam partem* to console the grieving parent of a little child – who, conversely, should acknowledge that he has not much to regret. Yet, at this stage of her moral progress, Marcia should also admit that, though “painful” (*grave*), the loss of a child of any age is “human” (*humanum*) – a point which allows Seneca to resume the *locus de communi hominum condicione* (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 10.1 and 11.1–3). As Traina 1987, 92, points out, such a widely used *topos* is embellished by Seneca through a careful rhetorical strategy: three couples of contrasting verbs, connected to each other by means of syntactic *variatio* (*ut perderes ut perires/ut sperares metueres/et timeres et optares*) are interspersed with a clause moving the antinomy from the main verb to two direct objects (*alios teque inquietares*). Even more notably, this is the first attested use of the verb *inquieto* in a reflexive construction (cf. also Seneca’s later usages in *Brev. vit.* 14.3; *Ira* 3.11.1) – which is one among the many instances of Seneca’s transformation (and ‘colloquialization’) of the Latin literary language for the purposes of psychological analysis. As for the occurrence of the word *pater* in Marcia’s objection, Favez 1928, XXI–XXII, is probably right in assuming that this is more a reference to the general situation of parental grief than an isolated – indeed the only – mention of Marcia’s husband. Not only is Metilius’ father not included among Marcia’s *solacia* at 16.5–8, but we learn from 24.1 that Metilius “was left as a ward (*pupillus*) in the care of guardians until he was fourteen” – a detail which allows us to discard the possibility that Marcia divorced (and is apparently missed by Manning 1981, 97).

***genitus es*:** The use of the masculine here provides further evidence about the general character of Seneca’s argument *de condicione humana*, which is addressed to a wider audience than the internal (female) addressee. Cf. also above, note on *Marc.* 9.3, *expositum*.

***cuius esses status*:** The undetermined status of humankind – often contrasted with the more teleologically oriented condition of non-rational animals – is one of the pillars of Seneca’s philosophical anthropology, which has its roots in Stoic cosmology (Tutrone 2012, 157–294). Here Seneca’s warning principally refers to the transience and unpredictability of human fortunes, but in Seneca’s

later works – especially in the *Epistles* and in the *Natural Questions* – the difficulties and the opportunities inherent in the ‘shifting’ status of humans – who can become both equal to the gods (except for their mortality) and worse than savage beasts – are richly problematized.

17.2 *Syracusas petenti*: All but the last of the remaining paragraphs of this chapter are dedicated to a detailed description (ἔκφρασις) of the advantages and disadvantages of the Sicilian city of Syracuse, which, as a wealthy center of power and the arts, had acquired legendary renown in antiquity (Evans 2016, 11–26; 54–55). For Seneca, Syracuse is a metaphor for life and the laws of nature – a symbolic microcosm which is first compared to the reality of parental responsibility (*Marc.* 17.6) and then to the larger macrocosm of the universe entered by humans at birth (*Marc.* 18). Modern scholars have been puzzled by the length and arrangement of Seneca’s ‘chorographic’ digression, with its extended metaphorical meanings. The frustrating (and eventually indecisive) search for Seneca’s sources has been often accompanied by a sharp criticism of the author’s alleged inconsistency and rhetorical excess. Emblematic is the reaction of Grollios 1956, 55, according to whom Seneca’s images “bear no close relation to the main argument and destroy the balance of the whole”. Scholarly dissatisfaction with Seneca’s arguments has even resulted in excision by textual critics such as Uhl 1899, 22–27 – who considered almost all of Seneca’s explanation in chapter 18 an interpolated translation from Posidonius and proposed to delete it. Today we should be prepared to acknowledge that such reactions reveal the difficulties of modern philology in accepting that ancient cultural patterns and modes of expression “may not comply with *our* sense of coherence, nor obey our laws of logical consistency” (Versnel 2011, 190–191, referring back to Skinner’s 1969, 16–22, path-breaking remarks about “the mythology of coherence”). As Abel 1967, 39–40, 176–177, pointed out, Seneca’s studied parallelism between Syracuse, parenthood, and the cosmos serves to further widen Marcia’s perspective, which until this point has been principally concerned with individual feelings and situations, in preparation for the more comprehensive cosmic vision unveiled in the subsequent chapters. Although it may not meet *our* standards of (neo-)classical harmony, Seneca’s elaborated depiction of Syracuse (17.1–6), with its two-level interpretation incorporated into the text (17.6–18), perfectly fulfils its function as “die erste Stufe beim Aufbau einer welt- und daseinbejahenden Haltung” (Abel 1967, 40). One should add that this is precisely the kind of learned and allusive argument – combining history, geography, physics, and poetry, among many other subjects – that could draw the attention of Marcia and early imperial readers. Of course, Seneca’s rhetorical background plays an equally decisive role in this context, and Manning’s 1981, 95–96, point about the influence of the *suasoria* seems well taken – especially

since we know that, before embarking on the rigorous path of Sextian philosophy, Seneca’s teacher Papirius Fabianus gained a reputation for his *suasoriae* unfolding in a luxuriant description of “the natures of places, the courses of rivers, the sites of cities, and the customs of peoples” (*locorum habitus fluminumque decursus et urbium situs moresque populorum*, Sen. *Contr.* 2.praef. 3). Although Seneca’s conflation of geography, history, and cosmology in the present passage has aroused the suspicion, as we have noted, that the model of Posidonius lurks behind the whole argument (Abel 1967, 177), all we know for certain is that Posidonius dealt with the triangular shape and the internal distances of Sicily (Strab. 6.2.1 = F249 Edelstein-Kidd) as well as with the position of Syracuse and Eryx as “strongholds by the sea” (ἀκροπόλεις ἐπὶ θαλάττης, Strab. 6.2.7 = F 250 Edelstein-Kidd) – a detail which may be related to the historiographical tradition about the slave revolts of the second century BC (Kidd 1988b, 858–859). This does not suffice to say that Posidonius inspired Seneca’s ‘Sicilian’ digression – unless one falls back into the now deservedly discredited inclination to “pan-Posidonianism” (Mazzoli 1967; Vimercati 2004, 1–2) which has pervaded Senecan scholarship over the past two centuries. It is, of course, possible that Seneca draws on Posidonius’ treatment of the history and geography of Sicily, but similar echoes of earlier works – by now indiscernible to us – have been ultimately integrated into an all-encompassing Stoic discourse which uses literary erudition and rhetorical brilliance to gradually instill in the addressee a deeper awareness of the providential order of nature. This is a psychagogic process that Seneca will bring to full realization several years later in his *Natural Questions*, where an even more impressive “rhetoric of wonder” is deployed (and eventually countered) to lead the reader “toward a completeness of self-realization” (Williams 2012, 3). Totally unconvincing is Manning’s 1981, 96, claim that Seneca’s descriptive passage is indebted to the so-called Bionean diatribe – for no “genre or package of rhetorical moves is now thought to have been recognized in antiquity, under the name ‘diatribe’ or any other” (Roller 2015, 63), the diatribic genre being “a discovery of the German scholars” at the end of the nineteenth century (Griffin 1976, 13). It is much more interesting to observe that Seneca should be counted among the earliest writers to use Sicily as a metaphor for human life, the world order, and their indelible contradictions. Quite fascinatingly, an existential trope which has been made famous by such insightful novelists as Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, Leonardo Sciascia, and Vincenzo Consolo (cf. Francese 2006, 31–32) was already exploited by a Roman philosopher who was to become the spiritual advisor of one of the proudest procurators of Sicily (cf. Sen. *QNat.* 4a.praef. 21–22).

videbis: As Abel 1967, 39, remarks, the anaphora of *videbis* is a recurring feature of Seneca’s instructive ‘catalogue of wonders’ (“Aufzählung der Wunder”),

punctuating both its allegorical section and the cosmic explanation which actualizes it at 18. Similarly, the repeated adversative *sed* marks the contrast between the (prevailing) advantages and the (less numerous) drawbacks of Syracuse and human life. Of course, the preponderance of pros over cons in this natural-cum-symbolic landscape is meant to be understood as an implicit proof of the providential design of the Stoic cosmos (Salles 2009a).

***quondam cohaesisse constat*:** The belief that Sicily was once joined to Italy and was wrenched away from the continent by an inundation is attested among ancient scientific writers (e.g., Pompon. Mel. 2.115; Plin. *HN* 2.204) but has its roots in the folkloric and poetic tradition. According to Strabo (6.1.6), when providing the etymology of Rhegium, Aeschylus (fr. 402 Radt) described Sicily’s separation (ἀπορραγῆναι) from the mainland and ascribed it to earthquakes. In *QNat.* 6.30.1–3, Seneca reenacts this primordial disjunction as a manifestation of the overwhelming energy of the universe and recalls the “inundation celebrated by the greatest poets” (*inundationem quam poetarum maximi celebrant*). Among such great poets is Virgil, who incorporates into Helenus’ prophecy of Aeneas’ Italian voyage an evocation of the time (*quondam*, the same adverb employed here by Seneca) when the sea “cut off with its waters the Hesperian from the Sicilian coast” (*undis Hesperium Siculo latus abscidit*, *Aen.* 3.417–418). Whereas in the *ad M.* Seneca quotes only the first part of one of Virgil’s hexameters (*Aen.* 3.418), in the *Natural Questions* he supports his argument with a lavish (albeit imprecise) quotation from the same section of the *Aeneid* (3.414–419). Furthermore, in the *ad M.* the Virgilian quotation is introduced by such a typical “Alexandrian footnote” (Ross 1975, 78) as the verb *constat*. Seneca’s allusivity extends beyond the overt quotation of Virgil’s words to the subsequent description of the dangerous Strait of Messina, which puts the main emphasis on Charybdis in emulation of Virgil’s focus on Scylla (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 3.420–432, with the notes of Horsfall 2006, 310–319).

***verticem perstringere*:** The MS reading is *restringere*, which Reynolds 1977 (following Muretus) corrects into *stringere*. In his apparatus, Viansino 1963 reports *restringere vel constringere* as the MS reading (which he emends into *perstringere*), although the reading of **A** is *restringere*. Paleographically, it seems more plausible that the corrupt form *restringere* resulted from *perstringere* – the abbreviation for *per* (*p* with cross-stroke through descender) being often mistaken for *r*. Moreover, *perstringere* is a *lectio difficilior* which might well be part of Seneca’s Virgilian allusivity in this context (cf. Verg. *Aen.* 10.344, with the conjunction of *est licitum* and *perstrinxit* comparable to Seneca’s *licebit . . . perstringere*).

stratam illam fabulosam Charybdin: Endorsing the perspective of a traveler from the Greek East (and hence of his Greek sources), Seneca approaches Syracuse from the Strait of Messina and reports the common view that the Charybdis of mythology (*fabulosam*, cf. *Ep.* 79.1: *Charybdis an respondeat fabulis*), first described by Homer (*Od.* 12.101–126; 234–236), is a dangerous whirlpool in the sea on the Sicilian side of the Strait. Seneca’s contemporary Pomponius Mela (2.115) agrees that the Strait of Messina is “frightful, violent, and renowned for the savage names of Scylla and Charybdis”, but makes clear that “Scilla is a rock (*scil.* on the Calabrian side), Charybdis the sea” (*Scylla saxum est, Charybdis mare*, cf. also Strabo, 6.2.3; Plin. *HN* 3.87). Among Seneca’s poetic models are Virgil (*Aen.* 3.420) and Ovid, who devotes several passages of his *Metamorphoses* to the Strait’s sea monsters (7.62–65; 13.730–734) and is probably the source of Seneca’s claim that Charybdis’ deadly storms are caused by the south wind (*ab austro*, cf. *Ov. Met.* 8.121: *austroque agitata Charybdis*). As the wind “which roughens the Sicilian Sea and forces it into whirlpools” (*qui Siculum pelagus exasperet et in vertices cogat*), the south wind (*auster*) is mentioned – precisely in connection with Charybdis – also in *Ep.* 14.8, which is just one among the many *loci* bearing witness to Seneca’s interest in, and philosophical re-use of, the Scylla and Charybdis myth (cf. *Ep.* 45.2; 79.1; 92.9, with another Virgilian quotation; *QNat.* 3.29.7; Henderson 2004, 31–32; Smith 2020, 58–72).

magno hiatu profundoque navigia sorbentem: Note the *aemulatio* of Virgil in Seneca’s prose style (*Aen.* 3.420–425: *imo barathri ter gurgite vastos sorbet . . . navis in saxa trahentem*). But see also *Ov. Met.* 7.64 (*sorbere fretum*).

17.3 fontem Arethusam: The first of the Syracusan *mirabilia* mentioned by Seneca (or, more properly, by his *persona loquens*) is the Arethusa fountain, a freshwater spring on the western side of the offshore island of Ortygia, which was (and still is) connected by a bridge to the mainland. By introducing the fountain as “famed in poetry” (*celebratissimum carminibus*), Seneca signals to his reader that he is aware of, and implicitly competing with, earlier accounts provided about the Arethusa fountain and its underlying myth since the time of Pindar (*Nem.* 1.1–4). By the first century AD, the legend of the nymph Arethusa, who was allegedly changed into a spring by Artemis to save her virginity from the river god Alpheus, had become common knowledge among the Romans, for the narratives of western Greek poets such as Ibycus (*PMG* 323 = Schol. Theoc. 1.117a) and Moschus (*Idyl.* 6) had been revived and expanded by Virgil (*Ecl.* 10.1–5; *Aen.* 3.692–696) and Ovid (*Met.* 5.572–641). Even before the epicists of the Augustan age, Cicero (*Verr.* 2.4.118) had expressed his admiration for this Syracusan wonder “of incredible size, very full of fish (*incredibili magnitudine*,

plenissimus piscium), which would be entirely overwhelmed by the waves of the sea, if it were not protected from the sea by a rampart and dam of stone (*qui fluctu totus operiretur nisi munitione ac mole lapidum diiunctus esset a mari*). In fact, before alluding to the myth of Arethusa and Alpheus, Seneca describes the place and the material characters of the fountain, with its “sparkling pool, transparent right to the bottom” (*nitidissimi ac perlucidi ad imum stagni*) and its “ice-cold waters” (*gelidissimas aquas*). When it comes to the aetiological myth conveyed by the poets – which Cicero found irrelevant to his judicial context – Seneca cautiously presents two alternative explanations (*sive . . . sive*), thus following a typical practice of ancient meteorology (Taub 2003, 11–12), the research field to which the study of springs belonged in antiquity. The first, more rational explanation is that the water of the Arethusa fountain gushes out of Ortygia’s soil, whereas the second, mythically derived account suggests that the Sicilian spring has its source in the Alpheus River in the Peloponnese, which flows beneath the sea and reemerges in Ortygia untainted by salt water. The Peloponnesian river is, of course, the god Alpheus, who abandons his human form to join the shy Arethusa in the narrative framework of a myth which originally symbolized “the colonists’ own westward movement from Corinth”, the “new political foundation”, and the “Greek and native interaction” (Dougherty 1993, 69). Quite remarkably, ancient historians, geographers, and scientific writers such as Timaeus (*ap. Polyb. 12.4d.5–8*), Pomponius Mela (2.117), Pausanias (5.7.2–3), and Pliny (*HN 2.225*) accept the mythical explanation and rationally integrate it into their cultural discourse, but by the time of Seneca Strabo (6.2.4) had already offered a resolute confutation of the Syracusan tradition. Seneca’s choice of leaving the door open to both the ‘normalized’ and the ‘mythical’ account has the double advantage of aligning his digression with the deep-rooted preference of the consolatory genre for mythical and poetic archetypes and at the same time of providing a rational insight into the received tradition in accordance with the principles of Stoic criticism of myths. A more openly skeptical attitude to the mythical *vulgata* will be adopted by Seneca in his *Natural Questions* (3.26.5–6), where the piece of evidence most often cited in support of the Alpheus’ underground nature – the re-appearance of dung and other objects from Olympia in the Arethusa fountain – is interpreted in a different way, i.e., as a proof of the physical theory that springs eject their impurities at regular intervals. In the *Natural Questions*, unlike in the *ad M.*, even Virgil (*Ecl. 10.4–5*) and Seneca’s dedicatee Lucilius (fr. 4 Buechner = fr. 4 Courtney = Sen. *QNat. 3.1.1*) are gently chided for their credulousness.

17.4 portum: Syracuse had (and still has) two harbors, usually referred to as the ‘Great’ (μέγας) and ‘Small’ (μικρός or ἐλάσσων) Harbor, respectively (e.g.,

Thuc. 7.22.1–2). The Small Harbor was also known as ‘Lakkios’ (τῷ Λακκίῳ καλουμένῳ, Diod. Sic. 14.7.3). Syracuse’s two harbors lay on either side of the island of Ortygia (Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.117; Strabo 6.2.4) and were separated from each other by a bridge connecting Ortygia to the mainland – whose identification with the present-day isthmus is controversial (Tréziny 2002, 273–278; Gerding 2013, 535). Seneca’s use of the singular *portum* is not as odd as it may seem at first glance, for Cicero, who knew very well of the two harbors and of their different entrances (*diversos inter se aditus*, *Verr.* 2.4.117), elsewhere uses the singular as well (*Verr.* 2.5.96). The fact that the Great and the Small Harbor were so closely connected may have induced foreign observers such as Cicero and Seneca to regard them as integrated parts of a common infrastructure. Moreover, Seneca’s ‘double’ reference to harbors “that have been formed by nature or improved by human hands” (*quos aut natura posuit [. . .] aut adiuvit manus*) may entail an allusion to Syracuse’s two harbors, with their different degrees of ‘naturalness’ and human intervention, as the Small Harbor was substantially transformed by human labor at the time of Dionysius I (Diod. Sic. 14.7.3).

ubi Athenarum potentia fracta: This is, first of all, a further reference to Syracuse’s harbors – specifically to the Great Harbor, in whose inner bay (ἐν τῷ κοίλῳ καὶ μυχῷ τοῦ λιμένος, Thuc. 7.52.3) a catastrophic sea battle marked the final defeat of the Athenians and the failure of their miscalculated Sicilian expedition in 413 BC (Kagan 1981, 324–328). The verb *frango* is often used with respect to waters and naval disruptions (e.g., Lucr. 6.695; Cic. *Fam.* 9.16.6; Ov. *Fast.* 4.282; Lucan. 6.266). As Thucydides (7.87.5–6) sums up at the end of his chronicle of the Sicilian expedition – which he regards as “the greatest achievement” (ἔργον . . . μέγιστον) in the Peloponnesian war, or even in Hellenic history – the Athenians “were beaten at all points and altogether (κατὰ πάντα γὰρ πάντως νικηθέντες), all that they suffered was great, and they were destroyed, as the saying is, with a total ruin (καὶ οὐδὲν ὀλίγον ἐς οὐδὲν κακοπαθήσαντες πανωλεθρία δὴ τὸ λεγόμενον)”. An echo of Thucydides and post-Thucydidean historiography (e.g., Diod. Sic. 13.14–16) can be perceived in Seneca’s words – which, in addition, may allude to the Athenian prisoners’ hardship in the quarries of Syracuse mentioned immediately thereafter.

nativus carcer: Situated to the north of the city, Syracuse’s stone quarries were in use at least since the sixth century BC and became commonly known as λιθοτομῖαι or λατομῖαι (*latomiae/lautumiae* in Latin, cf. Varr. *Ling.* 5.151). Seneca does not use the Latin calque of the Greek term, which is already attested in Plautus (*Capt.* 723, *latomias lapidarias*) and repeatedly employed by Cicero (*Verr.* 2.5.68; 143), but he makes a periphrastic allusion to it with the words *excisis saxis*. Seneca’s brief description – which is particularly indebted to Cic. *Verr.*

2.5.68 – recalls the “immeasurable depth” (*infinitam altitudinem*) of the *latomiae* as impressive limestone cliffs, their ‘mixed’ structure as a natural site and a product of human effort, and, above all, their secondary use as a prison during the Peloponnesian War. According to Thucydides (7.87), after the Athenians’ defeat by the Syracusans and their allies, no less than seven thousand Athenians were imprisoned and forced to work into what is now called the ‘Latomia dei Cappuccini’, where “no single suffering that can be experienced in such a place was spared them” (ἄλλα τε ὅσα εἰκὸς ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ χωρίῳ ἐμπεπτωκότας κακοπαθήσαι, οὐδὲν ὅτι οὐκ ἐπεγένετο αὐτοῖς, 7.87.2). Seneca’s mention of *tot milia captivorum* is reminiscent of Thucydides’ reckoning, and although we know from Cicero (*Verr.* 2.5.68) that the *latomiae* were still used as a prison in the Roman era (when even criminals from other Sicilian cities were kept in custody in Syracuse), Seneca’s use of the past perfect *incluserat* sounds like a retrospective allusion to the wretched Athenians of 413 BC.

laxius territorium: Initially founded on the island of Ortygia, the city of Syracuse gradually expanded to include five districts (Ortygia, Achradina, Neapolis, Tyche, and Epipolis), which were surrounded by a wall of 180 stadia (36 kilometers or 22 miles). See Thuc. 6.3.2; Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.118; Strab. 6.2.4; Evans 2016, 1–18, with other sources and a revision of the traditional chronology.

tepidissima hiberna: According to Cicero (*Verr.* 2.5.26), it was a common saying (*dicitur*) that in Syracuse “there never was a day of such violent and turbulent weather that people could not see the sun at some time or another in the day” (*nullus umquam dies tam magna ac turbulenta tempestate fuerit quin aliquo tempore eius diei solem homines viderint*). To this positive commonplace Seneca adds the contrasting point that Sicily’s “oppressive and unhealthy summer” (*gravis et insalubris aestas*) spoils the advantages of the mild winter climate. Many centuries after Seneca, in his novel *The Leopard* Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa will connect the ‘fatalist’ and ‘insular’ character of the Sicilian people precisely with the contrast between Sicily’s six-month summer – a summer “as long and glum as a Russian winter” – and its precipitously rapid rains (Tomasi di Lampedusa 2002, 179–180).

17.5 Dionysius: The comparatively short list of Syracuse’s drawbacks starting with the natural phenomenon of hot summer is completed with a distinctly human and political item: the tyranny of Dionysius II, the son of Dionysius I, who in 367 BC succeeded his father as ruler of Syracuse (Diod. Sic. 15.73.5–74.5; Plut. *Dion.* 6–7). Dionysius II reigned until 357, when his maternal uncle Dion, who had previously tried with Plato to transform him into a philosopher-king, overthrew him from the throne and seized power (Diod. Sic. 16.9–13; 16–20;

Plut. *Dion.* 23–46). In 346, Dionysius managed to regain control of Syracuse (Plut. *Tim.* 1.3–4), but his second tyranny lasted only until the arrival of the Corinthian general Timoleon in 344 BC. Timoleon allowed Dionysius to go into exile at Corinth, where the former tyrant earned a living as a schoolteacher, thus becoming a living example of the mutability of human fortunes (Cic. *Tusc.* 3.27; Val. Max. 6.9.ext.6; Diod. Sic. 16.70.2–3; Plut. *Tim.* 14). That Seneca is dealing with the younger Dionysius, not with the equally notorious Dionysius I, is evident from his hint at the failure of Plato’s teaching as well as from his claim that Dionysius was “greedy for life even after exile” (*cupidus* [. . .] *vitae etiam post exilium*) – a clear allusion to Dionysius’ choice of fleeing to Corinth, which is at odds with the Stoic ideal of heroic suicide embodied by Cato the Younger and Cremutius Cordus. As Abel 1958, 610, notes, Seneca’s criticism of Dionysius’ choice and his conventional treatment of the experience of exile confirm that our *consolatio* was written before 41 BC. Most importantly, Seneca’s depiction of Dionysius as a destroyer of liberty, justice, and law (*libertatis iustitiae legum exitium*, with dramatic asyndeton), “greedy for absolute power” (*dominationis cupidus*), and inclined toward gratuitous cruelty as well as toward unnatural lust, draws on a long tradition of anti-tyranny discourse, which by the first century AD had crystallized in the exercises of rhetorical schools (Favez 1928, lx–lxi; Manning 1981, 100–101) but had clear roots in Greek lyric and tragedy (Lanza 1977, McGlew 1993, Lewis 2006). Other Greek rulers and generals are mentioned elsewhere by Seneca for the same purpose: among them are Hippias (*Ira* 2.23.1), Alexander (*Ira* 3.17.2; *Clem.* 1.25.1), and Lysimachus (*Ira* 3.17.3; *Ep.* 70.6). The Roman aversion to kings and kingly power (Smith 2006) created an especially fertile ground for the reception of this side of Greek political thought, and Seneca’s own tragedy played a major role in the establishment (and the survival) of the classical image of the tyrant (Manuwald 2003; Schiesaro 2003; Tutrone 2019c).

etiam post Platonem: Plato visited Syracuse three times, sustained by his conviction that “the troubles of humankind will never cease until either true and genuine philosophers attain political power or the rulers of states by some dispensation of providence become genuine philosophers” (κακῶν οὖν οὐ λήξειν τὰ ἀνθρώπινα γένη, πρὶν ἂν ἢ τὸ τῶν φιλοσοφούντων ὀρθῶς γε καὶ ἀληθῶς γένος εἰς ἀρχὰς ἔλθῃ τὰς πολιτικάς ἢ τὸ τῶν δυναστευόντων ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἕκ τινος μοίρας θείας ὄντως φιλοσοφίῃ, *Ep.* 7.326B; cf. also *Resp.* 473D). During his first visit around 388 BC, Plato met Dionysius I, but his lofty lectures about virtue, justice, and the tyrants’ lack of courage irritated his royal host, who allegedly had him sold into slavery on the island of Aegina (Plut. *Dion.* 5.1–7; Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 3.18–21; Diod. Sic. 15.7.1). However, on his first visit Plato befriended Dion,

Dionysius I’s brother-in-law and Dionysius II’s uncle, who became a passionate student of Platonic philosophy and in 367 BC persuaded the new ruler Dionysius II to summon Plato “in order that his character might be regulated by the principles of virtue” (ὅπως διακοσμηθεῖς τὸ ἦθος εἰς ἀρετὴν λόγῳ) and “he would become a king instead of a tyrant” (γενόμενος βασιλεὺς ἐκ τυράννου, Plut. *Dion.* 10.1–3; cf. Plut. *Ep.* 7.327A–329B). As Plato’s *Seventh Letter* reports, both this second visit to Syracuse and a third one made in 357 BC upon invitation of Dionysius II ended in disaster, for Dionysius entered into conflict with Dion, and Plato was repeatedly imprisoned and could barely save his life (Monoson 2000, 145–153; Klosko 2006, 196–199). It is to this double failure of the Platonic therapy of the soul that Seneca alludes here. Since “Plato molded Dion into an unblemished philosophical hero against the tyranny of Dionysius” and “the whole Academy, throughout the course of its history, was devoted to his myth” (Forcignanò 2019, 68), Seneca’s reference to Plato in this context may betray an echo of the Platonic tradition and its paradigmatic contrast between philosophical reason and tyrannical power, which was later appropriated by the Stoics (Bénatouïl 2013, 155–156). Indeed, this is just one of the many passages in which, drawing on biographical tradition, Seneca recounts anecdotes about Plato and presents him “as a role model to imitate in one’s own life” (Tieleman 2007, 142–143; cf. e.g., *Ira* 2.21.10; 3.12.5–7; *Ben.* 5.7.5; 6.18.1; *Ep.* 58.30–31).

ad libidinem: Greed, violence, and lasciviousness have figured among the most characteristic features of ancient tyrants since the classical Greek period, as attested in the exemplary treatment of Hdt. 3.80, on which see Lanza 1977, 39–40. As for the character of Dionysius II, Plutarch (*Dion.* 7.4–7) maintains that his courtiers “obtained converse and intimacy with a tyrant who was young and had been badly reared by means of pleasures and flatteries (εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς νέου τυράννου καὶ τεθραμμένου φαύλως ὁμίλιαν καὶ συνήθειαν ἡδοναῖς καὶ κολακείαις καταλαμβάνοντες), and were ever contriving for him sundry amours, idle amusements with wine and women, and other unseemly pastimes (ἀεὶ τινὰς ἔρωτας καὶ διατριβὰς ἐμηχανῶντο ῥεμβώδεις περὶ πότους καὶ γυναῖκας καὶ παιδία ἐτέρας ἀσχίμονας)”. Plutarch adds that once the younger Dionysius “kept up a drinking bout for ninety consecutive days from its beginning (ἡμέρας γὰρ ὥς φασιν ἐνενηκοντα συνεχῶς ἔπινεν ἀρξάμενος), and that during this time the court gave no access or admission to men or matters of consequence (καὶ τὴν αὐλήν ἐν τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ, σπουδαίους ἀνδράσι καὶ λόγοις ἄβατον καὶ ἀνεῖσοδον οὖσαν), but drunkenness and raillery and music and dancing and buffoonery held full sway (μέθαι καὶ σκώμματα καὶ ψαλμοὶ καὶ ὀρχήσεις καὶ βωμολοχία κατεῖχον)”. Quite remarkably, Seneca selects and expands on the material of the anti-tyrannical tradition to put into the foreground Dionysius’

sexual deviations – a choice that may be influenced by the reality of Roman imperial power and, even more, by its representation in literary genres such as biography and historiography. In a sense, Seneca’s Dionysius is a shadow image of Suetonius’ Tiberius, whose lascivious pleasures soon became a commonplace in the Roman tradition. From a socio-psychological and, so to speak, ‘Foucaultian’ perspective, it is especially interesting to observe Seneca’s emphasis on Dionysius’ obliteration of sexual difference and personal love bonds, for we hear that the tyrant will send for both males and females (*mares feminasque*) to serve his lust and will force his sex slaves to couple with more than two people at the same time (*parum erit simul binis coire*). Whereas Stoic rationality sets up definite, naturally grounded boundaries for the performance of gender roles and the construction of social identity – as repeatedly recalled in our *consolatio* – tyrannical power is portrayed as blurring natural distinctions and throwing society into chaos. Modern writers and film directors, from Pasolini to Vidal, will assimilate the lesson of Seneca and Petronius on this subject (McEl-duff 2016).

***naviga aut resiste*:** The presentation of this alternative seems reminiscent of Plato’s own hesitation and assessment of pros and cons before his third visit to Syracuse (*Ep.* 7.338B–340A). Given its exemplary significance, Plato’s experience at Syracuse – as reflected in his *Seventh Letter*, which, if not authentic, is a meaningful testimony to the concerns of Plato’s readers and followers (*pace* Burnyeat/Frede 2015; cf. Edelstein 1966; Tarrant 1983) – may have been the source of further discussions and writings about the role of the philosopher in society, an issue of primary interest for Seneca and the entire Stoic tradition.

17.6 *natura*: After his Syracusan digression (which, as an imaginary address to someone leaving for Syracuse, is in itself a *sermocinatio*), Seneca resorts to the rhetorical device of personification (*προσωποποιία*) and lets nature itself speak. In ancient rhetorical treatises, personification – which Latin writers alternatively render as *conformatio* (*Rhet. Her.* 4.66), *personarum ficta indutio* (Cic. *De or.* 3.205), or *prosopopoeia* (Quint. *Inst.* 6.1.25; 9.2.29–37) – has a relatively broad definition, “with the general idea of speaking in the voice of a character not actually present, whether real or imaginary” (Stafford 2000, 5–6; cf. e.g., Aelius Theon, *Progymn.* ed. Spengel, *Rhet. Graec.* 2.115.11–28). For the Stoic Seneca, with his strong faith in natural law and providence, putting a speech into the mouth of nature means giving concrete shape and expression to the existential teachings previously encapsulated in the ephrastic argument. At the same time, this is also a further step in Seneca’s literary endeavor, for the rhetoric of personification has entered Roman literature at least since the time of Ennius, whose *Saturae* include

a *prosopopoeia* of death and life (Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.36). Ennius’ model is revived by Lucretius in his compelling personification of nature (3.931–965), which reflects a drastically revisionist appropriation of Ennian poetry (Gellar-Goad 2018, Nethercut 2021) and constitutes Seneca’s most direct model. Indeed, Seneca’s own *prosopopoeia* will contribute to a rich tradition featuring such diverse writers as Plotinus (*Enn.* 3.8.4) and Leopardi (*Dialogo della Natura e di un Islandese*). Like Lucretius, Seneca presents nature as a speaker of truth (*neminem decipio*; cf. *Lucr.* 3.950–951) and puts in its mouth an impartial exposition of the joys and sorrows of life – a reality that humans can only accept with peaceful resignation (cf. esp. *Lucr.* 3.935–943). Hence, as elsewhere in the *ad M.* and his other philosophical works (Tutrone 2017, 2020), Seneca engages in intertextual dialogue with Lucretius’ didactic poem and highlights both the analogies and the differences between the Stoic and the Epicurean concepts of nature. Whereas Seneca’s nature can agree with its Lucretian counterpart about the ineluctability and fairness of the laws governing human life, what precedes and follows Seneca’s *prosopopoeia* easily leads the reader to realize that in a Stoic cosmos, unlike in an Epicurean world, nature’s caveats are part of a providentially designed whole. Moreover, compared to Lucretius, Seneca approaches the issues of human finitude and fallibility from a more specific point of view, which is directly related to the pedagogic purposes of the *consolatio*: the point of view of a parent coping with the unpredictable outcomes of education and the indeterminateness of the moment of death. Such a parent-centered perspective will be enlarged in the subsequent chapter to encompass the wider question of the “entry into the whole of life” (*totius vitae introitum*, *Marc.* 18.1), and at that point Seneca will be in a position to reveal the blatantly un-Epicurean order of his Stoic cosmos. Strikingly enough, Seneca’s carefully contrived didactic strategy – which is based on the juxtaposition of three parallel rhetorical units (17.2–6; 17.6–7; 18) as well as on the gradual enlargement of the addressee’s perspective, from the level of metaphorical ἔκφρασις to the higher spheres of parental responsibilities and cosmic laws – has often been misunderstood or ignored by scholars. For instance, Madvig 1873, II, 354–355, regards the *prosopopoeia* of nature as an improper interruption of Seneca’s argument and proposes to transpose it to 17.1 (after *humanum est*). Gertz 1874, 112 – who claims to have inspired Madvig’s doubts on Seneca’s text – transposes nature’s words to the end of Seneca’s tripartite rhetorical structure (i.e., after *Marc.* 18.8). Following Uhl 1899, 22–27, Reitzenstein 1904, 6–7, 253–256, identifies in chapters 17–18 two different redactions of Seneca’s translation of Posidonius, but, unlike Uhl, he sees the source of such textual confusion in the manuscript tradition rather than in the tackiness of the “hasty Seneca” (“dem eilfertigen Seneca”). The whole story is instructive about how textual criticism and *Quellenforschung* can turn into a form of violence against the author and his text if they

focus more on the reconstruction of sources (and of a supposedly universal logic) than on the author’s culture, context, and style. In addition to the ‘structural’ reasons outlined so far, a number of stylistic features bear witness to the crucial role and position of the *prosopopeia* of nature as an intermediate stage in Marcia’s psychagogic journey. As Manning 1981, 97, points out following Abel 1967, 176, not only does the phrase *totius vitae* at the start of the next chapter (18.1) suggest “a contrast with the part of life to which the image of the Syracusan journey has already been applied”, but “Seneca’s second sentence *An Syracusas viseres . . . exposui* would have been unnecessary had Seneca only just completed his description”.

17.7 *propone tamen*: Seneca’s Stoic nature suggests engaging in the characteristically Stoic practice of the “premeditation of future evils” (*praemeditatio futurorum malorum*) – on which see above, note on *Marc.* 9.1, where the ‘technical’ verb *proponere* is also employed. An invitation to undertake the *praemeditatio* is also implied in the subsequent imperative *sic te para*, which shifts the focus from social ignominy (ἀδοξία) to death (θάνατος) – both conditions being ‘indifferents’ (ἀδιάφορα) in Stoic thought (cf. Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.102 = *SVF* 3.117).

***laudari*:** A reference to the culturally central practice of the *laudatio funebris*, which was part of the last honors (*suprema*) paid to the high-status dead and “possessed a heightened degree of community significance” (Covino 2011, 69). Seneca’s speaking nature is clearly aware of the social milieu of Marcia and of most of Seneca’s readers.

***inpositura*:** I see no valid reason for correcting the reading of **A** *inpositura* into the masculine *inpositurus* (as suggested by Gertz 1886 and Reynolds 1977; *contra* Viansino 1963). While it is true that Seneca sometimes uses masculine forms for his more general arguments, there is nothing in the context of this exhortation that justifies the obliteration of Seneca’s focus on Marcia’s gender and maternal role. No other masculine form is deployed for the addressee of the *prosopopeia*, and toward the end of nature’s speech Seneca uses the gender-neutral term *parens*.

***leges propositas*:** From the perspective of the Stoic belief in natural law, the speech of nature can be effectively summarized as an exposition of legal rules. Cf. above, note on *Marc.* 10.3, *legem nascendi*.

***invidia*:** A studied criticism of the traditional fear of the “envy of the gods”, which Seneca has repeatedly addressed in his *consolatio* (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 12.3 and 12.6). Here Seneca’s phrase allows the word *invidia* to hold together both the notion of the “envy of the gods for humans” and the idea of “the

hatred of humans for the gods” – as Marcia should free her concept of divine nature from the assumption that the gods intentionally harm people, while also shunning any feeling of hatred or animosity toward the gods.

18.1 *hanc imaginem*: The text transmitted by the manuscripts needs a correction, but it makes more sense to write *ad totius vitae introitum* than *ad hanc imaginem*. Reynolds 1977 writes *ad hanc imaginem* but in his apparatus criticus regards the reading *ad totius vitae introitum* (accepted by Viansino 1963 and Traina 1987) as equally plausible. By using the term *imago*, Seneca points out in rhetorical fashion that his ἔκφρασις of Syracuse, with its attendant προσωποποιία of nature, has the aesthetic quality of vividness (ἐνάργεια). Cf. e.g., Quint. *Inst.* 8.3.63, with the comments of Webb 2009, 91–93.

***puta*:** After appealing to Marcia’s mind through the imaginative techniques of ἔκφρασις and προσωποποιία – both of which stimulate the production of mental images (φαντασία) – Seneca takes another step in the same direction by resorting to the rhetorical device of *sermocinatio* (= διάλογοι, cf. Quint. *Inst.* 9.2.31), which, in the words of the Auctor *ad Herennium* (4.65), “consists in assigning to some person language which as set forth conforms with his character” (*alicui personae sermo adtribuitur et is exponitur cum ratione dignitatis*). Wearing his usual mask (*persona*) of teacher, Seneca now asks Marcia to imagine him coming to give her advice as if she were being born – a significantly more engaging experience for Marcia’s φαντασία. According to Quintilian (*Inst.* 9.2.31), some ancient rhetorical theorists restricted the term προσωποποιία to the case of incorporeal entities (such as Seneca’s nature) and preferred to call διάλογοι or *sermocinatio* the imaginary speeches of humans (*sermones hominum adsimulatos*). What Seneca contrives here should thus be regarded as a philosophical *sermocinatio* on cosmological subjects. Yet, since Seneca’s speech consists in a thorough description of celestial and terrestrial phenomena, the present *sermocinatio* becomes *ipso facto* an ἔκφρασις, entirely symmetrical to the ἔκφρασις of Syracuse. Even more notably, by intertwining in a crescendo of persuasive achievement the rhetorical strategies of ἔκφρασις, προσωποποιία, and *sermocinatio*, with their common appeal to φαντασία, Seneca displays a clear awareness that the rhetorical and Stoic conceptions of φαντασία are “different, but related, specializations of the same basic model” – the rhetoricians using the term “in a looser way than do the Stoics to mean any mental image” and implying “no automatic judgement as to the truth of that image or its relation to reality” (Webb 2009, 117–118). As a Stoic thinker with a solid rhetorical background, Seneca provides Marcia with a set of mental images which are both rhetorically alluring and philosophically truthful; he can thus make the most of the idea that

“φαντασία is the basis of language and, as in the rhetorical theory of ἐνάργεια, language serves as the medium by which φαντασίαι are communicated from the speaker’s mind to that of the listener” (Webb 2009, 114).

18.2 *urbem dis hominibus communem*: Seneca starts his cosmic picture by restating the fundamental Stoic dogma that humans and gods – *qua* rational beings – are citizens of a universal cosmopolis (cf. *SVF* 3.333–339, and Seneca’s own claims in *De ot.* 4.1). As Vogt 2008, 4, points out, in the Stoic tradition the ‘cosmic city’ is not an ideal, but a reality based on the assumption that among all natural creatures only humans and gods are endowed with reason; hence, before acquiring any political meaning, Stoic cosmopolitanism is “a physical and theological theory” (see also Schofield 1991, 64–92, with a rich discussion of the extant sources and a convincing case for the central role of Chrysippus). This is precisely the perspective adopted here by Seneca, who in fact is going to offer an entirely physical description at the border between astronomy, meteorology, and biology. Seneca’s underlying belief – which is the key for the interpretation of the subsequent ἔκφρασις – is that the all-embracing (*omnia complexam*) rational cosmos, with its variegated phenomena obeying “fixed and eternal laws” (*certis legibus aeternisque*), is in its essence a city (*urbem*) designed for the good of gods and humans – Marcia included.

***indefatigata celestium officia*:** The motions of the heavenly bodies can be defined as “duties” (*officia*), with a strong moral connotation, since every part of the Stoic cosmos complies with, and is even identical to, an immanent rational providence (πρόνοια), which manifests itself in the logical chain of causes also known as fate (εἰμαρμένη). See above, note on *Marc.* 6.2, *fata*. The adjective *indefatigatus* is not attested before Seneca and will be used again only by late antique authors, but rather than seeing it as a “Senecan neologism” (Traina 1987, 96), one could regard it as a colloquial word which Seneca, unlike other classical writers, does not refrain from using in a literary context for the sake of communicative efficacy. On Seneca’s taste for words which are at the same time colloquial and old-fashioned (and sometimes re-emerge only in late antique literature), see Richardson-Hay 2006, 120–122.

***Videbis*:** On the repeated anaphora of *videbis*, which establishes a clear connection between Seneca’s Syracusan and ‘cosmic’ ἔκφράσεις, see above, note on *Marc.* 17.2, *videbis*.

***aequalius[que]*:** Reynolds’ 1977 deletion of the enclitic is the most simple and reasonable correction of the MS reading. More extensive conjectures such as Alexander’s *aequali usque vice* and Viansino’s *aequali usque cursu*

are unnecessarily speculative. As acknowledged by Traina 1987, 96, and Hine 2014, 40 n. 61, Seneca’s use of the comparative of *aequaliter* serves to make the point that while the length of day and night varies constantly with the season of the year, the length of summer and winter is always the same.

a fraternis occursibus: In ancient myth, the lunar goddess Artemis/Diana was the sister of the solar god Apollo. Their mythical bond was re-interpreted in scientific terms with the emergence of the theory of *heliophotism* – which is embraced here by Seneca – according to which the Moon shines (primarily or exclusively) with light that it borrows from the Sun. There is good reason to believe, with Graham 2002 and Mheallaigh 2020, 64–65 (*pace* Manning 1981, 102–103, and Mourelatos 2012), that heliophotism was first proposed by Parmenides (DK 28 B 14–15; Aët. 2.26.2 = DK 28 A 42) and Anaxagoras (*ap. Pl. Cra.* 409B). The Stoics followed in the Presocratics’ footsteps but elaborated a slightly different version of the theory, according to which “the Moon was a murky but diaphanous body, composed of smoky, rippling air; its light was a mixture of its own luminosity combined with the light of the Sun, which was conducted through the Moon instead of being reflected off its surface” (Mheallaigh 2020, 89). In fact, according to the Stoic astronomer Cleomedes (*Cael.* 2.4.21; 33–79; Bowen/Todd 2004, 137–141), the Moon does not reflect the Sun’s light *sensu proprio* but absorbs solar light like a sponge and eventually produces its own light through the active processes of mixture (κρᾶσις) and participation (μετοχή). Seneca’s reference to the Moon’s “encounters” (*occursus*) with the Sun and to its “borrowing” of a gentle, reflected light (*lene remissumque lumen mutuantem*) may be echoing the processes described by Cleomedes – who is likely to have drawn on Posidonius (Bowen/Todd 2004, 137–138 n. 8; cf. also Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.145) – but the ‘technical’ meaning of our passage remains vague as Seneca prefers to focus on the more well-known phenomenon of lunar phases.

damnisque: For the use of *damnum* to indicate the waning of the Moon, see Hor. *Carm.* 4.7.13. As noted by Hine 2014, 40 n. 62, an Horatian echo can also be perceived in the image of the “looming” (*imminentem*) Moon: cf. Hor. *Carm.* 1.4.5 (*imminente luna*). Overall, the language employed in this discussion of the lunar cycle – and in most of Seneca’s astronomical argument – is more poetic than technical-scientific.

18.3 *quinque sidera:* At least since the time of Anaximenes (DK 13 A 14), ancient astronomy recognized five planets (as distinct from the so-called fixed stars) that were visible to the naked eye: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. With typical allusive movement, Seneca does not name the planets explicitly but expounds the astronomical notion that every planet follows a different

course (*diversas agentia vias*) and moves from west to east through the zodiac in contrast with the westward daily motion of the sky (*in contrario praecipiti mundo nitentia*). The retrograde motion of the planets and the related cosmological issues are discussed by Plato (*Ti.* 36B-D; *Resp.* 617A), who may be drawing on Pythagorean sources, and even more carefully by Plato’s students Eudoxus and Callippus (Gregory 2003). The phenomenon of the seven circles or spheres (*orbis* or *globi*) traced by the five planets, the Sun, and the Moon “in the opposite direction from the heavens” (*versantur retro contrario motu atque caelum*), is mentioned by Cicero in his *Dream of Scipio* (*Resp.* 6.17), which incorporates Archimedes’ views and is one of Seneca’s main models for the last section of our *consolatio*. Stoic writers like Manilius (*Astr.* 1.255–262), too, enjoy describing how the signs of the zodiac “bear in succession through the seasons the Sun and the other planets which struggle against the movement of the celestial sphere” (*solemque alternis vicibus per tempora portant/ atque alia adverso luctantia sidera mundo*). Indeed, Seneca’s picture of the planets “straining (*nitentia*) against the motion of the hurtling world (*praecipiti mundo*)” seems reminiscent of Manilius’ image of the planets “struggling” (*luctantia*) against the *mundus* – all the more so as in the same context Manilius (1.261) reaffirms the Stoic doctrine on cosmic fate by claiming that “the whole rational scheme of destiny” (*ratio fatorum omnis*) is derived from the planets. This is precisely the point made by Seneca immediately afterwards, with more details and a poetic cadence, when he argues that “the fortunes of nations (*fortunae populorum*) depend on the planets’ slightest movements”, and that “the greatest and the smallest things (*maxima et minima*) are shaped by the arrival of a favorable or an unfavorable star (*prout aequum iniquumue sidus incessit*)”. On Seneca’s typically Stoic belief in fate and divination, see above, note on *Marc.* 3.3, *triste matribus omen occurre*. Since the Stoics showed different degrees of commitment to divination and astrology – Panaetius being the only truly ‘skeptical’ Stoic (Cic. *Luc.* 107; Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.149; Collette 2022, 108–114) – it is no wonder that Seneca’s own approach reflects a few minor variations throughout the years. In fact, whereas in *QNat.* 2.32.3–4 Seneca seems to regard the stars as providing signs, at *QNat.* 2.32.7–8 the stars apparently have the power to cause events, and in the present passage “they seem actually to cause them” (Griffin 2013, 247). Cf. also *Ep.* 88.14–15.

collecta nubila: This is a kind of ‘meteorological interlude’ in Seneca’s catalogue of natural *mirabilia*, for in the Greek and Roman world the study of clouds, rains (*cadentis aquas*), lightnings (*obliqua fulmina*), and thunders (*caeli fragorem*) pertained to the field of meteorology – much of which, from Aristotle and Theophrastus onwards, “was concerned with weather” (Taub 2003, 2). The

fact that Seneca replaces the anaphora of *videbis* with *miraberis* is a clear reflection of the ‘marvelous’ character of the μετέωρα in ancient culture. In his later *Natural Questions*, Seneca will demonstrate a much more consistent interest in meteorology and will devote considerable efforts to correct the ancient “rhetoric of *mirum*” (Williams 2012, 219–220).

18.4 *satiatus*: Another masculine form attesting to the general character of Seneca’s argument. See above, note on *Marc. 9.3, expositum*.

***supernorum*:** The substantivized adjective *superna* may embrace both the realm of celestial/astronomical phenomena and the field of meteorology as Seneca is marking his transition from such domains to the earthly world (*in terram*) – which is said to be substantially different from the heavenly spheres (*alia forma rerum aliterque mirabilis*) in accordance with a basic distinction established by Aristotle. However, since *stricto sensu* Seneca is gradually moving from the μετέωρα to earthly realities – and since the adjective *supernus* appears in Lucretius’ treatment of meteorology to designate the bodies lying immediately above the clouds (*superna in statione locata*, *Lucretius* 6.192–193) – it is also possible that Seneca is mainly thinking of the μετέωρα. In addition, it should be noted that a further meteorological issue – the origin of terrestrial waters – is dealt with by Seneca at the start of his new ‘earthly’ section.

***planities*:** Like other parts of Seneca’s *sermocinatio*, this description of level plains, snowy summits of mountains, and rivers tumbling down is reminiscent of poetic models such as *Verg. Aen.* 11.526–527, *Hor. Carm.* 4.7.1–4, and *Lucretius* 1.17–20, 271–289; 2.589–597; 5.200–203, 943–957. As in the *Natural Questions*, Seneca’s *aemulatio* of Lucretius’ ‘sublime’ view is aimed at replacing the Epicurean order of nature and its anti-teleological, atomistic foundations with the Stoic idea of cosmic harmony (σμπάθεια).

***ex uno fonte*:** *Pace* Manning 1981, 104, *Favez* 1928, 63, is right in seeing here an echo of the ancient belief that all rivers have a common subterranean source. What in the *ad M.* is a brief, poetically phrased allusion becomes the subject of careful investigation in *QNat.* 3.8, where Seneca discusses the theory that rivers are discharged from a deep-seated supply of water (*ex illa profunda copia isti amnes egeruntur*) among other possible explanations of the same phenomenon. The theory seems to go back to Democritus (DK 68 A 97 = *Arist. Meteor.* 365B; 98 = *Sen. QNat.* 6.20.1–4), Anaxagoras (DK 59 A 42.5 = *Hippol. Refut.* 1.8), and Plato (*Phd.* 111E–112A), but is embraced also in poetic didactic sources such as *Virgil’s Georgics* (4.363–373).

aviumque concentu dissono: Seneca’s depiction of the birds’ choiring as dissonant stands in stark contrast with – and thus is a contrastive imitation of – the image of the melodious singing of birds characterizing the classical *locus amoenus*. Since Seneca situates his scene in the idyllic landscape of *nemora* and *silvae*, an especially telling point of comparison is provided by bucolic poetry and its echo in Latin didactic poets such as Lucretius (5.1379–1398; 2.144–149; cf. also 1.10–20) and Virgil (*G.* 1.420–423; 2.325–329). For the recognized conventional character of the *locus amoenus* in Roman imperial literature, see Plut. *Amat.* 749A, who also points out the intergeneric processes of imitation carried out by both philosophers and poets – especially after Pl. *Phdr.* 230B.

18.5 *rivis lacu vallibus palude*: The text in **A** (*ripis lacu vallibus pavidae*) is corrupt, and Reynolds 1977 regards this passage as a *locus desperatus* notwithstanding the several attempts which have been made to emend it. However, it is almost certain that *pavidae* is a corruption of *palude*, a reading transmitted by the manuscripts of γ and corroborated by the joint occurrence of *paludes*, *lacus* and *valles* in *QNat.* 3.8. It is more difficult to emend the first part of the asyndeton. Certainly, any supplement interrupting the asyndetic series (such as Madvig’s *ripis lacu<um>*) is to be discarded, whereas Seneca’s intertextual engagement with various poetic models in this context makes a regular alternation of singular and plural forms perfectly acceptable (cf. also Traina 1987, 98). The most ‘economic’ choice seems the emendation of *ripis* into *rivis* as the corruption of *rivis* may be due to both paleographic and phonetic reasons.

18.6 *rapidorum torrentium aurum*: This Senecan wonder finds a place also in the encyclopedia of Pliny (*HN* 33.66), according to whom the gold thrown up by rivers such as the Tagus, the Padus, the Hebrus, the Pactolus, and the Ganges is of the purest quality insofar as it is “thoroughly polished by the continual attrition of the current” (*cursu ipso attrituque perpolitum*).

aeriae ignium faces: The adjective before *ignium faces* is lost in the MS tradition. The original reading of **A** has been erased, and a later hand has written the meaningless *terrae*. However, one can still see an *a* very close to the preceding word *mari*, and the other readings attested in two later manuscripts (*terret* and *taetrae*), though senseless, bear witness to the presence of a *t* and/or an *r* in Seneca’s adjective. Madvig’s conjecture *aeriae* – accepted by Walz, Favez, Basore, and Traglia – seems more than reasonable, even if Reynolds 1977 prefers to put a *crux* here, suggesting the unnecessarily difficult *Aetnaeae* in his apparatus. Traina 1990, 48–50, writes *atrae ignis faces* and opposes Madvig’s proposal by claiming that *aerius* has a poetic flavor (“*caratura poetica*”) and is more suitable for atmospheric

phenomena than for volcanic fires. Both objections are unconvincing since the imitation of poetic language is a distinguishing feature of the entire chapter 18 and the adjective *aerius* is often used for terrestrial entities rising aloft such as mountains (e.g., Catull. 64.240; Verg. *G.* 3.474; Ov. *Met.* 2.226) and trees (e.g., Verg. *Ecl.* 1.58; *Aen.* 3.680). Here Seneca is thinking of the columns of volcanic material which rise in the air from the land and the sea (*in mediis terris medioque rursus mari*), a typical ‘sublime’ view that the Romans could contemplate in such familiar places as Vesuvius, Etna, and the Aeolian islands. Cf. e.g., Plin. *HN* 2.238, and Seneca’s own mention of the “eruption of fires from marine caves” (*e cavernis maris ignium eruptio*) in *Ben.* 7.20.4.

oceanus: Seneca aligns himself with the common ancient tradition that saw the Ocean as a river surrounding the landmass of the northern hemisphere (i.e., Europe, Africa, and Asia: cf. Pomp. Mel. 1.3–7; Gell. *NA* 12.13.30). This may also be a further allusion to Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* (*Resp.* 6.21–22), where our hemisphere is described as “a little island surrounded by the sea which you on earth call ‘Atlantic’ or ‘great’ or ‘Ocean’” (*parva quaedam insula est circumfusa illo mari, quod Atlanticum, quod magnum, quem Oceanum appellatis in terris*). Seneca’s own poetic rendition of the same cosmographic notion is the apposition *vinculum terrarum* (“bound of the earth”). Even more remarkable is Seneca’s picture of the Ocean “interrupting the continuity of the nations with its trio of gulfs (*triplici sinu*)”, for in antiquity – and still in Seneca’s day (cf. Pomp. Mel. 1.5) – the most common view was that the Ocean had *four* gulfs or inlets: the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Persian Sea (i.e., the Indian Ocean), and the Caspian (or Hyrcanian) Sea. This view seems to have been established in the sixth century BC by Hecataeus of Miletus (*Schol. ad Apollon. Rhod. Argon.* 4.259 = *BNJ* I F18a) and was opposed only by Herodotus (1.203–204) and Aristotle (*Mete.* 354a). According to Arrian (*Anab.* 7.16.1–3), Alexander the Great was planning to send an expedition to settle the question, but his project was not put into practice until 285/284 BC, when Patrocles, a general of Seleucus I, allegedly explored the region and reaffirmed the old belief that the Caspian “offered a practicable route of circumnavigation from India” (περίπλουον ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰνδικῆς δυνατόν, Strab. 2.1.17 = *BNJ* 712 F4a; cf. also Plin. *HN* 2.167–168 = *BNJ* 712 F4c). Patrocles’ testimony “stood in such high regard that until Ptolemy in the second century AD all geographers seem to have accepted it. Indeed, the idea remained widespread until the fourteenth century AD” (Visscher 2020, 30–31) – even if in the early fifth century AD Macrobius (*In Somn.* 2.9.7) admitted that “there are some who deny that the Caspian has any connection with the Ocean” (*esse nonnullos qui ei de Oceano ingressum negent*). Among the skeptics of the ancient *vulgata* alluded to by Macrobius is Seneca, who thus sides with Herodotus and Aristotle. As usual, it is hard to trace

the origins of Seneca’s stance, but since scholars have often regarded Posidonius as the main source of Seneca’s chorography (see above, notes on *Marc.* 17.2, *Syracusas petenti*, and 17.6, *natura*), one may start by noting that, in contrast to Seneca, Posidonius included the Hyrcanian Sea among the Ocean’s gulfs (fr. 219 Edelstein-Kidd = Priscianus Lydus, *Solutiones ad Chosroem* 6; cf. Kidd 1999, 289; 1988a, 274–275). Posidonius offered an account of annual tidal highs that connected the motions of the outer Ocean with those of the inner seas, and it is perhaps no accident that the conclusion of Seneca’s description of the Ocean refers precisely to the surging of tides (*ingenti licentia exaestuans*). Seneca’s distancing from Posidonius may have been influenced by Aristotle’s *Meteorologica*, a work cited eight times in the *Natural Questions* – sometimes almost verbatim – which Seneca knew directly or (less probably) from literal quotations of secondary sources (Hall 1977, 415–416; cf. esp. *QNat.* 1.3.7–8; 2.12). Certainly, by taking a stance that is heterodox for his time, Seneca intends to increase the (already high) degree of allusivity implicit in his text.

18.7 *innare*: Seneca’s transition from the meteorological topic of terrestrial waters to the domain of biology happens quite naturally as the image of the Ocean is enriched with that of exceptionally large fishes – which are said to take precedence over terrestrial creatures due to their superior size (*excedenti terrestria magnitudine animalia*). The threefold anaphora of *quaedam* allows the author to transform his focus on marine wildlife into an extended allusive movement, which calls on readers to recollect the names of all the animals referred to.

***quaedam gravia et alieno se magisterio moventia*:** The ponderous fish moving under another’s control is the whale led by a small fish known as *musculus*. According to Pliny (*HN* 9.186), when the eyes of the whale are closed by “the heavy weight of its eyebrows” (*praegravi superciliorum pondere*), the toothless *musculus* (cf. Plin. *HN* 11.165) “swims before the whale and points out the shallow places which are likely to prove inconvenient to its large body” (*infestantia magnitudinem vada praenatans demonstrat*), thus serving as “the whale’s eyes” (*oculorumque vice*). Pliny includes this symbiotic relationship among the cases of *amicitia* or *societas* observable in animals, and to the Stoic Seneca the story of the whale and the *musculus* must have appeared as a particular reflection of the cosmic συμπάθεια.

***quaedam velocia et concitatis perniciores remigiis*:** An allusion to dolphins, which ancient writers – from Pindar (*Pyth.* 4.17; *Nem.* 6.64–65; *Isthm.* 9.6–7) to Oppian (*Hal.* 2.533–552) – praise for their swiftness, also in comparison with athletes, ships, and other human artifacts. Aristotle (*HA* 631a20–23) remarks that

“incredible stories are reported about the speed of the dolphin” (λέγεται δὲ καὶ περὶ ταχυτήτος ἄπιστα τοῦ ζώου), which “seems to be the fastest of all animals, whether marine or terrestrial” (ἀπάντων γὰρ δοκεῖ εἶναι ζώων τάχιστον, καὶ τῶν ἐνύδρων καὶ τῶν χερσαίων), and “can leap higher than the masts of large ships” (ὑπεράλλονται δὲ πλοίων μεγάλων ἰστούς). Pliny (*HN* 9.20), too, considers the dolphin “the swiftest of all animals, not only of the sea animals” (*velocissimum omnium animalium, non solum marinorum*) and describes it as “more rapid than a bird, more instantaneous than the flight of an arrow” (*ocior volucre, acrior telo*). As in the previous paragraphs, Seneca is likely to echo both poetic and scientific models, for the proverbial speed of dolphins is recalled by such early Latin poets as Accius, who in his *Medea* (403–404 Ribbeck = Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.89) engages in an allusive adaptation of Apollonius Rhodius (*Arg.* 4.933–934) and compares the Argonauts to “swift and brisk dolphins” (*inciti atque alacres delphini*). Accius’ lines are quoted by Cicero in the framework of Balbus’ Stoic argument about the providential design of the cosmos, which can be regarded as a macroscopic version of Seneca’s cosmography. There has been much debate over the sources of Balbus’ speech – with several scholars suggesting that in constructing the arguments of his Stoic spokesman Cicero draws heavily on Posidonius and Panaetius (Pease 1955, 45–48) – but the most likely scenario is that both Cicero and Seneca assemble their pictures of a teleologically ordered, admirable world on the basis of a manifold tradition of Stoic writings about cosmology and theology.

quaedam haurientia undas et magno prae-navigantium periculo efflantia:

This dangerous fish sucking in water and breathing it out is the sperm whale or cachalot (*physeter*), which Pliny (*HN* 9.8) considers the largest animal of the Gallic Ocean (*in Gallico oceano*), that is, of the French side of the Atlantic. According to Pliny, the sperm whale “rises up like a huge column (*ingentis columnae modo se attollens*), and as it towers above the sails of ships, belches forth, as it were, a deluge of water (*altiorque navium velis diluviem quandam eructans*)”. In *Phaed.* 1025–1030, Seneca makes explicit mention of “the cavernous sperm whale” (*physiter capax*) and compares it to a sea storm. This monstrous fish is said to “swim through the deep ways of Ocean (*per alta vehitur Oceani freta*), spouting back streams of water from its mouth (*fluctum refundens ore*)”. See also Kitchell 2014, 199.

navigia quas non novere terras quaerentia: Since Seneca has just mentioned the vastness of the Ocean, he is probably thinking of the several expeditions organized by Greek and Roman rulers to explore the regions across the borders of the Ocean. The above-mentioned voyage of Patrocles to the Caspian is a case in point, but other analogous enterprises – from the Indian expedition of Eudoxus of Cyzicus under Ptolemy Physcon (Mc Laughlin 2014, 76–77) to Julius

Caesar’s invasion of Britain (see above, notes on *Marc.* 14.3) – were equally well-known in Seneca’s day, and in his later life Seneca himself will witness Nero’s efforts to penetrate Ethiopia (*QNat.* 6.8.3–4; cf. also *Plin. HN* 6.181; *Cass. Dio* 63.8).

humanae audaciae: As acknowledged by Manning 1981, 105, and Traina 1987, 99, Seneca’s reference to human boldness may be reminiscent of *Hor. Carm.* 1.3.21–37, but (*pace* Traina) Seneca’s attitude to human efforts at discovery and progress is less negative than that of Horace, who gives voice to the traditional criticism of navigation and the arts through a careful reception of mythical archetypes (such as Hesiod’s Prometheus) and their philosophical afterlife (Nisbet/Hubbard 1970, 53–57). On Seneca’s nuanced (and by no means derogatory) view of the progress of knowledge – which eventually proved inspirational to early modern explorers such as Christopher Columbus (Romm 1993, Moretti 1993) – see Tutrone 2014.

artes: Seneca’s threefold division of the *artes* is a simplified arrangement of Posidonius’ four-tiered ranking as reported by Seneca himself in *Ep.* 88.21–23 (= fr. 90 Edelstein-Kidd; cf. Kidd 1988a, 359–365; Zago 2012, 139–191). The arts (or, more properly, the branches of human knowledge) that here are said to “sustain life” (*quae vitam instruunt*) are the handicrafts which Posidonius called “common and low” (*vulgares et sordidae*), as shown by Seneca’s use of the strikingly similar expression *ad instruendam vitam* at *Ep.* 88.21. The arts that “embellish life” (*quae ornent*) are Posidonius’ *artes ludicrae*, which “aim to please the eye and the ear” (*quae ad voluptatem oculorum atque aurium tendunt*, *Ep.* 88.22). Though requiring manual skills just like the *artes vulgares*, the *artes ludicrae* are different insofar as they exceed the bounds of necessity. The third and last type of *artes* mentioned in the *ad M.* – the arts that “guide life” (*quae regant*) – result from a conflation of Posidonius’ *artes pueriles* and *liberales*, the former corresponding to the standard school curriculum of the Hellenistic and Roman era (the ἑγκύκλιοι τέχναι, sometimes translated as *artes liberales*, which arouses some confusion), the latter coinciding with philosophy as the only way to virtue (see Stückelberger 1965, 52–55). Since in *Epistle* 88 Seneca puts special emphasis on the primacy of philosophy over the *liberalia studia* – a term there used by Seneca in its common meaning and thus corresponding to Posidonius’ *artes pueriles* (Kidd 1988a, 362) – one may wonder why in the *ad M.* Seneca does not affirm the superiority of philosophy – of Posidonius’ *artes liberales* – in terms similar to those of the *Epistles*. Once again, the most likely explanation lies in Seneca’s pedagogic project. When addressing a woman who is not a professional philosopher but has received a careful literary education, Seneca avoids discrediting the *liberalia studia* – which are included among Marcia’s interests as early as in 1.6 – and instead uses literature, history, and the sciences as a tool for philosophical persuasion. In addition, just like the

revision of Posidonius’ oceanography (see above, note on *Marc.* 18.6, *oceanus*), the simplification of Posidonius’ epistemological theory provides further evidence that Seneca’s relationship to his Greek models is not as passive as the *Quellenforschung* has often assumed but rather reflects a complex process of reception, negotiation, and adaptation.

18.8 *intemperies caeli corporisque*: As Nutton 2000, 65–69, points out, in antiquity atmospheric and climatic changes were often considered responsible for the miasmatic pollution leading to the emergence of outbreaks (cf. also below, note on *Marc.* 26.6, *pestilentiae halitus*). This tradition of interpretation, which extends into Byzantine times and beyond, is given an atomistic basis in Lucretius (6.1090–1137), but the general expression *intemperies caeli* recurs in connection with the origins of plagues in such different contexts as Livy’s history of fourth-century BC Rome (Liv. 8.18.1–2) and Quintilian’s discussion of rhetorical conjectures (*Inst.* 7.2.3). Ancient medical wisdom is also echoed in Seneca’s mention of “bodily disorders” (*intemperies corporis*), an allusion to the ancient (originally Hippocratic) understanding of illness as a state of imbalance in the body’s four fluids or humors. The word *intemperies*, for instance, is employed with reference to the prevalence of black bile (μελαγχολία) in Gell. *NA* 18.7.4. As already acknowledged by Galen (*De meth. med.* [= 10 Kühn] 1.16), the Stoic theory of the four elemental qualities (hot, cold, dry, and wet) has its roots in the thought of the Hippocratics and Aristotle (Tielemann 2009, 289–291; Stewart 2019, 13–14), and the Stoic Seneca is particularly “akin to the Hippocratic humoralist in his attentiveness to corporeal fluctuations and the human body’s dynamic interactions with external forces” (Goyette 2021, 272–273). See e.g., *Ep.* 58.23–24; *QNat.* 3.15.1–5, where in accordance with the Stoic doctrine of συμπάθεια Seneca establishes a parallelism between macroscopic and microscopic fluids – between terrestrial and bodily *umores* – which is comparable to the association of climatic and bodily disorders in the present passage.

***acerba desideria et mors*:** It is no accident that Seneca’s list of existential evils – which Stoic philosophy rather regards as ‘indifferents’ – ends with death and grief at the untimely death of loved ones. At the conclusion of her cosmic journey, Marcia should see her fate as just one among the many natural events, both happy and unhappy, that inhere in the world order.

***per illa exeundum est*:** Since the repetition of *illa* to indicate both the good and the bad sides of life is not perfectly idiomatic, Erasmus interpreted the second *illa* as a scribal assimilation to the first one and corrected it into *ista* – which is more than plausible from both a linguistic and a paleographic point of view. However, Lucarini 2021, 382, has recently proposed to write *per haec exeundum est*,

arguing (in the style of A. E. Housman: Butterfield 2009, 200–201) that in similar cases “il criterio paleografico nell’emendamento non è decisivo”.

Immo, puto, ad id non accedes: Taken as it stands in the MS tradition, this passage is admittedly difficult. In Reynolds’ 1977 words, this is a *locus difficilis sed frustra temptatus* (see Favez 1928, 67, for some of the modern commentators’ *temptamenta*). Following Viansino 1963, 40, Manning 1981, 105–106, argues that *puto* adds an ironic tone to the corrective statement introduced by *immo* and that Seneca tries to undermine “by irony the case against deciding to live”. However, since it is not easy to detect traces of irony in Seneca’s rejoinder, it may be worth reconsidering Gertz’s emendation of *non* to *volens*. The participle *volens* is often used by Seneca to designate the individual act of moral deliberation (cf. e.g., *Vit. Beat.* 15.5; *Ep.* 37.2; 81.24; *Ben.* 4.40.4; 6.10.1; 7.4.4), and Seneca’s point here seems to be that after careful consideration Marcia will be willing to enter life despite the minor drawbacks (*aliquid*) of the human condition.

decuti: A verb frequently used for the harmful action of atmospheric agents and other natural forces (e.g., Verg. *G.* 1.131; Prop. 3.13.27; Ov. *Fast.* 2.707; Liv. 1.54.6). Seneca implies that when willingly accepting to live, Marcia will consider life’s sorrows as inevitable as hailstones and bad weather.

parentes nostri: Marcia’s objection that no human being is consulted before being born finds an echo in such famous expressions of modern pessimism as Leopardi’s *Dialogo della Natura e di un Islandese* (“t’ho io forse pregato di pormi in questo universo?”: see Andreoni Fontecedro 2001; Sconocchia 2001). However, whereas Leopardi’s Iclander complains that he cannot find any philosopher rebutting his objections, Marcia has Seneca offering a response – which nonetheless Manning 1981, 106, considers “extraordinarily inadequate”. Indeed, to a reader imbued with the modern values of self-determination and individual will, Seneca’s rejoinder that our parents were consulted sounds perfunctory at best. But to a Roman reader who had grown up in the cult of paternal *auctoritas* and acknowledged the father’s power of life and death over children (Gai. *Inst.* 1.55), Seneca’s conclusion must have appeared extraordinarily weighty in moral authority. The very last verb of the present chapter (*sustulerunt*) recalls the Roman custom of laying new-born children on the ground at the father’s feet – the father’s gesture of lifting up the baby counting as a formal (and discretionary) act of recognition (Capogrossi Colognesi 1990; Treggiari 1991, 428; *pace* Courbier 2001, 53–55, and others). In the case of Marcia, Seneca suggests that nature consulted the wise and beloved Cremutius Cordus – who in fact will illustrate the magnificence of the cosmic order with his own voice at the end of the *consolatio*.

19.1 *ad solacia*: After strengthening his analysis of Marcia’s situation through a threefold rhetorical arrangement involving the devices of ἔκφρασις, προσωποποιία and *sermocinatio* (17–18), Seneca marks his return to the straightforward presentation of consolatory arguments (*solacia*). In order to reorient his addressee to her moral tasks, Seneca restates both the object of his therapy (*quid curandum sit*) and his strategy of intervention (*quemadmodum*), the former coinciding with the emotion of “longing for the loved one” (*desiderium eius quem dilexit*, cf. Cic. *Tusc.* 4.21 = *SVF* 3.398), the latter with a thoughtful transformation of the addressee’s *opinio* (= δόξα) *qua* rational judgement (*iudicemus*).

***non flemus*:** Pace Manning 1981, 106, Seneca’s statement here does not stand in contrast to his earlier assertion at 7.1 that the occasional separation (*discensus*) from living loved ones causes “an unavoidable stab of pain and a contraction of the soul” (*necessarius morsus et contractio*) – i.e., the inevitable experience of pre-emotion (προπόθεια). Seneca’s point is that we do not *weep* for living people who are absent, namely, that we do not grieve, in the proper sense, when a friend leaves – *flere* being one of the verbs most commonly used for mourning and lamentation (e.g., Plaut. *Capt.* 139; Catull. 39.5; Hor. *Carm.* 2.9.15–17; 3.7.1–5; Tac. *Ann.* 2.71; 6.10). Seneca also makes it clear that we do feel longing (*desiderium* = πόθος, ἕμερος) when a friend is away (cf. also *Ep.* 40.1, 49.1), but what makes this feeling “bearable” (*tolerable*) – both from the perspective of the sentient subject and from that of the Stoic therapist – is precisely the fact that this kind of *desiderium* can remain within the boundaries of pre-emotions and moderate reactions.

***Opinio*:** As in chapter 7 and elsewhere in his *consolatio*, Seneca recognizes in the cognitive process of the formation of opinion (δόξα) the source of the pain (λύπη, cf. *cruciat*) associated with mourning and presents *opinio* as “opposed to truth, nature, and reality” (Orlando 2014, 51). In restating such a characteristically Stoic diagnosis – which according to Cicero (*Tusc.* 3.75–76) was variously elaborated in the early Stoa, from Zeno to Chrysippus – Seneca emphasizes its rational basis, for Marcia is taught that “evils are only ever as great as our valuation of them (*quanti illud taxavimus*)”. As a frequentative form of *tango* typically recurring in contexts of assessment and measurement, the verb *taxo* bears witness to the concrete (indeed ‘corporeal’) and self-reflexive character of the process of judgement (κρίσις) as portrayed in the Stoic account of the origin of emotions (e.g., Cic. *Acad.* 1.39; Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.111; Gal. *Plac. Hipp. Plat.* 5.1.4). In his *Epistles*, Seneca uses the same verb with the very same meaning – once to suggest that Lucilius estimate in advance the amount of his fear of the future (*Ep.* 24.2), and once to claim that only the wise man can assess with precision the value of gifts and counter-gifts (*Ep.* 81.8). Both in the *ad M.* and in the *Epistles*, Seneca tries to persuade his addressee that correct reasoning can allow one to take

control of the emotions – which, *qua* rational judgements, are “up to us” (*in nostra potestate*), as Seneca argues echoing a well-known Stoic formula (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν; cf. e.g., Epict. *Ench.* 1.1–3; Graver 2007, 62–66).

nosmet ipsi fallamus: Since the mind’s judgements leading to the emergence of the emotions are rational acts of will, Seneca can urge his addressee to produce, and voluntarily assent to, a new understanding of the situation of bereavement. Thus, Seneca can legitimately use two imperatives – *iudicemus* and *fallamus* – which demonstrate that Stoic voluntarism does not even refrain from recommending self-deception as a beneficial ‘*technique du soi*’. In fact, Marcia is invited to imagine that she has sent her loved ones on their way (*dimisimus*), or rather that she has sent them on ahead (*praemisimus*), and is going to follow them. The metaphor of death as a necessary journey that different people undertake at different times is widely attested in consolatory contexts (Kassel 1958, 76–77) and is used also by Cicero (*Sen.* 84) and Plutarch (*Cons. Apoll.* 113C) with reference to the untimely death of children. Seneca resorts to the same argument in his *Consolation to Polybius* and several times in the *Epistles*, always building on the different prefixes of the verbs *mitto* and *cedo*: *Polyb.* 9.9 (*non reliquit ille nos sed antecessit*); *Ep.* 63.16 (*quem putamus perisse praemissus est*); 93.12 (*non maiore spatio alter alterum praecedimus*); 99.7 (*quem putas perisse praemissus est*); cf. Plut. *Cons. Apoll.* 113C (οἱ μὲν προπορεύονται οἱ δ’ ἐπακολουθοῦσι . . . οἱ βραδύτερον ἀφικνούμενοι τῶν θάπτον παραγιγνομένων). Christian writers such as Cyprian (*De mortalit.* 20), Ambrosius (*De exc. frat.* 1.71), and Augustine (*Ep.* 92.1) will follow in Cicero’s and Seneca’s footsteps, but they will point out much more clearly than their classical models that death is a journey to happiness and immortality. See Tibiletti 1972–73, and the notes of Favez 1928, 68, and Traina 1987, 100–101. For a broader history of the metaphor of death as a journey, from ancient Mesopotamia to contemporary culture, see Collins/Fishbane 1995. On the conceptually related metaphor of life as a journey to death, see above, note on *Marc.* 11.2, *properant*.

19.2 *qui me defendat, qui a contemptu vindicet*: The last of Marcia’s objections concerning her personal situation echoes a theme frequently found in epitaphs (Lattimore 1962, 177–184) and sarcophagi (Huskinson 1996, 95–96) which refer to the death of children: the state of defenselessness and the social damage suffered by bereaved parents. As recalled by Dixon 1992, 115, notwithstanding the material difficulties which curtailed the chance for Roman children to reach adulthood, the fundamental hope remained “that children would survive to bring pride, prosperity, and material and emotional support to the parent in due course, to produce children in their turn and thus confer a kind of immortality”.

As social actors in a world which considered the flourishing of a family for multiple generations – or, conversely, its lack of heirs – a matter of public significance (and not an issue of *Privatleben* in any modern sense), bereaved parents were often bound to feel the social contempt (*contemptus*) mentioned here by Seneca. Moreover, as reflected in such famous mythical archetypes as Orestes and Telemachus, children were expected to avenge (*vindicet*) any offense committed against their parents, thus releasing their families from the burden of social scorn. For Seneca’s attitude to other instances of *contemptus*, and his view that the Stoic sage is immune to offenses and social stereotypes, see *Const. Sap.* 10.2–3. An Epicurean teacher might have been more sympathetic with Marcia’s concerns than the Stoic Seneca, for Epicurus (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 10.117 = fr. 536 Usener) acknowledges that contempt (καταφρόνησις), together with hatred (μῖσος) and envy (φθόνος), is one of the three reasons for injurious acts among humans (βλάβας ἐξ ἀνθρώπων) – though Epicurus, too, like Seneca, holds that such detrimental tendencies should be overcome by the sage through reasoning (λογισμῶ). Cf. also Lucr. 3.59–78; 5.1125–1126.

plus gratiae orbitas confert: By announcing that he will offer “a consolation which is far from commendable, but true” (*minime probabili sed vero solacio*), Seneca makes a calculated rhetorical move to address Marcia’s conventional complaint from a declaredly unconventional perspective. What Seneca conjures up is a clever interlacing of different generic forms, for whereas Marcia’s objection fully belongs to the discourse of *consolationes* and *epitaphia*, Seneca’s argument oversteps the traditional boundaries of the παραμυθία and introduces a realistic element – a *verum solacium* – typical of the genres of comedy, satire, and epigram: the image of the legacy-hunters (*captatores* or *heredipetae*) courting the wealthy elderly. From Plautus (*Mil.* 705–722) and Horace (*Sat.* 2.5) to Petronius (124.2–4; 141), Martial (5.39; 6.63; 8.27; 9.100; 10.97; 11.67), and Juvenal (1.37–44; 3.126–130; 12.98–130), the above-mentioned literary genres consistently denounce the breaking of normal cultural codes by the *captatores* – the social adventurers who blandish non-kin in the hope of receiving bequests from them – and by the narcissistic *senes*, who enjoy the courtship of legacy-hunters even in the presence of direct descendants (cf. Cic. *Parad. Stoic.* 5.39; 6.43; Tac. *Dial.* 6.2; *Ann.* 3.25; Plin. *Ep.* 7.24; 8.18; and the sociological analysis of Hopkins 1985, 235–247). For Seneca (who condemns legacy-hunting also in *Const. Sap.* 9.2; *Ben.* 4.20.3; 6.38.4–5; *Ep.* 95.43; see Star 2012, 98–105), the most blatant inversion of the moral and natural order lies in the transformation of bereavement (*orbitas*) and loneliness (*solitudo*) into an opportunity for egoistic satisfaction – into a way to gain other people’s goodwill (*gratia*) and to increase one’s power (*potentia*) – especially because in several cases this inversion (or διαστροφή, in Stoic terms)

goes at the expense of the naturally sanctioned bond between parents and children. Quite ingeniously, Seneca succeeds in turning his treatment of an all too popular theme – the social discomfort of the bereaved – into a literarily and historically allusive note which emphasizes the gap between Stoic ethics and Roman reality (*in civitate nostra*).

liberos eiurent: The verb *eiuro* (or *eiero*) – restored by Gruter against the MS reading *servant* – indicates the act of disowning on oath a person or a juridical entity *qua* “unjust” (*iniquus*: see e.g., Cic. *De or.* 2.285; *Verr.* 2.3.137; *Phil.* 12.18), but its use in Latin literature quickly extended beyond the legal and political sphere. In *Ben.* 6.4.2, Seneca employs this verb to describe exactly the opposite situation, that is, the children’s disavowal of “harsh and wicked fathers” (*duri et scelerati patres*). Of course, the expression used in the *ad M.* has a stricter legal meaning since in ancient Rome it was the children who were afraid of being disinherited by their parents. As Hopkins 1985, 236–237, points out, although the Roman legal terminology implied that immediate descendants, such as children, were a man’s own heirs (*sui heredes*), already in the Middle Republic prosperous Romans had the power to leave their whole estate or parts of it to non-kin. They just had to disinherit a child, and later even a grandchild, explicitly by name to ward off future suits (Gai. *Inst.* 2.123–127) – which nonetheless became relatively frequent at the end of the Republic, when children were allowed to invalidate a will as ‘undutiful’ (*querela inofficiosi testamenti*) on the grounds that the testator was “in some sense of unsound mind” (*quasi non sanae mentis*, *Dig.* 5.2.1–2).

orbitatem manu faciant: There is a subtle wordplay here as the term *manus*, which refers to the artificial creation of bereavement by legal means, is one of the words used in Roman law to describe the power of the *paterfamilias* over the female members of his family (Gai. *Inst.* 1.108–109). Similarly, several Latin expressions relating to the purchase and possession of goods such as *mancipium* and *mancupatio* are derivatives of *manus*.

19.3–25 On the Sublime Privilege of Death: *Praecepta* about Metilius' Situation

In accordance with his earlier division of the *materia consolandi* (12.1), which is observed also by Plutarch (*Cons. ad Apoll.* 111E) and other ancient writers (see above, the general introduction to 12–19.2), Seneca turns from the treatment of Marcia's situation to the discussion of Metilius' fate. Yet, at the center of Seneca's concerns is still the progress and recovery of Marcia, who is likely to be one of those parents persisting in mourning "on account of the deceased" (τῶν κατοικομένων ἔνεκα), as Plutarch has it. Seneca's purpose is to reassure Marcia that her son did not suffer any pain or damage, but rather entered a privileged realm of freedom and peace. Although paragraph 19.3 is considered by Manning 1981, 9, a link section and is included by Hine 2014, 4, both in the section on Marcia's situation and in that on Metilius' condition, it is clearly the start of Seneca's new discussion of Metilius' fate. Marcia's imagined rebuttal that she is not troubled by her own losses (*detrimenta mea*) serves to foster the transition and to make clear that she has reached a more advanced stage of moral development, as Seneca notes that Marcia is not one of those people who "are upset by the death of a son in the same way as by that of a servant" (*qui filium sibi decessisse sicut mancipium moleste fert*) – namely, that Marcia is not a pathologically selfish mother. Since Marcia's grief may not result from self-love but from her love for Metilius, it is time for Seneca's therapy to go beyond the first level of Stoic οἰκείωσις – the level of self-perception and self-care, with its possible distortions – and to focus on Marcia's closest circle of relationships – on her apparently altruistic (yet potentially misleading) concern for the well-being of her son (cf. Hierocles *ap. Stob. Ecl.* 4.671.7–673–11; Long/Sedley 1987, 349; Gloyn 2017, 28–29). Even in the case of bereavement, re-directing a mother's natural inclination for parental care in a constructive direction means showing where the true good of a son lies. Therefore, in what follows Seneca is determined to demonstrate two fundamental theses: (1) death in itself is not an evil which has harmed Metilius in any way; (2) Metilius' death at a young age is not 'untimely' in any possible sense, for death saved him from several negative experiences and gave him access to a better condition. This two-sided argumentative plan is clearly presented at 19.3, when Marcia is asked by her teacher whether she is troubled by the fact that her son has died, or by the fact that he did not live long (*utrum quod filius tuus decessit an quod non diu vixit*). Pace Manning 1981, 108–109, who has argued for a rigid division of Seneca's discussion of his theses (19.4–20.6/21.1–25.3), the second theme occupies most of the writer's attention, as already in 20.1 Seneca describes the early arrival of death

as a blessing for youths and children alike and claims that death “does no one a greater favor than those to whom it comes without waiting to be asked (*antequam invocaretur*)”.

The demonstration of this counterintuitive assumption – which stands out as a typically Stoic paradox – is accompanied by the treatment of another recurring topic of ancient consolation literature (cf. *Men. Rhet.* 414.16–27; 421.14–17), the fate of the soul after death, which ends up dominating the conclusion of Seneca’s work. Seneca builds on what, following Kassel 1958, 76–77, several scholars have called “the Socratic alternative” (“die sokratische Alternative”), that is, Socrates’ argument in Plato’s *Apology* (40B–41D) that death (τὸ τεθνάναι) is not an evil (κακόν) but a good (ἀγαθόν) and a gain (κέρδος), insofar as “either death is virtually nothingness, so that the dead person has no consciousness of anything (ἢ γὰρ οἷον μηδὲν εἶναι μηδὲ αἴσθησιν μηδεμίαν μηδενὸς ἔχειν τὸν τεθνεῶτα), or it is, as people say, a change and migration of the soul from this to another place (ἢ κατὰ τὰ λεγόμενα μεταβολή τις τυγχάνει οὔσα καὶ μετοίκησις τῆ ψυχῆ τοῦ τόπου τοῦ ἐνθένδε εἰς ἄλλον τόπον)”. As Jedan 2017, 170, points out, the Socratic alternative “defines the intellectual space in which ancient consolation is played out” (cf. also Setaioli 2013, 458–462; 471–472) and is especially relevant to a Stoic writer since “the early Stoic philosophers had drawn so heavily on Plato’s and, to a lesser extent, Xenophon’s Socrates that members of the school were happy to be called Socratics” (Long 2004, 10). Indeed, Socrates’ claim in the same Platonic passage that “no harm can come to the good man in life or in death” (οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνδρὶ ἀγαθῷ κακὸν οὐδὲν οὔτε ζῶντι οὔτε τελευτήσαντι), as “his circumstances are not ignored by the gods” (οὐδὲ ἀμελεῖται ὑπὸ θεῶν τὰ τούτου πράγματα), turned out to be one of the foundation stones of the Stoic (and Senecan) doctrine on virtue and providence (Long 2001, 1–34; Inwood 2007, 153–154). The Socratic alternative which underlies the structure of the following chapters appears time and again in Seneca’s writings (e.g., *Polyb.* 9.2–3; *Prov.* 6.6; *Ep.* 24.18; 65.24; 71.16; 76.25; 93.9–10), but, quite significantly, Seneca – like Epictetus (*Diss.* 3.13.14–17, 3.24.94) and Marcus Aurelius (3.3.1; 5.33.1; 6.4, 6.24; 7.32; 8.58) – never needs to solve it, for his real purpose is to show that “the perfect ethical action is a value in itself and is in need of no sanction in another life” (Setaioli 2013, 485) – death being neither an evil nor a good (*pace* Plato’s Socrates) but a Stoic ‘indifferent’ (cf. below, note on *Marc.* 19.5, *nec bonum nec malum*). If one bears in mind that “Stoic consolation is often more about coming to terms with an ending than establishing what survives of us, or the length of its survival” (Long 2019, 154), one can easily invalidate the charge of inconsistency which has been laid against Seneca by scholars like Wilson 2013a, 100–102. Both the hypothesis of the extinction of the soul at death and the idea of its ascent to heaven are considered plausible by the author as both have the potential to reassure and motivate the addressee on her path to wisdom. Of course, by

the time of Seneca, the two sides of the Socratic alternative had come to be identified with new philosophical and literary movements, which had advanced further arguments in support of earlier theses. Seneca is perfectly aware of such arguments and thoroughly integrates them into his Stoic consolatory discourse. In the first section arguing for the annihilation of the soul at death (19.4–22.3), a central role is played by the therapeutic arguments of Epicurus and Lucretius, whereas in the second ‘eschatological’ section (23–25), and in the attendant *prosopopoeia* of Cremutius Cordus (26), a number of Platonizing elements – often patterned after Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* – are used to give shape to the Stoic belief that the souls of the dead “inhabit the sublunar atmosphere” (τὸν ὑπὸ σελήνην οἰκοῦσι τόπον, Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* 9.73 = *SVF* 2.812; cf. Lucan. 9.1–14). Since the history of Stoic psychology and eschatology is a history of debates, doubts, and disagreements – with leading figures like Cleanthes, Chrysippus, and Panaetius expressing diverging views on such notable issues as the destiny of the souls of the wise and the common people, or the reappearance of individuals after every cosmic conflagration (*SVF* 2.809–822; Hoven 1971; Setaioli 2013, 473–475; Long 2019, 152–164) – any attempt to denounce Seneca’s treatment at 23–26 as ‘unorthodox’ is methodologically unfounded. More attention should instead be paid to Seneca’s attempt to frame his two ‘Socratic’ options within the borders of his characteristic rhetoric of exemplarity. Indeed, not only is a triptych of Roman *exempla* (Pompey, Cicero, and Cato Uticensis, 20.4–6) encapsulated in the heart of the first section on the annihilating power of death – so as to build a crescendo from an unphilosophical general to a philosophically minded orator and eventually to an ideal Stoic hero – but, even more effectively, the dividing line between the first and the second of Seneca’s argumentative sections is constituted by a further commemoration of Cremutius Cordus’ suicide (22.4–8). As a figure familiar to Marcia and a paradigmatic incarnation of the values of heroic death and constructive memory, Marcia’s father stands out as a pillar and a lodestar both at the beginning and at the end of Seneca’s *consolatio*.

19.3 *Etenim*: As acknowledged by Traina 1987, 102, who, unlike Reynolds 1977, 153, closes quotation marks after *detrimenta mea*, this is the start of Seneca’s comment and explanation, not a continuation of Marcia’s rejoinder. Seneca extracts from Marcia’s personal note a general philosophical truth, namely that a loving parent should see in her child nothing else than the child’s own self (*quicquam* [. . .] *praeter ipsum*) – i.e., a relational subject, not an ancillary object. The adoption of such an ‘altruistic’ perspective is not obvious in an ancient Mediterranean context, where “those children who were reared must have been viewed in part as an investment in the future” (Dixon 1992, 109).

semper enim scisti moriturum: On the consolatory *topos* that death is the common lot of humans – like a seed planted in everyone at birth – see above, notes on *Marc.* 11.1–2.

19.4 *fabulas esse*: Seneca’s rejection of the classical myths (*fabulae*) of the underworld is in line with Stoic physics. In fact, according to the Stoics (Sext. *Emp. Adv. Math.* 9.71 = *SVF* 2.812), “it is an impossible conjecture that the souls are brought downwards (οὐδὲ τὰς ψυχὰς ἔνεστιν ὑπονοῆσαι κάτω φερομένας), since they are composed of fine particles and have a nature which is no less fiery than pneumatical, by virtue of which they tend more to elevate themselves to the upper regions (λεπτομερεῖς γὰρ οὔσαι καὶ οὐχ ἤττον πυρώδεις ἢ πνευματώδεις εἰς τοὺς ἄνω μᾶλλον τόπους κουφοφοροῦσιν)”. A belief in the existence of the infernal regions (*inferi*) as a place of punishment for the wicked (*impii*) is ascribed to Zeno and other unnamed Stoics by Lactantius, *Div. Inst.* 7.7; 20, and Tertullian, *De An.* 54 (cf. *SVF* 1.147; 2.813), but such testimonies should be understood in light of the Stoic reinterpretation of the mythical notion of Hades as a physical and ‘aerial’ abode of the soul (see below, note on *Marc.* 25.1, *supra nos commoratus*). Most importantly, the ridicule of “the monstrous inventions of poets and painters” (*poetarum et pictorum portentata*), as Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.10–11) has it, is a common feature of the rational therapies of most Hellenistic philosophers, whose books – to quote Cicero once again – “are full of arguments against such inventions” (*pleni libri sunt contra ista ipsa disserentium philosophorum*). Among the inventions mentioned (or alluded to) by both Cicero and Seneca are the kings-judges Minos and Rhadamanthus, the subterranean rivers Cocytus and Phlegethon, and the punishments of Tantalus and Sisyphus. The most mordant critics of these traditional beliefs are the Cynics (see e.g., *Diog. Laert. Vit.* 4.50 on Bion of Borysthenes) and the Epicureans. The latter follow their master (*Epic. Ep. Hdt.* 81) in arguing that “the principal disturbance in the minds of humans” (τάραχος ὁ κυριώτατος ταῖς ἀνθρωπίναις ψυχαῖς) arises because they have a false conception of the gods and “are always expecting or imagining some everlasting misery, such as is depicted in myths (ἐν τῷ αἰώνιόν τι δεινὸν ἢ προσδοκᾶν ἢ ὑποπτεῦειν κατὰ τοὺς μύθους), or even fear the loss of feeling in death as though it would concern them” (εἴτε καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν ἀναισθησίαν τὴν ἐν τῷ τεθνᾶναι φοβούμενους ὥσπερ οὔσαν κατ’ αὐτούς, cf. also *Plut. Non posse* 1092A–B = fr. 384 Usener). Indeed, Seneca’s claim that “no law courts and defendants” (*nec tribunalia et reos*) loom over the dead is strongly reminiscent of a saying attributed to Epicurus (μήτε κρίσεις εἶναι ἐν Ἄιδου μήτε δικαστήρια, *Hippol. Haer.* 1.22.5 = fr. 340 Usener), and all of Seneca’s refutation – here and in *Ep.* 24.18 – may be echoing the famous polemical section in Lucretius’ Book 3 (978–1023) – which in turn has been interpreted by Boyancé 1972, 222, as a criticism of Stoic allegorism. Certainly, in *Ep.* 24.18 Seneca presents the polemic

against the myths of the netherworld as “an old Epicurean song” (*Epicurea cantilena*) and, like Cicero, he deems it superfluous to repeat it. On the psychological and social foundations of the Epicurean discourse on the underworld, see Konstan 2008, 27–77.

flumina igne flagrantia: An allusion to the Phlegethon (or Pyriphlegethon), one of the five mythical rivers of the underworld together with the Styx, Lethe, Cocytus, and Acheron. The Pyriphlegethon is mentioned by Homer (*Od.* 10.513) and features in the eschatological geography of the Orphic-Pythagorean tradition inherited by Plato (*Phd.* 113B), according to whom “the streams of lava which spout up at various places on earth are offshoots from it” (οὗ καὶ οἱ ῥύακες ἀποσπάσματα ἀναφυσῶσιν ὅπῃ ἂν τύχωσι τῆς γῆς; see Edmonds III 2004, 207–214). Seneca’s plural *flumina* echoes the more general belief that there are “everlasting rivers of huge size under the earth, flowing with hot and cold water” (ἀενάων ποταμῶν ἀμήχανα μεγέθη ὑπὸ τὴν γῆν καὶ θερμῶν ὑδάτων καὶ ψυχρῶν); and there is “much fire, and great rivers of fire” (πολὸν δὲ πῦρ καὶ πυρὸς μεγάλους ποταμούς), and “many streams of mud, some thinner and some thicker, like the rivers of mud that flow before the lava in Sicily, and the lava itself” (πολλοὺς δὲ ὑγροῦ πηλοῦ καὶ καθαρωτέρου καὶ βορβορωδεστέρου, ὡσπερ ἐν Σικελίᾳ οἱ πρὸ τοῦ ῥύακος πηλοῦ ῥέοντες ποταμοὶ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ῥύαξ, Plat. *Phd.* 111D-E).

Oblivionem amnem: A Latin translation for Lethe (Λήθη), the river of forgetfulness that according to Orphic lore the souls had to cross to lose memories of prior lives and hence come again to earthly life. Admittedly, “the Romans paid much more attention to this river than the Greeks, who mentioned Lethe only rarely and in older times hardly ever explicitly as a river” (Bremmer 2014, 199). See e.g., Theogn. *Eleg.* 1.1216, Simon. *Epigr.* 7.25.6, Ar. *Ran.* 186, and Plat. *Resp.* 621, all referring to Lethe as a “plain” (πεδῖον) or a “house” (δόμοι). Seneca’s principal model here is Virgil, who in *Aeneid* 6 mentions the *Lethaeus amnis* (705), or *Lethaeum flumen* (714), but Seneca marks his distance from Virgilian epic (and Greek folklore) by translating the word Λήθη rather than transliterating it.

ullos iterum tyrannos: Traina 1987, 102, holds that the tyrants of the underworld mentioned here are Hades/Pluto and Persephone/Proserpina, but in light of Seneca’s earlier reference to “law courts and defendants” (*tribunalia et reos*) it is much more likely that, as acknowledged by Manning 1981, 111, they are Minos, Rhadamanthus, Aeacus, and Triptolemus – the kings-judges that Plato’s Socrates (*Apol.* 41A) cites among the “demigods” (ἡμίθεοι) of the after-life “who were righteous men (δίκαιοι) in their lives”. Minos and Rhadamanthus were kings of Crete, Aeacus of Aegina, and Triptolemus of Eleusis (see Serv. *Ad*

Verg. Georg. 1.19, on the kingly status of Triptolemus). One may doubt that Seneca has also Triptolemus in mind, for in ancient literature – and in Seneca’s own *Hercules Furens* (731–734) – the standard reference is to the triad composed of Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Aeacus (cf. e.g., Isoc. *Panath.* 205; Plat. *Gorg.* 523E; Dem. *De cor.* 127), Plato’s *Apology* being the only exception. Certainly, Seneca uses the inveterate Roman hatred of kings (and love of *libertas*) to strengthen his argument against the fear of death and infernal punishments, as the misleading tyranny of myth is artfully contrasted with the unrestricted freedom brought about by death (*in illa libertate tam laxa*).

poetae: At least since the time of Xenophanes (Mackenzie 2021, 34–45), ancient philosophers had been engaged in controversy with poets – particularly with Homer and Hesiod – and had accused them of exerting undesirable influence on the common people’s conception of the gods and the afterlife (Barfield 2011). Plato’s criticism was especially severe (Destrée/Herrmann 2011) and featured an attempt to expurgate any works which were liable to nurture the fear of death (*Resp.* 386A–388D). In the Hellenistic and Roman worlds, the Epicureans launched a fierce polemic against the harmful effects of poetry and literary education (McOsker 2020), and Seneca’s mention of “the empty terrors” (*vanis terroribus*) aroused by poets may be reminiscent of Lucretius (e.g., 1.102–135) – though Academic thinkers like Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.11) expressed strong criticism as well. By contrast, from Zeno and Chrysippus to Seneca’s contemporaries Chaeremon and Cornutus, the Stoics tended to take the myths of archaic poetry as a path to truth and made consistent efforts to interpret poetic texts allegorically (Boys-Stones 2003, Most 2010). Indeed, this is not the only passage in which Seneca distances himself from the Stoic tradition of poetic exegesis, as the more ample discussions at *Ep.* 88.5–8 and *Ben.* 1.3–4 show that “we can discern in Seneca a conviction of the philosophical uselessness of allegoresis which is quite the opposite of Cornutus’ view and which coheres well with Seneca’s lack of sympathy for the traditional forms of ancient religiosity” (Most 1989, 2048).

19.5 *dolorum omnium exsolutio*: This is the first of the two ‘Socratic’ alternatives (Pl. *Ap.* 40C–E; cf. above, the general introduction to 19.3–25). It had a clear Epicurean flavor in Seneca’s day, for Epicurus’ famous claim (*Ep. Men.* 124; cf. also *RS* 2) that “death is nothing to us” (μηδὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς εἶναι τὸν θάνατον) relied on the assumption that “all good and evil lie in sensation (πᾶν ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν ἐν αἰσθήσει), whereas death is the absence of sensation (στέρησις δὲ ἐστὶν αἰσθήσεως ὁ θάνατος)” – an assumption with which Roman readers were well acquainted thanks to the thorough demonstration of Lucretius (3.417–1094). See Warren 2004, 17–41.

antequam nasceremur: As in other passages of his philosophical and dramatic oeuvre (*Polyb.* 9.2; *Ep.* 54.4–5; 65.24; 77.11; *Tro.* 371–408), Seneca puts forth what is commonly called a ‘symmetry argument’, that is, an “argument that uses the similarity between prenatal and post-mortem non-existence to promote or challenge an attitude to death” (Long 2019, 157). This argument, too, had a strong Epicurean flavor in Seneca’s day (Warren 2004, 57–108), as both Lucretius (3.832–842; 972–977) and Cicero’s Epicurean spokesman Torquatus (*Cic. Fin.* 1.49) had deployed it. Indeed, Seneca’s remark that death restores us to a state of peace (*tranquillitas*) may have easily reminded readers of the Epicurean emphasis on ἡσυχία. Yet, symmetry arguments are attested in Attic tragedy (*Eur. Tro.* 636) and oratory (*Hyp. Epitaph.* [= 6] 43) well before Epicurus and they feature in the works of such different writers as Teles (61 Hense; O’Neil 1977, 68–69), Cicero (*Cic. Tusc.* 1.91; *Rep.* 6.23), the anonymous author of the *Axiochus* (365D-E), and Pliny the Elder (*HN* 7.188). As for the consolatory tradition *sensu strictiore*, see *Plut. Cons. ad Apoll.* 109E-F, with the notes of Kassel 1958, 79–80 on “die einleuchtende Analogie ‘nach dem Tod = vor dem Geburt’”. All things considered, there is good reason to think that symmetry arguments – whose *Nachleben* can be traced forward into the thought of Schopenhauer (1958, II, 466) and other modern thinkers – were not perceived as specifically Epicurean, “so when Seneca gives several versions of this argument, he need not have set foot inside the Epicurean ‘camp’, even as a spy” (Long 2019, 168, echoing *Sen. Ep.* 2.5).

nec bonum nec malum: Like the early Stoics (e.g., *SVF* 3.117; 127), Seneca includes death among the so-called “dispromoted indifferents” (ἀπροσηγμένα ἀδιάφορα), which are neither goods nor evils (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 7.4, *Pau-per-tatem luctum abiectio-nem*). With a careful intellectual move, this definition is used to bring under the umbrella of orthodox Stoic thought the consolatory arguments of different origin that have just been introduced. Above all, the markedly Epicurean claim that death “is itself nothing and reduces everything to nothing” (*ipsum nihil est et omnia in nihilum redigit*) is given a Stoic basis by arguing that what is ἀδιάφορον amounts to moral nothingness and provides humans with an opportunity to show their superiority over fortune (*nulli nos fortunae tradit*). What is more, we are reminded that universal nature – understood in the terms of Stoic corporealism, according to which “evil and good subsist in some material object” (*mala enim bonaque circa aliquam versantur materiam*) – embodies an order which is bound to top the apparent power of fortune (*fortuna* = τύχη), for we hear that “fortune cannot get a grip on what nature has released” (*non potest id fortuna tenere quod natura dimisit*).

19.6 *Excessit filius tuus terminos*: Here and in the subsequent chapter, Seneca complies with a conventional rhetorical strategy described by Menander Rhetor (414.8–12), according to whom the author of a consolatory speech should mention “how the change from this life is perhaps to be preferred, since it rids us of troubles, greed, and unjust fate” (ὅτι βελτίων ἐστὶ τάχα ἢ μετάστασις τοῦ τῆδε βίου, ἀπαλλάττουσα πραγμάτων, πλεονεξίας, ἀδίκου τύχης). Menander also suggests using an exclamatory tone – by resorting to phrases such as “what a dreadful thing it is to be involved in human cares, diseases, anxieties!” (τὸ πρᾶγμασιν ἀνθρωπίνους συμπλέκεσθαι, νόσοις, φροντισί) – a suggestion followed by Seneca, especially at the start of chapter 20. As usual, Seneca adds a distinctly Stoic note to the conventions of the consolatory genre, for chapter 19 ends with a list of ‘indifferents’, both promoted (προηγμένα) and dispromoted (ἀποπροηγμένα), and of the emotions (πάθη) and ‘sicknesses’ (νοσήματα) resulting from an erroneous understanding of the indifferents “as goods inherently worth pursuing or as evils inherently worth avoiding” (Graver 2007, 139). Among the ἀδιάφορα listed at 19.6 (for which cf. *SVF* 3.117–123, 127–139), we find poverty (*paupertas* = πενία), wealth (*divitiae* = πλοῦτος), pleasure (*voluptas* = ἡδονή), prosperity (*felicitas* = εὐτυχία, as distinct from true εὐδαιμονία), and public and personal calamities (*clades publica* and *privata*, a summarizing formula tying together different kinds of dispromoted indifferents, from poor health to social shame and political upheavals). Emotions and ‘sicknesses’ are grouped around what, following Stobaeus’ “causal history of emotion events at the level of genus” (Graver 2007, 42; cf. *Stob. Ecl.* 2.7.10b), can be called the four roots of psychic evils: desire (ἐπιθυμία), fear (φόβος), distress (λύπη), and delight (ἡδονή). In Seneca’s Stoicism, as in most Hellenistic systems, these perceptions are said to give rise to a series of “choices” (αἱρέσεις) and “avoidances” (φυγαί), which may or may not be correct. In fact, in his conclusion Seneca maintains that death has placed Metilius above the arena of choices and avoidances, as Marcia’s son “has finally come to a halt where nothing can banish him (*unde nil eum pellat*), nothing can terrify him (*ubi nihil terreat*)”. Even before that, we are reminded of the several emotions and ‘sicknesses’ arising from a misunderstanding of the above-cited indifferents: fear of poverty (*paupertatis metus*), love of riches (*divitiarum cura* = φιλοπλουτία/φιλαργυρία), fondness for pleasure (*libidinis per voluptatem animos carpentis stimuli*, a somewhat wordy circumlocution for φιληδονία and its genetic process), envy (*invidia* = φθόνος), both in an ‘active’ (*alienae*) and a ‘passive’ (*suae*) sense, and rivalry (ζῆλος/ζηλοτυπία), to which Seneca alludes by envisaging the “insults” (*conviciū*) that would have assailed Metilius’ “sensitive ears” (*verecundae aures*). Seneca insists with particular eloquence on the Stoic idea (*Stob. Ecl.* 2.7.10b) that most human troubles derive from the formation of the belief that a good or an evil is in prospect (τὸ δοξάζειν

ἀγαθὸν/κακὸν ἐπιφέρεισθαι), that is, from the formation of desire (ἐπιθυμία) and fear (φόβος). Thus, in the end, the classical *topos* of the privileged condition of the dead is grounded on the cognitive-cum-emotional fact that in his present state Metilius anticipates (*prospicitur*) no calamities and is not anxious about the future (*non sollicitus futuri pendet*).

magna et aeterna pax: Metilius' peace can be "immense and everlasting" in both the scenarios proposed by the Socratic alternative – the definitive annihilation of consciousness and the migration of the soul to another place – but in the latter case we should assume that Seneca implies a kind of 'relative eternity', for the Stoics argued that no soul – not even the souls of the wise and the gods – can outlast the conflagration at the end of each cosmic cycle (*SVF* 2.809–811). Cf. also below, note on *Marc.* 24.5, *aeternus*.

ex eventu semper tin certiora dependenti: Whereas the deletion of *et* before *ex eventu* is beyond any doubt (as *ex eventu* depends directly on *pendet*), the reconstruction of the rest of the phrase is notably difficult. The reading of **A** is *in certiora dependenti*, whereas the manuscripts of **γ** read *in incertiora dependenti*. Since even in **A** (which remains our most valuable authority) the preposition *in* and the adjective *certiora* are written very close to one another, one can safely assume that Seneca's original text included the adjective *incertiora*, which fits well with the general meaning of the passage. When it comes to restoring the original participle behind *dependenti*, one may choose either a transitive verb preceded by *incertiora* or an intransitive form requiring *in incertiora*. The former of these alternatives is followed by Lipsius (*repndenti*), Gertz and Hine (*reponenti*), Waltz (*spondente*), and Favez (*despondente*), while the latter option is preferred by Fickert, Haase, and Viansino, all of whom maintain the reading of **γ** *in incertiora dependenti*. However, as Traina 1990, 51, observes, the verb *dependo* is attested with *in* only in Ovid (*Met.* 12.395–396), and in Ovid, too, there is a clear indication of provenance connected with the prefix *de* (*aurea/ ex umeris medios coma dependebat in armos*). On the basis of a comparison with *Ben.* 7.2.4 (*in incerta propensus est*), Traina writes *in incertiora propndenti*, but although the two Senecan passages are conceptually related, a major difference resides in the fact that in our case the verb's subject is an abstract noun (*eventus*), not a thinking and morally purposive being. Since other emendations such as Alexander's *et ex eventu semper incertiora dependent*, or Shackleton Bailey's *ex eventu semper incerto, ra<ro a>d spem <respon>dent*, appear even less likely, one may wonder whether the choice of a transitive construction – such as Gertz's and Hine's *incertiora reponenti* – remains more plausible – the reading *in incertiora* in **γ** being just an example of dittography.

20.1 *O ignaros malorum suorum*: Seneca’s praise of the liberating power of death conforms to the hymnodic pattern of Stoic philosophy (most famously represented by Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus*) and fits well in the tradition of “eulogies of death” (ἔπαινοι θανάτου) excerpted by Stobaeus (*Ecl.* 4.52b.20–55). Moreover, Seneca’s praise finds room for both the conventions of the consolatory genre (*Men. Rhet.* 414.8–12) and the Stoic idea that death is an ‘indifferent’ which should be preferred under several circumstances. The most famous (or infamous) application of this Stoic idea is the doctrine of “sensible removal” or “well-reasoned exit” (εὐλογος ἐξαγωγή), according to which, if a wise person recognizes that the external conditions do not allow her to live virtuously (i.e., in accordance with nature), death becomes a necessary means to the end of virtue (*SVF* 3.757–768). As Epictetus (*Diss.* 4.1.165) puts it, in situations like that experienced by Socrates, a person “is saved by dying, and not by running away” (ἀποθνήσκων σώζεται, οὐ φεύγων), so that “paradoxically it is the Stoic theory of self-preservation that forms the basis for their later infamous defense of suicide” (Sellars 2006, 109). The invitation to meditate on death as an always accessible way to freedom (*libertas*) is strikingly frequent in Seneca’s writings (see e.g., *Ira* 3.15; *Ep.* 24.11; 26.10; 91.21, and the entire *Ep.* 70), which can indeed create the impression that “Seneca’s wise man is in love with death” (Rist 1969, 249). Certainly, Seneca makes consistent efforts to convince his addressees that “dying well is dying willingly” (Edwards 2007, 98; cf. *Ep.* 61.2; 82.17–18), and that the Roman ideals of *virtus* and *libertas* can have a new lease of life in the Stoic theory (and practice) of rational death. This is also the background of the present passage, in which death is presented as “nature’s finest discovery” (*optimum inventum naturae*) in the terms of Stoic teleology (cf. e.g., Plin. *HN* 7.190), and the popular concept of “untimely death” (*mors immatura* = ἄωρος θάνατος, cf. above, note on *Marc.* 4.2, *acerbo funere*) is deconstructed by means of a magiloquent rhetorical strategy. The five conditional clauses introduced by *sive* project two sets of oppositions: a simple antithesis between *felicitas* and *calamitas* – recalling the equivalence of εὐτυχία and δυστυχία *qua* ‘indifferents’ – and a twofold contrast between “the old man’s jadedness and weariness” (*satietatem ac lassitudinem senis*), on the one hand, and “young life” (*iuvenile aevum*) and “childhood” (*pueritiam*), on the other – which restates the principle that death can be an appropriate solution at any age. A descending climax follows, for the pronominal adjectives *omnibus*, *multis*, *quibusdam*, and *nullis* are arranged ‘numerically’ to constitute a regressive scale.

20.2 *Haec*: Throughout the second paragraph of the present chapter, the pronoun *haec* is anaphorically repeated ten times – a number which, according to the Greek tradition of numerology attested in Philo (*Opif.* 47), forms “the border

for the infinitude of numbers” (ὄρος τῆς ἀπειρίας τῶν ἀριθμῶν) and thus symbolizes “perfection” (παντέλεια). Within the boundaries of such an insistent anaphora, Seneca assembles another list of apparent evils (viz. ‘indifferents’), which death is able to dissolve: slavery (*servitatem*), imprisonment (with the mention of *catenae* and *carcer* in two different clauses), exile (*exulibus*), poverty (*ubi res communes fortuna male divisit*), submission to external authority (*alieno arbitrio*), and social lowness (*humilitatem*). The last three of the clauses introduced by *haec* illustrate the general theoretical point that death “is available to all” (*nulli non patuit*) and makes the adversities inherent in birth and life acceptable insofar as it allows one to fulfil the Stoic duty of “keeping one’s mind sound and in control of itself” (*servare animum salvum ac potentem sui*). As Seneca puts it in his legal language, there is always a chance to appeal to the ultimate tribunal of death (*habeo quod appellem*). Clearly, Seneca assumes that Marcia has made sufficient progress to hear such harsh truths, which concern not only Metilius but herself as a living moral being. However, to make Stoic truths a bit more palatable, the author conjures up once again the familiar figure of Cremutius Cordus (*pater tuus*) in a direct appeal to the addressee (*Marcia*) which paves the way for the final *peroratio*.

invito domino: An allusion to the Roman practice of *manumissio*, the freeing of a slave, which, as reported by Gaius (*Inst.* 1.17), could be accomplished in three ways (*vindicta aut censu aut testamento*), all requiring the master’s consent (Mouritsen 2011, 120–205). Seneca implicitly suggests that, when it comes to bestowing freedom on a human being, death can defy (and is more efficient than) human institutions. The same theme resurfaces shortly thereafter in 20.3, when Seneca claims that “it is no problem being a slave (*servire*) if, when you grow tired of being someone else’s property (*si dominii pertaesum est*), you can cross over to freedom (*ad libertatem*) with a single step”. As is well-known, the former slave Epictetus cherishes this theme as a key to understanding the Stoic conception of happiness (Stephens 2007).

infra quos quis iaceat: Although **A** reads *infra quod*, Reynolds 1977 writes *infra quos*, a reading attested in one of the manuscripts of the γ family (**R** = Vat. Lat. 2215). Indeed, *infra quos* is a *lectio difficilior* which bears the mark of Seneca’s “vivid pictorial method of expression” (Manning 1981, 113) and creates a contrastive wordplay with the following *quis*. Seneca’s claim that dying in exile is no evil because it does not matter ‘beneath whom’ (i.e., beneath whose soil) one is buried belongs to the “cluster of Cynic (or Cynico-Stoic) arguments” (Nesselrath 2007, 91–92) that form the backbone of the ancient tradition of consolatory writings *On Exile* (Περὶ φυγῆς). The argument echoed here is first attested in Teles’ *On Exile* (29–30 Hense; cf. O’Neil 1977, 28–31), and its origins are likely to lie in

the Cynic rejection of well-established social norms such as those related to burial rituals and civic belonging. We find the same line of argument in the Stoic writers Musonius (*Diss.* 9 = *Stob. Ecl.* 3.40.9) and Epictetus (*Diss.* 2.6.18). The latter claims that one should not care about “the way of going down to Hades” (ποία ὁδὸν καταβῆς εἰς Ἅιδου), for “all ways are equal” (ἴσαι πᾶσαι εἰσιν), a saying which is attributed to Aristippus by Teles (20.13–30.1 Hense = Aristippus, fr. 85 Mannebach) and to Anaxagoras by Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.104). There is no need to quibble about matters of attribution as the belief that “the ways to unspeakable Acheron are equal, from whatever place they are measured” is defined as “a popular adage” (αἶνος ἀνδρῶν) in an epigram by the Academic philosopher Arcesilaus (*ap. Diog. Laert. Vit.* 4.321), a pupil of Crantor of Soli. Proverbs and common sayings are often used by Hellenistic and Roman writers interested in anchoring their (sometimes countercultural) views to earlier wisdom, and the unimportance of one’s place of burial is one of those recurring themes that prove suitable for different contexts: at the time of the early Cynics (when the polis system dissolves along with its notion of territorial identity) and in the Roman cosmopolis of Plutarch (*De exil.* 604D-F) and Favorinus (*De exil.* fr. 9 Barigazzi) – who employ the same argument as Teles and Seneca. The fact that Seneca aligns with such a long-lived tradition without making any substantial change seems to confirm that he wrote the *ad M.* before his exile in Corsica in 41 AD, for Seneca’s personal experience will inevitably induce him to approach the consolatory literature περὶ φυγῆς from a less conventional perspective. For further evidence, see above, note on *Marc.* 16.2, *loquimur*.

***aequo iure genitos*:** According to the Stoics, all humans are born with equal rights insofar as they are rational beings participating in the universal cosmopolis, which is the common house of gods and humans (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 18.2, *urbem dis hominibus commune*). On account of this physical theory, the Stoics, unlike Aristotle, hold that slavery has no basis in nature (*SVF* 3.352, with the defense of Griffin 1976, 459–460, *pace* Garnsey 1996, 137–138, and others). Seneca’s recognition of the human dignity of slaves in such famous texts as *Ep.* 47 and *Ben.* 3.18–28 is in full accord with earlier Stoic sources, particularly with Cicero’s claim (*Off.* 1.41) that slavery is a result of fortune (*fortuna*) – a claim connected by Cicero himself with Chrysippus’ definition of slaves as “long-term hirelings” (*mercennarii*; cf. *Sen. Ben.* 3.22.1: *perpetuus mercennarius*). Likewise, in the present passage Seneca argues that one’s social and economic position depends on fortune, which can share out the “common possessions” of humanity (*res communes*) unfairly. However, neither Seneca nor his Stoic models use the idea that earthly goods are the common possession of everyone capable of reasoning to deny the legitimacy of private property or to challenge the legal institution of slavery. In

fact, on the one hand, what truly interests the Stoics is the moral servitude of the wicked (as opposed to chattel slavery: Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.121 = *SVF* 3.555), and on the other hand the Stoics are careful in combining the belief that every person is the rightful owner of herself with the notion that “human nature inclines individual human beings to acquire private property and to interact with one another as property owners” (Long 1997, 15). Cicero’s stout defense of private property in his work *On Duties* offers abundant evidence on this matter (Annas 1989). Even more telling is the Stoic concept of “appropriation due to choice” (οἰκείωσις αἰρετική), a part of the natural instinct of ‘appropriation’ (οἰκείωσις) by virtue of which “we choose goods for ourselves”, as the anonymous author of a commentary on Plato’s *Theaetetus* (*Anon. comm. in Plato. Tht.* col. 7.26–8.1 = *PBerol* 9782; Bastianini/Sedley 1995, 278–281) puts it in a passage that helps us clarify Hierocles’ *Elements of Ethics* (col. 9.7–8; Bastianini/Long 1992, 354–355; Ramelli 2009, 59–62).

exaequat omnia: On the *topos* that death is the great leveler of human existence, see above, note on *Marc.* 11.2, *unus exaequabit cinis*.

20.3 Video: Another insistent anaphora aiming to capture the addressee’s attention – this time not through a deictic pronoun, but through the stimulation of the sense of sight. Quite ingeniously, *video* is repeated five times, which is exactly half the times *haec* is repeated. In the framework of this second anaphoric series, Seneca provides a detailed description of instruments and methods of torture which reveals a distinctive taste for the gruesome and the macabre most famously attested in Seneca’s own tragedies and in Lucan’s *Pharsalia* (McClellan 2019, 67–169). Seneca’s and Lucan’s ‘baroque’ sensibility *avant la lettre* “may perhaps be partly a Spanish characteristic, but it probably also owes something to the declaimers” (Keulen 2001, 511). In addition, it should be noted that early Roman literature – especially Roman theater – delighted in scenes of torture and mutilation (see, e.g., Plaut. *Asin.* 481–486; *Mil.* 502–511; Ter. *Ad.* 311–319; Rosenmeyer 1989, 120–123). Even more importantly, as noted by Courtil 2014, 205, the fact that there are more than two hundred and fifty allusions to torture in Seneca’s philosophical works should be seen as a consequence of the author’s system of thought, which conducts a consistent analysis of the problem of political violence and, while condemning the excesses of tyrannical power, justifies torture as a rational means for correcting the wrongdoer.

stipitem: A wooden stock used for impalement: cf. Sen. *Ep.* 14.5.

fidiculas: The *fidicula* was a small lute, but here and in *Ira* 3.3.6; 3.19.1, Seneca uses this word as a metonymical designation for the rack (*eculeus* or *equuleus*) on which criminals – especially slaves (Cic. *Mil.* 57) – were drawn

and quartered. Manning 1981, 114, claims that the “the instruments of torture here described are most likely to be applied to slaves rather than a person of Marcia’s social status” – which is certainly true for torments such as crucifixion, which were typically imposed on unfaithful slaves (e.g., Val. Max. 2.7.12; Tac. *Hist.* 2.72; 4.11; Cass. Dio 54.3.7; Lavan 2013, 124–125). Yet, according to Suetonius (*Tib.* 62; *Calig.* 33), both Tiberius and Caligula resorted to the *fidicula* to satisfy their sadistic impulses, and both threatened or planned to use torture against their closest relatives and acquaintances. For other Senecan references to penalties and torture, see *Ira* 1.16.5; 3.19.1 (on Caligula); *Ep.* 24.14; 85.27.

†*membris singulis articulis*† *singula* †*docuerunt*† *machinamenta*: As Hine 2014, 41 n. 72, points out, “the Latin of this clause is incurably corrupt”, for neither the reading of **A** (reported here) nor that of **γ** (which simply adds the conjunction *et* between *singulis* and *articulis*) is tenable – *pace* Viansino 1963, who prints the reading of **A** as it stands. In all likelihood, the passage was already corrupt in the archetype. However, there is good reason to agree with Castiglioni 1921, 204, that *membris* is an interpolated gloss on *articulis* – an unfamiliar word to late antique and medieval readers – and should thus be omitted. Moreover, despite the efforts of scholars like Niemeyer 1899, 437 (followed by Traina 1987, 106), who proposed to replace *docuerunt* with *admoverunt* on the basis of a comparison with *Ben.* 4.21.6 (*si singulis membris admoveatur*; cf. also Hor. *Carm.* 3.21.13; Curt. 6.11.31), an abrupt transition from the anaphoric *video* to a third person plural remains extremely unlikely. Abel’s proposals (*applicuerunt* and *aptaverunt*) are not more helpful than Niemeyer’s, but they rightly draw attention to a passage in Seneca’s *Epistles* (24.14: *singulis articulis singula machinamenta quibus extorqueantur aptata*) which may provide a crucial point of comparison. In fact, if one recognizes that *docuerunt* is to be deleted (as already suggested by Muretus) and cannot be replaced by any other third person plural, it is tempting to interpret *singula machinamenta* as a further object of *video* and correct *docuerunt* into a participle such as *aptata*. The resulting phrase (*singulis articulis singula aptata machinamenta*) fits Seneca’s *usus scribendi*, with its taste for alliteration, grapho-phonetic correspondences, and polyptoton, but is nothing more than a conjectural emendation.

beneficio mortis: Seneca’s view of death as a “favor” (*beneficium*) is both a rhetorical cliché and a further reflection of Stoic teleology – recalling the definition of *optimum inventum naturae* given at 20.1. Distinctly Stoic (and Senecan) is also the choice of summarizing the content of the first three paragraphs of this chapter into a single paradoxical expression. As often in Seneca, the rhetorical device of antithesis becomes one with the Stoic strategy of paradoxical argumentation, which in this case makes clear that there is no contrast between the

natural instinct for life and self-care – as understood in the theory of οἰκείωσις – and the rational acceptance of death. On the use of the adjective *carus* in Seneca’s description of the οἰκείωσις process, see *Ep.* 121.14 (*sibi carus est homo*).

20.4 *opportuna mors*: A translation for εὐκαιρὸς θάνατος, which Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.109) renders as *mors tempestiva*. Seneca couples the theme of the liberating power of death with the strictly related consolatory *topos* that the death of a young person, which is commonly regarded as “untimely” (ἄωρος), can instead be seen as “timely” or “seasonable” (εὐκαιρὸς), if one considers that the deceased has avoided future evils. According to Kassel 1958, 82–83, the earliest occurrence of this *topos* is in Sophocles (fr. 761 Nauck), but its re-use by later authors such as Seneca (cf. also below, 22.2) and Plutarch (*Cons. ad Apoll.* 110E) betrays the influence of the Stoic belief in providence (“des stoischen Vorsehungsglaubens”). As in Seneca’s first mention of Cremutius (1.2) and in other Senecan *loci* (e.g., *Ira* 3.15.4), here death “represents true freedom” (Degl’Innocenti Pierini 2014, 176). One should also note that Seneca’s triptych of *exempla* in the final part of the present chapter is evidently indebted to Cicero, who in his *Tusculan Disputations* had already deployed the *exempla* of Cato (1.74), Pompey (1.86), and himself (1.109). Cicero discusses Pompey’s fate also in his work *On Divination* (2.22), where readers are reminded that Cicero’s *Consolation to Himself* included a gallery of “very grievous deaths that befell some of Rome’s most illustrious men” (*clarissimorum hominum nostrae civitatis gravissimos exitus*). Other Roman *exempla* mentioned in Cicero’s *Consolation* are listed in *Tusc.* 3.70. Moreover, in an attempt to increase his appeal to Marcia, Seneca may be echoing Cremutius Cordus’ *Annales*, for not only does Cremutius play a central role in the concluding section of Seneca’s *consolatio*, but we also know that his *Annales* focused on the civil wars (cf. below, note on *Marc.* 26.1, *civilia bella*) and devoted special attention to Cicero’s vicissitudes (cf. *Sen. Suas.* 6.19; 6.23; Cornell 2013, I, 499–500). As for Pompey, Cremutius seems to have referred to Livy’s positive characterization of Caesar’s enemy in his defense speech at the *maiestas* trial (*Tac. Ann.* 4.34), and it is possible that Cremutius’ history of the civil wars also covered the period of the First Triumvirate, since according to Cassius Dio (57.24.3) Cremutius dealt with Caesar’s deeds without blaming them.

***decus istud firmamentumque imperii*:** The depiction of Pompey as “the mainstay of the empire” is part of a tradition attested also in Valerius Maximus (5.1.10), according to whom before his death Pompey “was accounted the pillar of the Roman empire” (*Romani imperii columen habitum*). Seneca’s eulogy of Pompey in the *ad M.* does not compare with the praises sung by his nephew Lucan, but it is all the same remarkable insofar as it was written under the

Principate. A eulogistic tradition highlighting the contrast between Pompey's glory and the deplorable circumstances of his death seems to have developed quite early, for whereas Caesar's account of his enemy's assassination by the henchmen of Ptolemy XIII is relatively meagre (*BCiv.* 3.104), already in 45–44 BC Cicero (*Div.* 2.22) complains that he cannot speak without tears (*sine lacrimis non possumus dicere*) of the unworthy treatment suffered by a man of such great distinction. This eulogistic tradition survived the establishment of the Principate, since Livy famously "lavished such eulogies on Pompey that Augustus styled him "the Pompeian"" (*Pompeianum*, Tac. *Ann.* 4.34; cf. Liv. *Per.* 112), and writing under Tiberius, both Velleius Paterculus (2.53) and Valerius Maximus (5.1.10) did not hesitate to extol the virtues of Caesar's rival – the former describing Pompey as "an upright and illustrious man" (*sanctissimi atque praestantissimi viri*) who had attained to the highest pinnacle of fame, the latter introducing the defeated triumvir as "a model of humanity" (*humanitatis specimen*) and "a miserable example of humanity not shown" (*miserabile desideratae [scil. humanitatis] exemplum*). However, Valerius is prudent enough to crown his treatment of Pompey's death with the praise of Julius Caesar – of "the tender mind of the divine leader" (*mansuetus animus divini principis*), who put on the countenance of a father-in-law, buried Pompey with every honor, and even cried for him. It is true that at 14.3 Seneca has already praised Caesar's virtue in the context of an anecdote which exposes Pompey's feelings of envy and selfishness. And it is equally true that Caesar's pious respect for Pompey's body is duly mentioned by Seneca (see below, note on *sacrosantum victoribus corpus*). But one cannot ignore that the conclusion of the present chapter groups together three of the most iconic martyrs of the Republic (20.4–6) – with Caesar's Stoic opponent Cato the Younger at the top of the climax. One might view this fact as internal evidence that Seneca wrote his *consolatio* when the atmosphere of tolerance and reconciliation with memory outlined by Suetonius (*Calig.* 16) had not completely vanished – hence not much later than 39 AD, which is the *terminus post quem* tentatively set by Griffin 1976, 397. Still, it should be recognized that throughout the imperial age, within the framework of such traditionally 'laudatory' genres as biography, the figure of Pompey continues to receive very positive valuation without any special political purpose (see e.g., Plut. *Pomp.* 77–80), especially because the contrast between Pompey's glorious victories and his miserable fall had become a classical example of *mutatio fortunae* (see, besides the above-cited account by Valerius Maximus, Cass. Dio 42.3–5, and App. *BCiv.* 2.12.84–86).

Neapoli: During his stay in Naples in 50 BC – "two years before the outbreak of hostilities" (*ante biennium quam ad arma itum est*, Vell. Pat. 2.48.2; cf. also App. *BCiv.* 2.4.28), that is, two years before the battle of Pharsalus – Pompey fell

seriously ill. Velleius, Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.86), and Juvenal (*Sat.* 10.283–286) report that all Italy (especially the Campanian cities) prayed for Pompey and celebrated his recovery, but the same authors agree with Seneca that it would have been better for Pompey to die in Naples at the top of his success. The reports by Cicero and Velleius are especially important as they show that in Seneca's day Pompey had already entered the repertory of *exempla* supporting the idea that an earlier death can be desirable and 'timely' (εὐκαιρός).

fastigio: Seneca's phrasing can be compared with Velleius' claim (2.53.3) that Pompey had "attained to a pinnacle of fame beyond which it is impossible to rise" (*in id evecti super quod ascendendi non potest*). One can perceive an echo of the popular belief – which goes back to archaic Greece and is often restated by Seneca (e.g., *Brev. vit.* 4.1; *Ben.* 6.30.6; *QNat.* 3.praef. 9) – that "being at the pinnacle of success leads to a fall" (Griffin 2013, 305). To the ears of Roman readers, this belief was so typically Senecan that the anonymous author of the *Octavia* (377–380) put it in the mouth of Seneca as a *persona dramatis*.

ex illo proelio: A periphrastic allusion to the battle of Pharsalus (9th August 48 BC). Seneca's assertion that the senate formed "the front line" (*prima acies*) of Pompey's army is a somewhat emphatic reference to the fact that several senators, including Cicero, fought on Pompey's side. According to Appian (*BCiv.* 2.11.82), ten senators were killed. Moreover, in his description of the heated atmosphere before the battle Lucan (*Phars.* 7.84–85) has Cicero ask Pompey whether the senators (*senatus*) should follow him as combatants (*miles*) or mere companions (*comes*).

Aegyptium carnificem: A collective designation for Pompey's assassins, the men of the young and easily manipulated Ptolemy XIII (Cleopatra's brother), whose help was sought by Pompey in the hope that the favors he had once conferred on Ptolemy XII would be reciprocated by the former king's son and successor. According to Plutarch (*Pomp.* 77–80), upon the advice of the eunuch Pothinus, the general Achilles, and the teacher of rhetoric Theodotus of Chios, Ptolemy XIII sent Achilles to the shore of Pelusium along with other men who treacherously enticed Pompey to disembark, stabbed him to death, and cut off his head (cf. Lucan, *Phars.* 8.472–711). Like Cicero (*Div.* 2.22) and Velleius (2.53), Seneca places much emphasis on the ethnicity of Pompey's murderers and obscures the fact – which is confirmed by Caesar (*BCiv.* 3.104), among others – that Achilles was assisted by Lucius Septimius, a Gabinian soldier who had served as tribune under Pompey during the war against the pirates (67–66 BC). Seneca's omission may reflect a feeling of national shame (cf. Lucan, *Phars.* 8.595–610; 676–678), combined with the stereotypic denigration of the Egyptians, or the common perception

that the Gabinians were ‘naturalized’ Egyptians (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 14.2, *duo simul filii interfecti sunt*). Certainly, there is no reason to endorse Stewart’s 1953, 83 n. 82, speculative suggestion that “the hostile or contemptuous use of the adjective *Aegyptius* (14.2; 20.4) may be a flattering allusion to Caligula’s difficulties with the Alexandrians in the last year of his reign”. Overall, Seneca is aware that he can adjust the story of Pompey’s death to his own purposes, for, as Bell 1994 has shown, whereas Caesar’s death quickly took a ‘canonical’ form, with precise details, the account of Pompey’s assassination never assumed a fixed form as far as details are concerned. Admittedly, “with an ungrateful boy-king, a conniving eunuch, and a disloyal soldier as villains, the story could be given almost any emphasis a writer desired” (Bell 1994, 835).

sacrosantum victoribus corpus: An allusion to the well-known story that when Pompey’s head was presented to Caesar “as a gift of Egyptian perfidy, lamentable to the very eyes of the victor” (*Aegyptiae perfidiae munus* [. . .] *etiam ipsi victori miserabile*, Val. Max. 5.1.10), Caesar turned away with loathing and burst into tears (Plut. *Pomp.* 80.5). We are also told that Caesar – whose sincerity is questioned by Lucan (*Phars.* 9.1006–1108) – punished Pothinus and Achilles with death, ordered that Pompey’s head be buried, and “set apart for it a small plot of ground near the city which was dedicated to Nemesis” (App. *BCiv.* 2.13.90). It is possible that two sets of Pompey’s ashes existed, for Plutarch (*Pomp.* 80.6) maintains that Pompey’s wife Cornelia – who was allowed to return to Rome soon after her husband’s murder (Cass. Dio 42.5.7) – gave burial to Pompey’s remains (τὰ λείψανα) at her Alban villa. See Augoustakis 2011, 192–194.

satelliti: This is Erasmus’ emendation of the MS reading *satiētati*. The underlying mentioned here by Seneca may be the degenerate Roman Lucius Septimius, whom Lucan (*Phars.* 8.597) presents as a *satelles* of Ptolemy XIII. Moreover, since Septimius had served as tribune under Pompey, the latter can be said to have surrendered his body to his own *satelles*. Yet, this identification is far from certain, for Lucan himself uses the word *satelles* for the Egyptian general Achilles, who claimed the right to carry Pompey’s head in his hand (*vindicat hoc Pharius, dextra gestare, satelles*, *Phars.* 8.675).

beneficio regis: A purposely ambiguous expression. First and foremost, Seneca refers to Ptolemy XIII, who – according to the logic of the Roman economy of *beneficia* painstakingly explored in Seneca’s *On Benefits* – was expected to repay Pompey’s favors to his father, Ptolemy XII Auletes. Since the young Ptolemy was a foreign *cliens* of Pompey – the Roman *clientela* being hereditary

(Dion. Hal. 2.10.4) – Seneca suggests that it was unsuitable (and, in a sense, culturally paradoxical) for Pompey to become a *cliens* of his own client-king. In *Tranq. an.* 16.1, too, before citing Cato Uticensis as his crowning example of the ingratitude of fortune, Seneca observes that “Pompey and Cicero offered their throats to former clients” (*Pompeius et Cicero clientibus suis praeberere cervicem*). However, by remarking that it was shameful for Pompey to depend on the generosity of a king, Seneca also implies that the champion of senatorial *libertas* could not live under Caesar, who adopted a policy of *clementia* towards his defeated opponents (Konstan 2005) but never managed to “get rid of the reputation of aspiring to kingship” (*infamiam affectati regii nominis discutere*, Suet. *Iul.* 79.2). Such a double *entendre* in Seneca’s text may lend further strength to the assumption that the *ad M.* was written in the comparatively tolerant climate of Caligula’s reign (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 20.4, *decus istud firmamentumque imperii*).

20.5 *Catilinae sicas*: Cicero was elected consul for 63 BC with C. Antonius. According to Sallust (*Cat.* 26), the impoverished but well-born Catiline, who had been defeated at the consular elections, planned to murder Cicero as early as March 63. Catiline’s project failed both in March and in November, when he entrusted the *equites* C. Cornelius and L. Vargunteius with the task of killing Cicero at home during the morning *salutatio* (Sall. *Cat.* 28; Cic. *Cat.* 1.9). Here Seneca expands on Cicero’s own regret that he failed to die when “no other gain could be made, all the duties of life had been fulfilled, and nothing remained but to contend with fortune” (*nihil enim iam adquirebatur, cumulata erant officia vitae, cum fortuna bella restabant*, *Tusc.* 1.109; cf. also *ibid.* 1.84). When Cicero wrote these words in 45 BC, he was certainly thinking of his success in foiling Catiline’s conspiracy – of the time when “he had the greatest power in the state” (μέγιστον μὲν ἴσχυσεν ἐν τῇ πόλει τότε, Plut. *Cic.* 24). Seneca grasps Cicero’s allusion in the consolatory context of the *Tusculan Disputations* and makes it perfectly explicit in his own consolatory discourse.

***pariter cum patria petitus est*:** With this alliterating expression (which, in turn, echoes the alliterating and etymologizing title of *pater patriae*), Seneca revives Cicero’s claim that Catiline and his associates meditated not only Cicero’s death but “the death of all of us, the destruction of this city, and of the whole world” (*qui de nostro omnium interitu, qui de huius urbis atque adeo de orbis terrarum exitio cogitent*, *Cat.* 1.9).

***servator eius*:** The reading of **A** *servat eius* is corrected by Fickert into *servitor eius*, and this correction is accepted by Viasino 1963 and Reynolds 1977, among others. By describing Cicero as “the savior (*servator*) of the state”, Seneca makes a clear reference to the title of “father of the fatherland” (*pater* or

parens patriae), which according to several sources (Plut. *Cic.* 23.6; App. *BCiv.* 2.1.7; Plin. *HN* 7.117) Cicero was the first Roman to receive. Plutarch and Appian report that the title was bestowed on Cicero upon initiative of Cato the Younger, but in *Pis.* 6, and *Sest.* 121, Cicero claims that it was Q. Lutatius Catulus who called him “father of the fatherland” in the senate. Cf. also Cic. *Phil.* 2.12.

filiae suae funus: Cicero’s beloved daughter Tullia died in her thirties in mid-February 45 BC, one month after giving birth to her second son by P. Cornelius Dolabella, who was Tullia’s third husband (see Treggiari 2007, 135–138). Tullia’s death devastated Cicero, who in a letter to Atticus (12.14.3) complained that “all consolation is defeated by grief” (*omnem consolationem vincit dolor*). However, it was on this occasion that Cicero wrote his ‘experimental’ *Consolation to Himself* (Baltussen 2013b) as well as some of his richest philosophical works, since, crushed by sorrow, Cicero preferred to abandon all public business, retired to his country house near Antium, and immersed himself in study. See also *Att.* 12.15, 20, 23; *Fam.* 4.6; *Nat. D.* 1.9.

stricta in civilia capita mucrones: This is the first of a series of pathetic references to the violence of the civil wars – a theme which surfaces at several points in Seneca’s oeuvre (e.g., *Ep.* 14.13; *Ben.* 2.20), possibly under the influence of Seneca’s own father, whose *Histories* ran “from the start of the civil wars” (*ab initio bellorum civilium*, Sen. *Vit. Patr.* 1 = fr. 99 Haase; see now Scapaticcio 2020). Critics might object that internecine violence among Roman citizens had started at a much earlier date than Tullia’s death (45 BC), and this is the reason why, according to Manning 1981, 118, “it is perhaps best to regard the mention of Tullia as a parenthesis and the description of the evils of the times applying to the whole period from the outbreak of civil war until Cicero’s own death in 43”. Yet, as Favez 1928, 76, had already noticed, Seneca is principally concerned with the phase of the late Republican conflict which had the most dramatic impact on Cicero’s life and eventually led him to death, that is, the proscriptions of 43 BC following the reconciliation of Octavian and Antony. Of course, with his first hypothetical clause (*si illo tempore quo* [. . .]), Seneca suggests that Cicero would have had a perfectly ‘timely’ death if he had passed away after foiling Catiline’s conspiracy (63 BC), but immediately thereafter, by using the adverbs *denique* and *etiannunc*, Seneca concedes that even if Cicero had died soon after his daughter, he could still have died happy – the implicit assumption being that Cicero would have at least avoided the bloody assault of Antony’s hitmen, one of whom, Herennius, “cut off his head, at Antony’s command, and his hands” (τὴν δὲ κεφαλὴν ἀπέκοψαν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰς χεῖρας, Ἀντωνίου κελεύσαντος, Plut. *Cic.* 48.6).

divisa percussoribus occisorum bona: Here and in what follows, Seneca refers to the auctions of the goods of proscribed Roman citizens. The proscribed were citizens whose names were placed on the so-called lists of proscription (*tabulae proscriptiois*). They could be put to death without trial, and their property was confiscated and sold. As reported by Cicero (*Rosc. Amer.* 126; *Verr.* 2.3.81; *Off.* 2.27–29), the first Roman politician to publish a proscription list was Sulla, who after his victory over Marius (82–81 BC) “did not confine himself to proscribing political enemies but proscribed many Romans purely to please his followers or to confiscate their property” (Eckert 2014, 263; cf. also *Plut. Sull.* 31). In *Off.* 2.27–29, Cicero complains that Sulla’s example was followed by Caesar, who “did not stop at confiscating the property of individual citizens, but actually embraced whole provinces and countries in one common ban of ruin” (*non singulorum civium bona publicaret, sed universas provincias regionesque uno calamitatis iure comprehenderet*). Cf. also *Cic. Fam.* 13.8.1–3; *Phil.* 2.103–104. Writing his eighth Philippic in February 43 BC, Cicero adds that Caesar’s auctions gave Antony’s followers “hope and audacity” (*spem et audaciam*), for “those men who are hanging over our property, and to whom Antonius promises everything, are always longing to see an auction” (*semper hastam videre cupiunt ei qui nostris bonis imminet, quibus omnia pollicetur Antonius, Phil.* 8.9). Cicero was not being paranoid, for a few months later, in December 43, he was proscribed by Antony and brutally killed. The long and sad history of the late Republican *tabulae proscriptiois*, from Sulla to Antony, confirms that in the present passage Seneca is mainly thinking of Cicero’s disgrace in 43 BC – which an earlier death would have avoided – since even if Cicero had died at the time of Catiline’s conspiracy, he would not have evaded the bloody sight of Sulla’s murders in 81 BC.

hastam consularia spolia vendentem: Roman soldiers used to auction off the booty taken in war after driving a spear (*hasta*) into the ground around which the loot was gathered. Cicero often mentions the deplorable application of the same system to the sale of the goods of the proscribed (e.g., *Off.* 2.27; *Phil.* 2.103; 8.9) and blames Sulla because “when he sold the property of Roman citizens, he did not hesitate to say that he was auctioning his war booty” (*dicere in contione non dubitaret, bona civium Romanorum cum venderet, se praedam suam vendere, Verr.* 2.3.81). Some of the goods sold by Sulla, Caesar, and Antony could be legitimately called *consularia spolia*, as Seneca does here, since they had been confiscated from citizens of consular rank.

caedes locatas publice: During the civil wars, slaughters were put out to public tender insofar as anyone could kill the proscribed with impunity. As Appian (*BCiv.* 1.11.95) points out, Sulla was the first “to offer prizes to assassins and rewards to informers and to threaten with punishment those who concealed the

proscribed” (προγράψαι καὶ γέρα τοῖς ἀναιροῦσι καὶ μήνυτρα τοῖς ἐλέγχουσι καὶ κολάσεις τοῖς κρύπτουσιν ἐπιγράψαι).

tantum Catilinarum: By concluding his fourfold series of asyndetic objects with the hyperbolic image of “many Catilines” – which, like other rhetorical devices used in this passage, echoes the style of declamations – Seneca gives his paragraph on Cicero a ring structure and offers a unified reading of the late Republican civil wars.

20.6 M. Catonem: As Sellars 2006, 39, notes, “when pushed for an example of a Stoic sage, Seneca’s response was always to point to Cato” – who, according to what we read in *Const. sap.* 7.1, might even be thought to surpass the Stoic ideal (*exemplar*) of the wise man (Isnardi Parente 2000). Here Seneca recalls an episode that had already become part of the ‘hagiographical’ tradition surrounding Cato: the annexation of the island of Cyprus, which formed part of the kingdom of the Ptolemies, in 58 BC (see Drogula 2019, 157–189, and Hussein 2021, 23–29). When Ptolemy XI Alexander II died in 80 BC, there were rumors that, like other Hellenistic kings, he had bequeathed his kingdom to Rome. However, Cicero’s speech *On the Agrarian Law* (2.41–44) attests that in 63 BC the existence of Ptolemy Alexander’s will was considered dubious, and in fact the king’s son Ptolemy Auletes (who paid a massive bribe to the triumvirs) was allowed to ascend the throne of Egypt. Ptolemy Auletes’ brother tried to establish his rule over Cyprus but was apparently “unable to raise sufficient money to satiate the appetite of the Romans” (Siani-Davies 2001, 17). Therefore, in 58 BC, upon the initiative of the tribune P. Clodius, Cato the Younger was appointed *quaestor cum iure praetorio* (Vell. 2.45.4) and was entrusted with the tasks of taking possession of Cyprus, appropriating the royal estate, and arranging the restoration of exiles to Byzantium. Although Cato, like Cicero (*Sest.* 62–63), seems to have regarded the confiscation of Cyprus as an act of injustice – as a “stain” (*macula*) on the history of the Republic – he “not only acted in a consciously upright fashion himself, but also used the Cyprus mission to set an example for others of how a province should be administered” (Morrell 2017, 116). Inspired by both Stoic principles and traditional Roman ethics, Cato sought to persuade Ptolemy to yield his kingdom without fighting and offered him a rich priesthood on Paphos. Despite this offer, Ptolemy preferred to poison himself to death, and Cato concentrated on fulfilling his duties in the most virtuous way possible: he raised nearly seven thousand talents of silver from the royal estate and triumphantly brought his treasure to Rome in 56 BC (Plut. *Cat. Min.* 35–39). Cato’s exemplary behavior – which contrasted with the widespread corruption of late Republican officials – is mentioned by his contemporaries Cicero (*Dom.* 23) and Sallust (*Hist. fr.* 1.6 McGushin

= *Adnot. super Luc.* 3.164) and is eulogized by several writers both before and after Seneca (cf. Vell. Pat. 2.45.4–5; Val. Max. 4.3.2; Cass. Dio 39.22.4). Seneca's point in the *ad M.* is that it would have been better for Cato to die at a time when his uncontaminated virtue aroused general admiration than to join other leaders with less impeccable credentials (such as Pompey), experience the disaster of Thapsus, and commit suicide in Utica (46 BC).

hereditatis regiae dispensatione: Seneca endorses the official Roman narrative that the annexation of Cyprus resulted from the execution of Ptolemy Alexander's testament – which required Cato to hold the office of *dispensator* (= διοικητής, cf. Cic. *Rab. Post.* 28), that is, treasurer and financial official.

civili bello stipendium: A subtly polemical allusion to Caesar's later appropriation of Cato's Cypriot booty. With his customary dramatic flair, Lucan (*Phars.* 3.154–164) describes Caesar sacking the treasury in the temple of Saturn to fund his war against Pompey in 49 BC. The treasury in the temple allegedly included the riches saved up by the Romans' frugal ancestors (*quidquid parcorum mores servastis avorum*, 3.161) from the time of the Punic Wars to the end of the Republic, and Lucan concludes his historical catalogue precisely with the spoils that “Cato brought by sea from distant Cyprus” (*quod Cato longinqua vexit super aequora Cypro*, 3.164).

libertati non suae tantum sed publicae: Following Wirszubski 1968, 127–128, Gowing 2005, 79, argues that Seneca tends to perpetuate “a memory of an essentially depoliticized Cato”, for even if Seneca repeatedly comes back to Cato's fortitude, he “never suggests that we should take up the cause of Catonian *libertas*, that is, the Republic”. The present passage stands out as an exception to Gowing's rule, since Seneca's readers are explicitly told that Cato's natural vocation was not only a matter of individual moral autonomy, in Stoic terms, but also of *publica libertas*. If seen along with the description of Pompey's refusal of kingly mercy in the same paragraph, Seneca's remark may appear as further evidence that the *ad M.* was written in an atmosphere of political détente.

Caesarem fugere, Pompeium sequi: A cautious note against Republican idealism and nostalgia. By presenting Pompey as a less than ideal leader, Seneca endows his triptych of *exempla* with a ring structure (just as he did with his central treatment of Cicero's fate) and mitigates the praise that Pompey has just received. Implicitly, Seneca suggests that Pompey was not a better guaranty of political freedom than Caesar and, above all, that he was unworthy of Cato's endorsement – a point explicitly made at *Ep.* 14.13. Cf. also Lucan. 2.319–323; 9.19–30.

illi: After devoting chapter 20 to a general treatment of the benefits inherent in death, Seneca turns back to Metilius' specific case and hence to Marcia's grief at her son's untimely death (*mors immatura* = ἄωρος θάνατος, cf. above, note on *Marc.* 4.2, *acerbo funere*).

21.1 quantum est?: With a studied oratorical move which is reminiscent of Socrates' method of maieutic inquiry, Seneca answers Marcia's repeated complaint that Metilius "died too soon and too young" (*cito perit et immaturus*) by raising a provocative question and thus leaving Marcia free to define what a long life is. The discussion that follows relativizes the very ideas of time and space – of spatio-temporal existence – from the perspective of Stoic cosmology and providential fatalism, offering a set of physical-cum-moral insights that will be further developed in Seneca's dialogue *On the Shortness of Life*.

venienti in pactum: Unlike Viansino 1963, Reynolds 1977 wisely avoids putting a comma before *venienti*. In fact, the strategic (*qua* deliberately ambiguous) position of the dative *venienti* between *cessuri* and *in pactum* allows Seneca to present two different ideas: on the one hand, readers are told that they are bound to depart from their temporary dwelling on earth (*cito cessuri loco*) to make way for others coming after them (*venienti*); on the other hand, we humans are said to be born to contemplate (*prospicimus*) this precarious abode (*hospitium*) known as world, which is literally "forced upon" (*in pactum*) each new arrival (*venienti*). The verb *inpingere* is often used to designate acts of violence and punishment, as in the case of the imposition of chains (Plaut. *Capt.* 734), the throwing of stones (Phaedr. 3.5.1–7), and the infliction of blows with a stick (Cic. *Fam.* 8.8.9), but Seneca employs it in a metaphorical sense, with reference to the "noose" (*laqueus*) set by fortune, also in *Tranq. an.* 10.1. The semantic richness of Seneca's phrasing is not captured by Manning 1981, 121 (who refers *venienti* only to *in pactum*), but is fully exploited in Hine's 2014 translation.

hospitium: Seneca often reminds his readers that this world is just a temporary abode. In particular, the metaphor of "lodging" (*hospitium*) appears also in *Ep.* 120.14. For other related usages, see e.g., *Ep.* 70.16 (*ex hoc domicilio*); *Tranq. an.* 11.7 (*contubernium*). Cf. Setaioli 2013, 470–471.

quas incredibili celeritate +convolvit+: The reading of **A** is *convolvit*, which clearly lacks a subject. Petschenig and Castiglioni add *aevum* as a subject (with Petschenig also correcting *convolvit* into *volvit*), but other conjectural supplements (such as *tempus*) would be equally plausible. Another possible alternative is to accept the reading of **γ** (*convolvi constat*), as Traina 1987 does, or to modify this reading by replacing *constat* with another governing verb such as *vides*

(Viansino 1963) or *scimus* (Reynolds 1977 in *apparatu*, pointing for comparison to Sen. *Ep.* 93.9, and *QNat.* 1.3.10). However, since no certainty can be attained on the basis of the MS tradition and the comparison with other Senecan *loci*, it seems wiser to follow Reynolds 1977 and put *convolvit* between *cruces*.

***urbium saecula*:** A variation on the common consolatory theme of the decline of cities and monuments – what Kassel 1958, 101, calls “das Motiv vom ‘Tod’ einst blühender Städte” (cf. Men. *Rhet.* 414.6–8). Here Seneca uses this traditional motif from the point of view of the present and invites Marcia to consider that even the cities which boast of their antiquity have not been standing for long. Later in the *ad M.* (26.6), as well as in *Polyb.* 1.1, and *Ep.* 71.15, Seneca projects the same argument into the future and argues that even the most illustrious cities will eventually be destroyed – a fact which should persuade humans to accept their own mortal destiny. By contrast, in *QNat.* 6.1.13; 32.8, Seneca uses the most popular version of the argument, which evokes the past destruction of old and glorious cities, a version which appears in Sulpicius Rufus (*ap. Cic. Fam.* 4.5.4), Favorinus (fr. 109 Barigazzi = Stob. 4.41.62), and Marcus Aurelius (4.48.1), among others.

21.2 *puncti loco*: This is one of several Senecan passages in which, to borrow the words of Ker 2009, 270, “an aesthetics of the *punctum* matches the already minuscule temporal and spatial dimensions of human life”. In *Rep.* 6.20, and *Tusc.* 1.40, Cicero had already exploited the mathematical and astronomical notion of point (*punctum* = κέντρον) to argue in a Platonic fashion that, when seen from the perspective of the vast universe, earthly goods and achievements are just a tiny point, unworthy of the efforts of humans. Following Festugière 1949–54, II, 442–444, Traina 1975, 240–241, traces the origins of this *topos* – which has an impressive afterlife in ancient and medieval literature, from Boethius through Dante, and beyond – to Plato’s claim in *Phd.* 109B that, although the earth is “very large” (πάμμεγα), “we who dwell between the pillars of Hercules and the river Phasis live in a small part of it about the sea, like ants or frogs about a pond” (ἡμᾶς οἰκεῖν τοὺς μέχρι Ἡρακλείων στηλῶν ἀπὸ Φάσιδος ἐν σμικρῷ τιμωρίῳ, ὥσπερ περὶ τέλμα μύρμηκας ἢ βατράχους περὶ τὴν θάλατταν οἰκοῦντας). Plato’s claim was perhaps indebted to Pythagorean thought (cf. Cic. *Lael.* 88, on Archytas of Tarentum = fr. A7a Huffman), but it should be admitted that we do not know exactly how and when the Platonic idea of the narrowness of the inhabited world was combined with the themes of the “astronautic contemplation” (Contini 1970, 370) and of the ascent of the soul to heaven. The names of Aristotle, Posidonius, and Eratosthenes have been mentioned, but, as Traina himself acknowledges, there is not sufficient evidence to provide a conclusive answer.

Certainly, Seneca's principal model in this final section of the *ad M.* is Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, and Seneca may not be the first Stoic to appropriate the above-mentioned Platonic *topos*, which appears twice in Marcus Aurelius (6.36.1; 12.24.1). However, one cannot agree with Traina 1987, 108–109, that, by using the *punctum* metaphor, Seneca creates a perfectly balanced “spatiotemporal equation” (“un'equazione spazio-temporale: la terra sta all'universo come la vita umana sta all'eternità”), for only when Seneca uses the image of the point in a *spatial* sense (i.e., with reference to the earth), as at the start of the present paragraph and in *QNat.* 1. *praef.*8–11, does he establish a perfect equivalence between the *comparatum* and its *comparandum*. By contrast, when Seneca employs the *punctum* metaphor in a *temporal* sense (i.e., with reference to the duration of human life), as in the second part of our paragraph (*minorem portionem aetas nostra quam puncti habet*) and in *Ep.* 49.3 (*adhuc puncto minus*), readers are told that time is even smaller than a point – a suggestion that, as noted by Vogt-Spira 2017, 197, “pointedly gets rid of the physical and arithmetical definition of time” and contrasts with the “view that considers periods of time within physics” (cf. e.g., Arist. *Phys.* 227B).

***totiens remetiatur*:** A reference to the Stoic doctrine of the cyclical conflagration (ἐκπύρωσις) and subsequent regeneration (παλιγγενεσία) of the cosmos (Salles 2009b, Collette 2022, 74–81), which will be presented in more detail in the final *prosopopoeia* of Cremutius Cordus (see below, notes on *Marc.* 26.6–7). Among other things, Seneca's remark that the duration of eternity exceeds that of the universe explains why, compared to cosmic time, human life is *smaller* than a point (*minorem portionem quam puncti*), whereas the cosmic space occupied by the earth does correspond to a point (*puncti loco*): since for Chrysippus and other Stoics time is “the interval proper to the movement of the cosmos, and it is in Time that everything moves and exists” (Sambursky 1976, 160), the inferiority of the human condition is far more evident from the perspective of temporality, with its endless cosmic cycles.

***quod vivimus*:** Seneca is the first Latin writer to use the verb *vivo* with the neuter pronoun *quod* – typically with the purpose of emphasizing the limits of human existence. Cf. *Ep.* 49.3; 99.11 and 31; *Phoen.* 47–48.

***si satis est*:** The claim that human life is long only when it is long enough to live well is one of the central axioms of Seneca's later work *On the Shortness of Life* (see. e.g., *Brev. vit.* 1.3–2.2). As a consistent application of the method of physical analysis to existential ethics, the same claim is repeatedly made in the *Epistles* and in the *Natural Questions*: see esp. *Ep.* 93.2 (*non ut diu vivamus curandum est, sed ut satis*); 101.14–15; *QNat.* 6.32.9–11. The general idea that length of

life does not add to happiness was shared by both the Stoics (Cic. *Fin.* 3.46, 76) and the Epicureans (Cic. *Fin.* 1.63; 2.87–88).

21.3 in memoriam traditae senectutis viros: The Romans fondly cherished the memory of long-lived men whose length of years had passed into history, and Cicero's writing *On Old Age* (*De senectute*) is in fact dominated by the authoritative figure of the eighty-four-year-old Cato the Elder (cf. Cic. *Sen.* 32). In the framework of his philosophical critique of traditional social models, Seneca suggests relativizing the significance of such patriarchal archetypes of longevity (*viros*) by adopting the overwhelming (and morally liberating) perspective of cosmic time.

Quanto non vixerit: In order to relativize the meaning of human old age, Seneca employs once again what is commonly known as a symmetry argument (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 19.5, *antequam nasceremur*). Here, too, Roman readers may have felt an echo of Epicurus' and Lucretius' teachings (cf. esp. Lucr. 3.1087–1094; Manning 1981, 122), but, as mentioned earlier, symmetry arguments were not regarded as specifically Epicurean.

21.4 quantum debuit: For Seneca, Marcia has reached a sufficiently advanced stage of cognitive development to accept in its fullest form the Stoic doctrine that every event, including the death of one's children, is a necessary consequence of the providential will of God (viz. Nature). Already at the start of his *consolatio*, Seneca had set himself the task of getting Marcia to acquit her fate (*fortunam tuam absolveres*, 1.1), and the whole work is replete with didactic references to the Stoic ideas of εἰμαρμένη and πρόνοια (see.e.g., notes on 6.2 and 18). Yet, in this concluding section of chapter 21, we find an especially thorough (and at times harsh) exposition of the Stoic theory that “everything comes to be by fate” (καθ' εἰμαρμένην τὰ πάντα γίνεσθαι, Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.149 = *SVF* 2.915), for Seneca goes so far as to tell Marcia that her losing Metilius was deliberately planned by nature (*te illum ex consilio perdidisse*). Metilius lived “as long as he had to” since, as we learn from *QNat.* 3.29.3, “the entire rational development of a future human being is incorporated within its seed, and, while still unborn, the baby contains the law governing the beard and grey hair” (*in semine omnis futuri hominis ratio comprehensa est et legem barbae canorumque nondum natus infans habet*). For a Stoic, the life of every human being, like that of any other creature, follows the course established by the immanent God since the very beginning, and the true sage, like Cicero's Cato the Elder (*Sen.* 5), has no other aspiration than to obey divine nature (*naturam optumam ducem tamquam deum sequimur eique paremus*), persuaded as he is that “there had to

be something final, and – as in the case of orchard fruits and crops of grain in the process of ripening which comes with time – something shriveled, as it were, and prone to fall” (*necesse fuit esse aliquid extremum et tamquam in arborum bacis terraeque fructibus maturitate tempestiva quasi vietum et caducum*). The claim that death, just like the alternation of seasons and the motion of the stars, is the effect of an immutable providential decree, and thus is always timely, underlies Seneca’s *Epistles* 93 and 101, both of which bear many resemblances to the present chapter.

animalibus: Seneca’s relativization of the concepts of the length and shortness of life combines an invitation to fix our gaze on eternity with a comparison between the human and the animal – a ‘double-sided’ strategy of argumentation which is firmly entrenched in the consolatory tradition: see Cic. *Tusc.* 1.94, and Plut. *Cons. ad Apoll.* 111C-D. Both Cicero and Plutarch support their arguments with a zoological *exemplum* which goes back to Aristotle (*Hist. An.* 552B17–23) and later appears in Pliny (*HN* 11.120) and Aelian (*NA* 5.43): the case of a species of mayfly living by the river Hypanis (the modern Bug) on the Black Sea. According to Aristotle, this four-legged flying insect (ζῷον περωτὸν τετράπουον) is called ἐφήμερον (which Pliny changes into *hemerobion* and Aelian into μονήμερον) precisely because it lives only for a day. The lesson that ancient consolers draw from Aristotelian zoology is that among certain animals a life lasting one day can be accounted long and happy. Moreover, Plutarch observes that if the Black Sea insects had “a human soul and power to reason” (ψυχὴ τις ἀνθρωπίνη καὶ λογισμὸς), and “the same conditions obtained among them” (ταῦτὰ δῆπου γ’ ἂν συνέπιπτεν), those dying before midday would “cause lamentation and tears” (θρήνους παρέχειν καὶ δάκρυα) – a comparative note which might be regarded as evidence that at a certain point in the ancient tradition the Aristotelian material entered the Stoic school, for it was the Stoics who attached unprecedented importance to the gap between rational and irrational animals and regularly restated this gap in their zoological arguments (Dierauer 1977, 199–252). With a meaningful *variatio*, Seneca chooses not to align himself with the conventional tendency to use the mayfly *exemplum* and cites the case of those animals that old age exhausts “within fourteen years” (*intra quattuordecim annos*). Seneca’s allusion remains deliberately vague (*quaedam*), but he may be thinking of such common animals as dogs, since, for instance, Aristotle (*Hist. An.* 574b29–34) maintains that most female dogs (αἱ μὲν πλεῖσται) live “about fourteen or fifteen years” (περὶ ἔτη τετταρακαίδεκα ἢ πεντεκαίδεκα). It may also be interesting to recall that according to the Stoics human beings attain the age of reason at the age of fourteen (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.55–56) or seven (Aet. *Plac.* 4.11.1–4 = *SVF* 2.83). However, what is truly relevant for Seneca as a

Stoic is to show that “each creature is given a different potential for living” (*dispar cuique vivendi facultas data est*) – the only ‘active’ giver of norms being divine nature.

21.5 *Fixus est cuique terminus*: According to Manning 1981, 123, Seneca’s phraseology entails either a “conscious allusion” to, or a “subconscious reminiscence” of, Lucretius’ praise of Epicurus, who is said to have revealed “by what law each thing has its scope restricted and its deeply implanted boundary stone” (*finita potestas denique cuique/ qua nam sit ratione atque alte terminus haerens*, *Lucr.* 1.76–77; cf. also 1.595–596; 5.89–90; 6.65–66). A Lucretian echo is likely in Seneca’s text, but it should be noted that not only does Seneca restrict the scope of his discourse to human subjects (*cuique*), but, even more importantly, he re-interprets the traditional Roman notion of *terminus* from the perspective of Stoic natural theology, which stands in stark contrast with Lucretius’ Epicurean reading of the same notion. Whereas for Lucretius the limits of physical phenomena are rooted in the internal, non-teleological order of atomic nature, with its fortuitous processes of creation, destruction, and re-creation, Seneca is unequivocal in stating that the boundary stone of human life has been fixed in place by a providential fate. As he explains to Lucilius in *Ep.* 101.7, “there is indeed a limit fixed for us (*stat quidem terminus nobis*), just where the remorseless law of fate has fixed it (*ubi illum inexorabilis fatorum necessitas fixit*), but none of us knows how near he is to this limit (*sed nemo scit nostrum quam prope versetur a termino*)”.

***diligentia aut gratia*:** Here as well as below at *Marc.* 21.6 – where Seneca claims that “prayer and effort are futile” (*frustra vota ac studia sunt*) – we are reminded of the Stoic belief that since fate’s decrees are inexorable, no human act or word can change their course. In his works, Seneca often presents this concept as a logical consequence of Stoic theology and its underlying determinism (Mazzoli 1984, 962–963, 980–981). As for the term *diligentia*, see *QNat.* 2.59.4, where Seneca teaches that one should not be afraid of death and its manifold causes, for “no carefulness can avoid this, no good fortune can exempt us from it, no power can overcome it” (*hoc nulla diligentia evitat, nulla felicitas donat, nulla potentia evincit*). In the present passage, *gratia* is used in the active sense of “favor” or “influence” (Moussy 1966, 371) to argue that, unlike human rulers, the fate ruling the cosmos cannot be persuaded by external influences to make irrational or individual concessions. This is the reason why any prayer which tries to change divine will is useless (*QNat.* 2.35–36; *Ep.* 77.12; *Oed.* 980–994), if not immoral (*Ben.* 6.25–40; *Ep.* 10.5; 95.2). For Seneca, Marcia is now ready to learn that the only reasonable prayer is a statement of adhesion

to the fatal order of things – famously exemplified by Cleanthes’ *Hymn to Zeus* (*ap. Sen. Ep.* 107.10–11; *Epict. Ench.* 53 = *SVF* 1.527). This also means that the only object of prayer should be virtue (*Ep.* 115.4; *Vit. Beat.* 26.7), understood as an essentially inner state of self-sufficiency (*Ep.* 20.8; 10.4).

ex consilio: According to the Stoics, the cosmic god, coinciding with fate, is endowed with will, and the truest form of worship consists in making one’s will “respectful” and “upright” (*colitur* [. . .] *pia et recta voluntate*, *Ep.* 115.5), which means accepting even such painful decrees as the death of one’s child. See also above, note on *Marc.* 21.4, *quantum debuit*.

metasque dati pervenit ad aevi: A quotation from Vergil (*Aen.* 10.472), whose works, as a “mastertext for the representation of the human soul and its passions” (Staley 2013, 98), are “the most popular source of quotations in Seneca’s prose works” (Papaioannou 2020, 107; cf. Mazzoli 1970, 215–232). This is an extract from the speech in which Jupiter explains to Hercules that Turnus’ death, like the deaths of other heroes, is inevitable insofar as “a day has been fixed for everyone, and the time of life is brief and irrecoverable” (*stat sua cuique dies, breve et irreparabile tempus/ omnibus est vitae*, *Aen.* 10.467–468). Seneca’s Virgilian intertextuality seems especially pertinent as Virgil’s own text bears a Stoic imprint – Virgil usually being “Stoic with respect to his conception of fate and free will” (Colish 1990, 251; see Galinsky 1994, and Putnam 1995, 201–245, for some caveats) – and Turnus is a classical paradigm of untimely death at a young age (ἄωρος θάνατος), easily comparable with Metilius (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 4.2, *acerbo funere*). Seneca omits the first four feet of Virgil’s hexameter (*fata vocant*) with the clear purpose of making his quotation consistent with the syntax of his sentence. However, this is also an effective way to highlight the relevance that the idea of fate had in Virgil’s poetry – a kind of *evocatio per absentiam*.

21.6 casus: By making clear that chance (*casus* = τύχη) never intervenes in a person’s years, Seneca distances himself from a popular conception of human existence, towards which he had been more well-disposed in the first part of his didactic program (cf. e.g., above, notes on *Marc.* 9.3–4 and 15.4), and expresses in clear terms the Stoic faith in the sovereign power of fate (εἰμαρμένη) – which admittedly leaves little room for pure chance, since the Stoics argue that “anything that appears to happen by chance or luck is simply determined by a cause that has escaped our attention” (Sellars 2006, 100, building on *Aët.* 1.29.7). This is a further sign that Seneca now regards Marcia as a more advanced *proficiens*.

eunt via sua fata: Cf. *QNat.* 2.35.2 (*fata aliter ius suum peragunt . . . cursum irrevocabilem ingressa ex destinato fluunt*), and above, note on *Marc.* 21.5, *Fixus est cuique terminus*. The MS reading (*eunt ut sua fata*) is clearly corrupt. Haase’s emendation *via*, which is accepted by Reynolds 1977, finds support in other Senecan *loci* (such as the passage in the *Natural Questions* just mentioned) and should be preferred to Pincianus’ *vi* (printed by Viansino 1963).

vota ac studia: See above, note on *Marc.* 21.5, *diligentia aut gratia*.

dies primus: Cf. *Sen. Oed.* 987–988 (*omnia certo tramite vadunt/ primusque dies dedit extremum*), and above, note on *Marc.* 21.4, *quantum debuit*.

lucem vidit: On the common ancient belief that, from the time of birth onwards, life is a journey to death, see above, notes on *Marc.* 10.5, *crimen*, and 11.2, *properant*.

adulescentiae anni: Here, too, as in *Marc.* 21.3–4, one may perceive an echo of Cicero’s writing *On Old Age* (*Sen.* 4), where Cato the Elder rejects the popular claim that “old age steals upon youth more rapidly than youth upon childhood” (*citius adulescentiae senectus quam pueritiae adulescentia obrepit*). The same claim is refuted by Seneca in *Ep.* 26.4, where Lucilius is told that “we are not suddenly smitten and laid low (*non enim subito impulsus ac prostrati sumus*); we are worn away (*carpimur*), and every day reduces our powers to a certain extent (*singuli dies aliquid subtrahunt viribus*)”. Among other things, this is the reason why the daily meditation on death (*meditatio mortis*/μελέτη θανάτου) – which, from Plato to the Stoics, is identified as the defining act of the philosopher (Ker 2009, 162–164) – should be practiced by young and old alike (*Ep.* 12.6): everyone, irrespective of his or her age, should realize that “one day is a stage on life’s journey” (*unus autem dies gradus vitae est*) and that our span of life “consists of larger circles enclosing smaller” (*orbis habet circumductos maiores minoribus*). Cf. also *Ep.* 24.20; 120.18.

21.7 errore: The suppression of the awareness of death is, in Stoic terms, a cognitive mistake. It is an especially common example of the prevalence of “opinion” (δόξα) over “correct reasoning” (ὀρθὸς λόγος), but, as Seneca sharply notes, its roots lie in a primarily physiological process, for it is the fates (*fata*) that, by instilling in us the natural instinct to live, “make sure we are not conscious of our execution” (*nobis sensum nostrae necis auferunt*). However, for Seneca, the fates are just “doing their job” (*agunt opus suum*) since every living being has a duty to participate actively in the providential order of life. It is the responsibility of humans *qua* rational beings not to turn their attraction to life and social relationships – as emerging in the process of οἰκείωσις – into the

erroneous presumption that human life on earth is eternal – a presumption which would paradoxically contradict the fundamental meaning of οἰκείωσις as a source of selfhood and self-perception (*constitutionis suae sensus* = συναίσθησις/συνείδησις; cf. *Ep.* 121.5; Inwood 1985, 190–193).

necis: Manning 1981, 124, observes that this is “a comparatively rare usage” of *nex* with the meaning of “natural death” and cites for comparison Just. *Epit.* 42.1.1 (*post necem Mithridatis*); Suet. *Iul.* 5 (*post necem consulis*); Verg. *G.* 3.480 (*genus omne neci pecudum dedit*); Ov. *Trist.* 1.2.40 (*nescit adesse necem*). It should be added that, as usual, Seneca’s lexical choice is rhetorically and semantically motivated. Seneca increases the dramatic tension within his sentence by creating an elegant alliteration (*nobis sensum nostrae necis*) and, even more, by describing the gradual approach of death as a violent – albeit slow and almost imperceptible – act. Admittedly, *nex* is never a mere synonym of *mors*, and all the occurrences of *nex* cited by Manning imply a certain element of violence.

22.1 illi hac morte consultum est: Seneca resumes the widespread consolatory *topos* of “timely death” (εὐκαιρος θάνατος = *mors opportuna/mors tempestiva*), which he has already built on at 20.4 (see above, note on *Marc.* 20.4, *opportuna mors*). In the present chapter, the popular claim that “death relieves not a few persons from great and grievous ills which, if they had lived on, they would surely have experienced” (τὸν θάνατον οὐκ ὀλίγους ἀπαλλάττειν μεγάλων καὶ χαλεπῶν κακῶν, ὧν, εἰ ἐπεβίωσαν, πάντως ἂν ἐπειράθησαν, Plut. *Cons. ad Apoll.* 114B; cf. also 110E), is used to show that Metilius, like the three Roman heroes of 20.4–6 and his own grandfather Cremutius Cordus (22.4–8), was liable to decay, sorrow, and death. Seneca’s use of the verb *consultere* is especially indicative of his Stoic faith in divine providence (cf. e.g., *Prov.* 4.5: *deus consulit*; *Polyb.* 9.9) – a faith which contributes significantly to the success of the above-mentioned *topos* among post-Hellenistic writers of consolations (Kassel 1958, 82–83). For instance, when commemorating the deaths of such illustrious orators as Crassus (*De or.* 3.12) and Hortensius (*Brut.* 4), Cicero – who, despite his Academic leanings, willingly submits to the fascination of Stoic teleology (Inwood 2016) – readapts the same consolatory theme for the purposes of rhetorical education.

hodie: In an attempt to breathe new life into the consolatory motif of *opportunitas mortis*, Seneca makes several references to the negative tendencies of contemporary Roman society, which are said to make an early death even more desirable. Among the dangers posed by the “degenerate city” (*luxuriosae urbis*, *Marc.* 22.2) of Rome Seneca lists gluttony, medicine, and political disgrace (22.2–3), all of which figure prominently in the Senecan corpus. However, this

strategy of persuasion, too, finds a precedent in Cicero, who, when consoling Titius on the death of his sons (*Fam.* 5.16.3), maintains that contemplating the state of decadence and disorder in late Republican Rome (*status ipse nostrae civitatis et haec peturbatio temporum perditorum*) is a more effective consolation than the usual arguments of the consolatory tradition, for nobody would be happy to raise his children in such a difficult context. A similar argument is employed by Sulpicius Rufus in his consolatory letter to Cicero (*Fam.* 4.5.3, *hiscē temporibus*). In a sense, just as Virgil's *Bucolics* render the pastoral genre porous to the pressure of history, Cicero's and Seneca's works let Roman social issues enter the crystallized universe of the παραμυθητικός λόγος.

nihil nisi quod praeterit: As in Areus' speech to Livia and in several other places of his oeuvre, Seneca takes on the Epicurean argument that only past pleasures are exempt from the ups and downs of fortune and should thus become the object of a mental exercise of recollection (see above, note on *Marc.* 5.4, *Nunc incubuisti tota in alteram partem*). As mentioned earlier, this is not styleless amalgamation or thoughtless eclecticism. On the contrary, "Seneca's therapy of more violent emotions shows how a Stoic might integrate the views of other philosophical schools into Stoic theory without abandoning the basic framework of Stoicism" (Kaufman 2014b, 131).

22.2 *pulcherrimum corpus et summa pudoris custodia*: As elsewhere in his *consolatio*, Seneca aligns himself with the Roman tradition of the "praise of the deceased" (*laus mortui* or *laudatio funebris*), which typically seeks to immortalize both the physical and the moral qualities of the dead (cf. e.g., *Rhet. Her.* 3.10: *laus* [. . .] *rerum externarum, corporis, animi*). A much more extensive *laudatio* will be offered in the next paragraph as a suitable pendant to Metilius' apotheosis (*Marc.* 23.3–24.4).

ad senectutem: The view that old age is an inevitable descent towards physical (*formae decus*) and mental (*ingenia*) decay is a widespread cultural stereotype, with deep roots in mythical knowledge and archaic poetry. From the myth of Tithonus as recalled in the Homeric Hymns (*Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 218–238) and in Mimnermus (frs. 3–5 West) to Cicero's passionate *recusatio* of the common claim that old age is "a burden heavier than Mount Etna" (*onus Aetna gravius*, Cic. *Sen.* 4), there are plenty of literary works that Marcia can reinterpret in light of Seneca's therapeutic argument (Falkner/de Luce 1989, Cokayne 2003). Of course, on Seneca's 'revisionist' Stoic reading, the point is not that old age is to be feared, and youth is to be regretted, but that the physiological process of senescence should be meditated upon to dispel the negative emotions of grief and regret. With a clever rhetorical maneuver, Seneca transforms

another side of the traditional discourse *de communi hominum condicione* (= περί φύσεως ἀνθρωπίνης, Men. Rhet. 414.2–6) into a tool of moral persuasion.

interversa: A rare metaphorical use of the verb *interverto* with the meaning of “changing for the worse”, “pervert”, which recalls the Stoic concept of διαστροφή (SVF 3.228–236; Grilli 1963).

sera eoque foedior luxuria: Seneca hints at another well-known cultural and literary stereotype, the *senex amator* of Roman comedy, who is often represented as an immoral lecher, for “his behavior can range from laughably innocuous to offensively sleazy” (Franko 2001, 176; cf. also Ryder 1984; Bianco 2003, 55–87). In Seneca’s day, this comic stereotype – which is a carnivalesque inversion of the ‘official’ representation of the old man as a venerable pillar of society – had been tragically embodied in the historical figure of Tiberius, whose character (*mores*) is said by Tacitus (*Ann.* 6.51) to have gone through “different periods” (*tempora diversa*), from the honorable beginnings of his service under Augustus to the shameless lust of his late years in Capri. Tiberius’ decline mirrors precisely the kind of parabolic movement from “brilliant beginnings” (*speciosa principia*) to senile *luxuria* envisaged here by Seneca – whose argument, however, despite its possible political overtones, remains on a general level.

in popinam ventremque procubuerunt: Seneca takes on the traditional association between sexual lust and perversion, on the one hand, and gluttony and luxurious banqueting, on the other – an association which has deep roots in Plato’s (*Resp.* 586A–B) and Aristotle’s (*Eth. Nic.* 1095B.19–22) denigration of the hedonistic way of life as “a life for cattle” (βοσκημάτων βίος). At Rome, the idea that enslavement to the pleasures of the stomach transforms humans into beasts and hence symbolizes the worst moral degradation finds wide acceptance across a variety of genres, from historiography to philosophical protreptics and satire. Famous examples include the proem of Sallust’s *Catiline* (1.1) – with its Platonizing comparison between vicious men and “the beasts of the field, which nature has formed groveling and subservient to appetite” (*pecora, quae natura prona atque ventri oboedientia finxit*) – and Cicero’s description of pleasure-seekers as “humans only in name, not in fact” (*homines non re sed nomine*) in the Stoic context of *Off.* 1.105. In the Augustan age, when the disapproval of gourmet food and banquets has already grown into a moralistic stereotype, Livy (39.6.6–9) traces a history of the Roman *epulae*, starting with the Asian campaigns of 187 BC. As for Seneca, his extraordinarily frequent references to the debauchery of Roman dining practices (e.g., *Ep.* 60.2–4; 89.22; 108.15–22; 110.12–13; 122.2–6; *Brev. vit.* 7.1–2; *QNat.* 3.17–18) rely on the belief that “what one puts in his mouth and how much is a philosophical choice”, for in the Senecan corpus “gastronomic description and

images of food are not the details of satire but information about the actions of an individual in the service of his Self, his integrity, happiness, and self-sufficiency” (Richardson-Hay 2009, 96; see also Gourévitch 1974, remarking on Seneca’s acknowledgement of the “rôle capital de la digestion et de l’alimentation dans l’histoire de l’humanité”; Torre 1997 and Berno 2003, 65–110, both offering an analysis of the natural philosophy underlying Seneca’s moral tirades). In the present passage, Seneca’s use of the verb *procubuerunt* – which is Madvig’s reasonable supplement of the MS reading *pro* – is reminiscent of the Platonic and Aristotelian emphasis on the animal-like posturing of hedonists, a detail also echoed in Sallust, *Cat.* 1.1 (whom Seneca quotes at *Ep.* 60.4).

22.3 *incendia ruinas naufragia*: This asyndetic list of common evils (which the true Stoic regards as ‘indifferents’) can be compared with other analogous lists presented earlier in the work (cf. e.g., *Marc.* 7.4, 18.8, 19.6; 20.2). Once again, one may note the conventional character of Seneca’s catalogue, for the association of fires, falling buildings, and shipwrecks has a strong mythical and epic flavor – the Homeric saga, with its Virgilian *Nachleben*, pivoting on Troy’s fire and fall as well as on the perilous sea voyages of the surviving heroes. Significantly, when listing some of the most common sources of death, Propertius (2.27.5–10) couples war and poison with burning and collapsing houses (*domibus flammam metuisque ruinas*). However, we may agree with Manning 1981, 126–127, that the three disastrous events mentioned by Seneca are also a genuine source of danger in the everyday experience of a Roman – especially from the imperial age onwards, when, with the construction of tall *insulae* of wood and brick (see e.g., *Sen. Contr.* 2.1.11–12; *Juv.* 3.193–202) and an increasing concentration of tensions in the *Urbs*, “the terror of urban fire looms large not only as a constant accidental hazard but also as a weaponized threat” (Closs 2020, 1). It is no accident that in his moral exhortations Seneca cites several times the dangers arising from urban collapses and fires (e.g., *Tranq. an.* 11.7; *Const. Sap.* 12.2; *Vit. Beat.* 26.2). As for shipwrecks, the Odyssean metaphor takes a much more concrete (and tragic) form if one considers that hundreds of Roman shipwrecks have been surveyed or excavated (Parker 1992) and that Seneca himself witnessed the drowning of his uncle C. Galerius, the *praefectus Aegypti*, which probably occurred when they were en route back from Egypt in 31 AD (cf. *Helv.* 19.4–7; Ker 2009, 99–100).

***lacerationesque medicorum*:** One of the numerous references to medical practices in the works of Seneca, whose deep knowledge of both medicine and surgery (as reflected especially in the *Epistles*) has been the subject of thorough research (see, most recently, Courtil 2015, 147–348, 504–559, and Gazzarri

2020, 171–222). However, in contrast to the vast majority of Seneca’s medical arguments and metaphors, the present passage does not draw on the epistemic analogy between *philosophia* and *medicina*, or on the reassuring figure of the *medicus amicus* as a ‘double’ of the philosopher-teacher (Stock 2009). Rather, by including surgery among the evils of human life, Seneca aligns himself with a well-established Roman tradition that sees medicine as a painful, suspicious, and possibly deadly practice – a tradition that ranges from Cato the Elder (*Dict. fr.* 1 Jordan) and Plautus (*Men.* 882–888) to Pliny (*HN* 29.10–11), Martial (1.47; 5.9; 6.53; 8.74), and beyond. At the same time, an evident connection exists between this description of surgery as butchery and other (more intellectually sophisticated) Senecan *loci* in which “the semantic logic of medical imagery [. . .] enhances the cognitive value of pain and brings to the fore an idea of physicality which is predicated on painful surgery” (Gazzarri 2020, 171).

ossa vivis legentium: The removal of bones for therapeutic reasons is mentioned by Seneca as a typical instance of invasive (though ultimately beneficial) treatment in *Prov.* 3.2, where the author adds that some people have their bones “shaved and picked out” (*et radi ossa et legi*). At *Ben.* 5.24.3, Seneca has one of Julius Caesar’s veterans recall the time when some bones were removed from his skull (*in capite lecta ossa*), which reminds us that this kind of trauma surgery was especially common in military contexts. Indeed, evidence about the therapeutic removal of bones can be found from the time of the Hippocratic treatise *On Epidemics* (5.1.15; 7.1.35) to that of Quintilian (*Inst.* 6.1.3: *lecta e vulneribus ossa*), but the dangers inherent in such surgical procedures were perceived as early as the fifth century BC, when the doctors pronouncing the Hippocratic Oath swore “not to use the knife, even upon those suffering from stones” (οὐ τεμέω δὲ οὐδὲ μὴν λιθιῶντας). As noted by Witt 2018, 226–227, under normal circumstances “invasive bone surgery was not practiced in antiquity”, and even the treatments taught in the Hippocratic writings which bear the titles *Fractures* and *Joints* “belong instead to a category that today would be referred to as conservative traumatology and orthopedics”. Seneca’s reference to bone removal is thus intended to strike readers with its unusual character. Cf. also Miles 2004, 105–123.

pudenda: This is another ‘technical’ note aiming to impress the reader, for, just like bone removal, the medical treatment of genitalia is commonly regarded as a painful, risky, and ethically complex practice. Since Marcia is a woman, one should start by noticing that the gynecological surgery techniques of the ancients – as described in the Hippocratic treatises *On the Excision of the Fetus, Diseases of Women 1* (ch. 70) and *Diseases of Women 3* (ch. 37) as well as in Celsus (*Med.* 7.28–29) and Paulus of Aegina (*Epit. Med.* 6.72–75) – are “rather simple

and not very audacious” and attest that “there was a certain tactfulness when treating women’s intimate parts” (Witt 2018, 244). Likewise, as observed by Miles 2004, 107, “the Greek medical writings seem surprisingly reticent about surgery on male genitalia”, apparently because of “a form of self-censoring on the subject of cutting on male genitalia”. Seneca, too, seems to be trying to heighten his readers’ perception of the evils of life by recalling a set of unusually invasive medical practices – and even by subtly alluding to the taboo of castration.

Rutilius: Seneca concludes his list of evils (or better ‘indifferents’) with a triad forming an ascending climax: exile, prison, and suicide, which are incarnated by Rutilius, Socrates, and Cato the Younger, respectively. As usual, Seneca’s triad is carefully designed to convey a distinctively Stoic understanding of the problems concerned (c.f. e.g., above, 20.4–6). In fact, if observed from the perspective of the Stoic tradition, Seneca’s series of *exempla* has a ‘triangular’ shape, with Socrates at the center as a model of *sapientia* (*non fuit sapientior quam Socrates*) – Socrates being “the philosopher, a figure canonized more regularly and with more attention to detail than any other Stoic saint” (Long 2001, 2; cf. also Sellars 2006, 40–41) – and Rutilius and Cato side by side *qua* Roman paradigms of the virtues of *innocentia* (*non fuit innocentior filius tuus quam Rutilius*) and *sanctitas* (*non fuit sanctior quam Cato*). It is no surprise that Seneca juxtaposes P. Rutilius Rufus (*cos.* 105) with such well-known Stoic icons as Socrates and Cato Uticensis, for Cicero (*Brut.* 114–116) places Rutilius “among the Stoic orators” (*in Stoicis oratoribus*) and maintains that he was “an adherent of Panaetius and had a nearly complete grasp of the Stoics” (*Panaeti auditor, prope perfectus in Stoicis*). As Candau 2011, 143–144, points out, Rutilius’ “moral rigor, seriousness, temperance, sobriety, and innocence are repeated over and over again by an ample range of sources from Cicero to Orosius passing via Ovid, Velleius, Florus, and Quintilian. Seneca represents perhaps the culminating point in this ‘rhetorical canonization’ that was orchestrated around the image of Rutilius” (cf. also Amiotti 1991). The origins of Rutilius’ legend lie in his service as legate of Q. Mucius Scaevola when the latter was proconsul in Asia (possibly in 98/97 BC). On this occasion, Rutilius was outspoken in censuring the abuses of the *publicani* (the tax collectors who usually came from the equestrian order) and, just like Cato forty years later (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 20.6), displayed a typically Stoic concern for moral integrity and the respect of human dignity. In 92 BC (*Liv. Per.* 70), or perhaps even earlier (Kallet-Marx 1990, 139: “ca. 94”), the *equites* exploited their prominence in the Roman juries to retaliate against Rutilius and put him on trial under the accusation of extortion – the prosecution being encouraged by Marius (*Vell. Pat.* 2.13.2; *Val. Max.* 2.10.5; 6.4.4; see Münzer 1914, 1275, and Broughton 1952, 8, for other sources). Historically, Rutilius’ unfair conviction and exile to Mitylene and Smyrna may be “merely an

episode of Roman politics in the 90s, in which the attempt of a few individuals to subject the activities of the *publicani* to particularly strict scrutiny was effectively halted by a strong equestrian reaction, encouraged, if anything, by the complete failure of the senatorial order to close ranks behind the old consular” (Kallet-Marx 1990, 139). Yet, Rutilius’ choice of Socrates as his model in his defense – which is mentioned by several sources, from Cicero (*De or.* 1.229–231) to Quintilian (*Inst.* 11.1.13) – and his equally Socratic refusal of Sulla’s later invitation to return to Rome – a refusal allegedly motivated by Rutilius’ determination “not to do anything against the laws” (*ne quid adversus leges faceret*, Val. Max. 6.4.4) – transformed a late republican senator into one of the earliest martyrs of the Roman Stoic tradition. Seneca makes a powerful contribution to this tradition by often coupling Rutilius with Socrates, Cato, and other Roman *viri* (cf. *Prov.* 2.9–12; *Vit. beat.* 18.3; *Tranq. an.* 16.1; *Ben.* 5.17.2; *Ep.* 24.4; 98.12). It is extremely likely that the encomiastic tradition surrounding Rutilius had its roots in Rutilius’ own *Memoirs* (*De vita sua*), which seem to have been available in both Latin and Greek (Hendrickson 1933; Candau 2011, 144–147). By focusing on the virtue of *innocentia* – which Cicero (*Tusc.* 3.16) defines as “the inner disposition not to hurt anyone” (*affectio talis animi, quae noceat nemini* = ἀβλάβεια) and is just one among the many qualities commonly ascribed to Rutilius, together with *gravitas*, *sapientia*, and *sanctitas* – Seneca alludes not only to Rutilius’ undeserved conviction, but also to his exemplary behavior as a magistrate in Asia, for *innocentia* is even “more apt than *gravitas* for designating administrative integrity, an issue close to the heart of many municipals” (Forbis 1996, 94; cf. e.g., Cic. *Verr.* 1.1.34; 2.3.21, 2.3.217).

Socrates: Among the several narrative elements of Socrates’ paradigmatic story, Seneca chooses imprisonment (*carcerem*) – Socrates’ Athenian prison being the setting of Plato’s *Crito* and *Phaedo*, two works that made enduring contributions to the ancient consolatory tradition (Scourfield 2013, 13–14). Socrates – who was unjustly sentenced to death in 399 BC and preferred to drink the hemlock rather than disobey the laws – was often cited by the Stoics as an example of a sage, for “Stoic philosophy literally began with Zeno’s admiration for the life of Socrates” (Sellars 2006, 40). According to Philodemus (*De Stoicis* = *PHerc.* 339, col. 13.3–4 Dorandi), some Stoics even wished to be called “Socratics” (Σωκρατικοί). As summed up by Long 2013, 2–3, “it is now widely agreed that Stoic moral philosophy was undertaken as a development of Socratic ethics, and Socrates’ significance for the Stoics may have extended beyond ethics, for Stoic cosmo-theology seems to have drawn on Socrates’ statements in Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.4.5–18, 4.3.2–18) about the divine design of the world and its human inhabitants”.

Cato: On Seneca’s frequent appeal to the figure of Cato the Younger, who committed suicide in Utica in 46 BC by falling on his sword, see above, notes on *Marc.* 20.6. Already in Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.74), Cato is presented as a kind of ‘new’ Socrates (*ut tunc Socrati, nunc Catoni*), whose suicide stands out as an act of obedience to the Stoic god. Here Seneca’s pathetic description of Cato’s “breast pierced by a self-inflicted wound” (*voluntario vulnere transfixum pectus*) may allude to the fact that after a physician tried to sew up Cato’s wound, he “pushed the physician away, tore his bowels with his hands, rent the wound still more, and so died” (τὸν μὲν ἰατρὸν ἀπέωσατο, ταῖς χερσὶ δὲ τὰ ἔντερα σπαράξας καὶ τὸ τραῦμα ἔπαναρρήξας, ἀπέθανεν, *Plut. Cat. Min.* 70.9).

vitae stipendium: One of Seneca’s military metaphors evoking the Stoic idea of life as a struggle against fortune (Armisen-Marchetti 1989, 313–335). Cf. *Ep.* 93.4 (*omnibus vitae humanae stipendiis*).

ignorantibus: The reading of **A** is *intibus* (with some signs of erasure), which seems to attest to the loss of a word in dative. However, the *codices recentiores* of **γ** have *inisciis* – a different form of dative which may reflect a scribal attempt to explain an already ambiguous reading. Fickert tries to find a compromise in writing *inscientibus*, to which Reynolds 1977 prefers *ignorantibus* – apparently because, as Traina 1987, 114, points out, Seneca never uses the substantivated participle *inicientes*, but only the forms *ignorantes* and *inisci*. As already noted by Favez 1928, L-LI, the main problem resides in the inconsistency between Seneca’s claim here and his earlier statement in 18.8. In fact, whereas here we are told that nobody aware of the hardship of life would have accepted to live, in 18.8 we are invited to willingly enter the world, relying on our parents’ knowledge of life’s terms. Manning 1981, 129, seeks to solve the problem by observing that Seneca’s claims occur in two different contexts, in which “each argument is used in support of wider overall arguments”. Yet, it should be admitted that with readings like *ignorantibus*, *inisciis*, or *invitis* (Abel), the contradiction remains. I would suggest another possible emendation, which would complement **A**’s *intibus* and would even establish a conceptual connection between chapters 18 and 22: *a parentibus*. Indeed, one should not fail to note Seneca’s concomitant use of the two most representative verbs of Roman gift-giving, *accipere* and *dare*, which lay the foundation of Seneca’s treatise *On Benefits* (Griffin 2013, 114–124). While *accipere* is employed here in an active sense with the direct object *illam*, the passive form *daretur* might well have been followed by an agent – as happens quite often in *On Benefits*, where the passive of *do* is common usage (e.g., *Ben.* 2.7.1; 2.18.8; 5.19.6). What is more, a long section of Seneca’s *On Benefits* (3.29–38) revolves precisely around the cultural assumption (which is widespread in Roman literature) that the parental gift of life is the necessary condition of all other

benefits, in an attempt to show that children can sometimes confer greater benefits on parents than they have received.

non nasci: A literal translation of μή φῶναι, the famous motto of Greek pessimism— or, as Heidegger 2014, 197, would have it, of the Greek understanding of existence (“Dasein”). The view that “the best thing for all men and women is not to be born” (ἄριστον γὰρ πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις τὸ μὴ γενέσθαι), while “the second best, is, after being born, to die as quickly as possible” (δεύτερον δέ, τὸ γενομένουσ ἀποθανεῖν ὡς τάχιστα), is described by Aristotle (fr. 44 Rose) as a “saying which is on the lips of all humans” (τὸ διὰ στόματος ὄν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις) and “has been passed from mouth to mouth for many years” (ἐκ πολλῶν ἐτῶν περιφέρεται θρυλούμενον). Aristotle’s fragment is preserved by Plutarch (*Cons. ad Apoll.* 115B-E), who makes clear that Aristotle framed his piece of archaic wisdom in the mythical context of the encounter between Silenus and Midas – an encounter recalled also by Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.114–115) together with other myths and literary works supporting the same pessimistic view. As Plutarch (*Cons. ad Apoll.* 115E) acknowledges, “one might cite thousands and thousands of examples (μυρία δ’ ἐπὶ μυρίοις) under this same head” – which demonstrates that before becoming a literary trope and cutting across the boundaries of elegy (Theogn. *Eleg.* 1.425–428), tragedy (Soph. *OC* 1224–1226; Eur. fr. 449 Nauck), and consolation (Crantor *ap.* Cic. *Tusc.* 1.115, and Plut. *Cons. ad Apoll.* 109B-D), Silenus’ bitter response to Midas was a popular adage with deep roots in folklore and religion. See also Curi 2008.

in integrum restitui: A metaphorical use of the Roman legal institution of *restitutio in integrum*, by virtue of which a praetor ordered to restore a citizen to his former position after a transaction had unjustly harmed him (cf. *Dig.* 4.1.1–8). By deploying such legal jargon, not only does Seneca add a distinctively Roman note to an archaic Greek commonplace, but he also creates a paradoxical effect insofar as in the present passage the restoration of a person’s intactness ends up coinciding with her annihilation and death (cf. also *Ep.* 66.53, where Mucius Scaevola’s self-inflicted mutilation is described in the same terms). From the perspective of Stoic philosophy, death can literally be seen as a *restitutio in integrum*, that is, as a reintegration of the person into the cosmic whole from which every life emerges and into which every life form inevitably passes (Scarpata 1981, 152, *pace* Traina 1987, 114–115; cf. also below, note on *Marc.* 26.7, *in antiqua elementa*).

22.4 Propone: In a final attempt to demonstrate that Metilius’ death has rescued him from further evils, Seneca urges Marcia to engage in a Stoic spiritual exercise – more precisely, in an exercise of mental visualization signaled by the verb *proponere*, which here, unlike in *Marc.* 9.1 (*nihil nobis mali antequam*

eveniat proponimus) and in 17.7 (*propone tamen*), points to the recollection of the past rather than to the premeditation of the future. Marcia is in fact invited to relive the time of her father's trial and suicide (already mentioned in 1.2), which in Seneca's view can confirm the ineluctable and even beneficial nature of death. Certainly, Seneca expects that Marcia is now ready to go deeper into her memory, painful as it may be, so as to gain a more solid awareness of what the true good is.

patrem tuum: On the circumstances of Cremutius Cordus' trial and death, see above, note on *Marc.* 1.2, *Mortem A. Cremuti Cordi*.

Satrio Secundo: Satrius Secundus is one of “the henchmen of Sejanus” (*Seianini satellites*) alluded to in *Marc.* 1.2. Unlike Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.34), Seneca does not mention Cremutius Cordus' second prosecutor, Pinarius Natta, who became an even more prominent figure in the Tiberian age. According to Manning 1981, 130, such a tactful reticence may be due to the fact that Seneca “moved in the same circles as Pinarius”, but the only evidence cited by Manning is Seneca's own *Epistle* 122 (10–13), which simply attests that Seneca “had memory” (*meminimus*) of several *bon vivants* of the Tiberian court, including Pinarius. Just like the mediocre poet Julius Montanus and the parasite Varus mentioned in the same letter, Pinarius may have been known to Seneca because of his public exposure. More elaborate speculations about Seneca's political motivations – such as those contrived by Stewart 1953 – do not find sufficient support in the literary and epigraphic evidence.

congiarium: In Roman culture, a *congiarium* was a gift of the measure of a *congius* (the eighth part of an *amphora*), originally used in the sphere of interpersonal relationships. The term applied particularly to asymmetrical relationships such as that between unequal friends (*Cic. Fam.* 8.1.4, already alluding to a gift in money), or that between patrons and clients (*Plin. HN* 14.96). However, from the Augustan age onwards, the word *congiarium* was usually employed for generous donations of money to the populace of a city at large, the emperor being the only person with a right to distribute *congiaria* within Rome (Spinola 1990). In *Mon. Anc.* 15.1, Augustus commemorated his distribution of money after his victory over the Cantabrians (Forbis 1996, 38–40), and during Seneca's life this special kind of *largitio* was institutionalized by the *beneficentia* of Tiberius (*Suet. Tib.* 20; 54.1) and Caligula (*Suet. Calig.* 17.2). Cf. *Brev. vit.* 8.2; *Ben.* 2.16.2. Since for Seneca and his readers a *congiarium* in the city of Rome was mainly an imperial privilege, Seneca's depiction of the very person of Cremutius as a *congiarium* given by Sejanus to his client seems to imply that Sejanus acted as an *alter princeps*, abusively transforming his private donations and *clientelae* into public

matters. Moreover, since under Caligula's reign *congiaria* were primarily gifts in money, there is a clear allusion to the fact that *delatores* like Secundus earned enormous sums as a reward for their service to political authorities: several notorious examples of ascending *delatores* are reported by Tacitus (*Ann.* 2.32; 11.4.3; 16.33.2), who records the distribution of millions of sesterces together with the award of public offices and *insignia* (Strunk 2017, 86–87).

unum aut alterum liberius dictum: A euphemistic description of Cremutius Cordus' outspoken praise of republican *libertas* – to which the absolute comparative *liberius* alludes. By playing down the number and extent of Cremutius' *boutades*, Seneca highlights the disproportionate nature of Sejanus' reaction. Manning 1981, 130, believes that Seneca is discussing "Sejanus' actual reasons for anger" and regards this remark as "the only extant suggestion of a reason other than his writings for the charge against Cremutius". However, Cassius Dio (57.24.2–4) unequivocally states that, having "come into collision with Sejanus" (τῷ Σεϊανῶ προσέκρουσεν), Cremutius "was tried for his history" (ἐπὶ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ κριθῆναι), since "no serious charge could be brought against him" (οὐδὲν ἔγκλημα ἐπαίτιον λαβεῖν ἠδυνήθη). Moreover, both Dio and Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.34–35) maintain that Cremutius' prosecutors saw his eulogy of Brutus and Cassius – the prototypical heroes of republican *libertas* – as an especially flagrant offence against the political order. Of course, as shown by Seneca's reference to Cremutius' witticism about Sejanus' statue, Sejanus may have been offended by other statements or attitudes of Cremutius – who, as a senator, had a right to express his *sententia* and deliver speeches in the Curia. Yet, Seneca's assertions in the present passage remain perfectly consistent with the reports by Tacitus and Dio. Seneca may just be noting that in his written and oral pronouncements Cremutius dared to speak up for the value of *libertas* – at a time when Sejanus was not just being foisted (*inponi*) on Roman citizens but was even clambering (*escendere*) over them.

statua in Pompei teatro: The Theater of Pompey – which is sometimes referred to simply as *theatrum* (Cic. *Att.* 4.1.6; Hor. *Carm.* 1.20.3; App. *B Civ.* 5.15) – was the first permanent theater in Rome and the largest ever built in Roman history (Sear 2006, 57–61). Pompey built it at his own expense (Vell. Pat. 2.48.2) at the time of his second consulship in September 55 BC (Cic. *Fam.* 7.1.2–4; Cass. Dio 39.38.1; Plut. *Pomp.* 52). After the theater was destroyed by a fire in 22 AD, Tiberius undertook its rebuilding (Tac. *Ann.* 3.72), which does not seem to have proceeded much further than the restoration of the *scaena* (Tac. *Ann.* 6.45), for according to Suetonius the building was completed by Caligula (*Calig.* 21.1) and dedicated by Claudius (*Claud.* 21.1). When announcing the restoration of Pompey's theater, Tiberius also praised Sejanus for the "energy and

watchfulness” (*labore vigilantiaque*) he had devoted to containing the fire (Tac. *Ann.* 3.72). It is for this reason that “the senate voted a statue to Sejanus, to be placed in the Theater of Pompey” (*censuere patres effigiem Seiano quae apud theatrum Pompei locaretur*, Tac. *Ann.* 3.72) – a bronze statue (χαλκοῦν, Cass. Dio. 57.21.3), which, as we learn here from Seneca, aroused Cremutius’ satirical wit.

Caesar: Tiberius. Cf. Tac. *Ann.* 3.72 (*Pompei theatrum . . . Caesar exstructurum pollicitus est*).

22.5 supra cineres Pompei: The contrast between the “great general” Pompey (*maximi imperatoris*) and the “treacherous soldier” Sejanus (*perfidum militem*) allows Seneca to make an intratextual allusion to the story of Pompey’s death as recounted in *Marc.* 20.4. Implicitly, Seneca suggests that Pompey’s ashes were neither in Egypt nor on the Alban hills (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 20.4, *sacrosantum victoribus corpus*), but in the monumental legacy Pompey had bequeathed to Rome – all the more so as Tiberius decreed that, even if Pompey’s heirs could not afford the cost of the theater’s restoration, “the name of Pompey was to remain” (*manente tamen nomine Pompei*, Tac. *Ann.* 3.72).

†**Consecratur**† **subscriptio:** The reading of **A** (*consecratur*) is clearly corrupt, and several emendations have been attempted. Hermes’ *componitur* finds support in *Ben.* 3.26.2 (*subscriptioem conponeret*), but, as Manning 1981, 131–132, points out, it is perhaps more likely that the scribal error arose from a difficult reading such as *consarcinatur* (which is Lipsius’ proposal accepted by Hine 2014, 41 n. 84; cf. *Amm. Marc.* 14.5.6: *crimina . . . consarcinando*) or *concinatur* (which is Madvig’s conjecture followed by Manning on the basis of *Ep.* 49.8: *aliaque ad exemplum huius acutae delirationis concinnata*). Neither Lipsius’ nor Madvig’s supplements are perfectly convincing (although both are reasonable compromises), and Reynolds 1977 is right in putting a *crux*.

acerrimi canes: The adjective *acer* is often used to indicate the fierceness of dogs (e.g., Varro, *Rust.* 2.9.14) – especially of guard and farm dogs, which are culturally expected to be “stern and not fawning” (*severos [. . .] nec blandos*, Columella, *Rust.* 7.12.5). Seneca draws on the conventional oratorical comparison between aggressive animals, on the one hand, and hostile and belligerent prosecutors, on the other, which recurs in forensic oratory from Aeschines (*Ctesiph.* 167) to Cicero (*Roscio Am.* 56–57). Such a well-established comparison, in turn, is based on the culturally embedded understanding of dogs as ‘ambiguous’ beings, at the same time watchful and deceitful, civilized and wild (Franco 2014; Tutrone 2019b).

†*etiam illum imperiatum*†: As Reynolds 1977 notes in his apparatus criticus, this is a *locus conclamatus*, since the evidently corrupt reading of **A** has led to a variety of emendations (which are too many to list here). A rich catalogue of scholarly conjectures can be found in Traina 1990, 51–52. Since the general meaning of the passage is that, just like dogs, Sejanus’ henchmen began to howl around Cremutius, the words *etiam illum* transmitted by **A** might be thought to refer to Cremutius’ situation as an innocent victim facing an unjust assault. In fact, several of the emendations suggested by scholars seek to describe Cremutius’ imperturbability and resilience: e.g., *etiam tunc imperterritum* (Niemeyer), *etiam illum intemeratum* (Becker), *etiamtum imperturbatum* (Waltz), *etiam illo imperio imperturbatum* (Favez), *etiam illo periculo interritum* (Reynolds in *apparatu*), *etiam illo in periculo imperturbatum* (Traina). However, one should perhaps acknowledge with Hine 2014, 41 n. 85, that what we have in the MS tradition is just “a few hopelessly corrupt words”.

22.6 *constituit filiam fallere*: As signaled by the verb *constituit*, Cremutius’ choice of deceiving his daughter (and killing himself) is a fully rational one and hence complies with a fundamental tenet of the Stoic theory of a “well-reasoned exit” (εὐλογος ἐξαγωγή) – on which see above, notes on *Marc.* 3.3, *vivere nolle, mori non posse*, and 20.1, *O ignaros malorum suorum*. From a Stoic perspective, if based on a rational process of decision-making and oriented to a higher good, even the act of temporarily deceiving a loved one is morally legitimate – just as under special circumstances self-deception becomes a useful “technology of the self” (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 19.1, *nosmet ipsi fallamus*). Yet, when addressing Marcia, Cremutius is careful in explaining that this is the only thing (*hoc unum*) he has kept from his daughter in his entire life – a narrative detail which dispels any possible doubt as to the intellectual honesty of Seneca’s hero.

balineo quo: The reading of **A** is *balineo et quo*, but – *pace* Traina 1987, 116 – Reynolds 1977 is right in omitting the conjunction *et*, for *quo* introduces a relative clause of purpose (and not a consecutive clause). Crucial evidence comes from the manuscripts of **γ**, which read *balneo quo*.

dimissis pueris: As a wealthy senator, Cremutius could rely on several members of the “Roman caste of servile male children” (Keegan 2013, 73–74), who figured prominently in early imperial aristocratic houses. However, Seneca may also be referring to older slaves, since, as the jurist Paulus (*Dig.* 50.16.204) points out, the Romans called all slaves ‘boys’ (*omnes servos pueros appellaremus*) – the ‘fictional’ difference of age serving as a linguistic marker of social disparity.

abstinuit: Although the basic meaning here is that Cremutius missed dinner (*a cena . . . abstinuit*), Seneca’s use of the verb *abstinere* alludes to Cremutius’ more general choice of killing himself by starvation (*abstinentia*), which is described in very similar terms by Tacitus (*Ann.* 4.35: *vitam abstinentia finivit*). In the imperial era, when the suicides of members of the senatorial elite became sadly frequent, the word *abstinentia* was often used as a synonym for *inedia* – self-starvation being most typically preferred by women (such as Caligula’s mother Agrippina the Elder) and by men of older age or in ill health (Hope 2007, 36; 83–84). Tacitus (*Ann.* 6.23) cites the case of another aged aristocrat, Asinius Gallus, who died by starvation under Tiberius. Seneca (*Ep.* 77.9) – who was bound to experience a similar destiny under Nero – describes the death of a certain Tullius Marcellinus, who, very much like Cremutius, fasted for three days (*triduo abstinuit*), had a tent (*tabernaculum*) and a tub (*solium*) put up in his bedroom (*in ipso cubiculo*), and gradually passed away (*paulatim defecit*). Elsewhere (*Ep.* 70.9), Seneca explains that Socrates, too, might have ended his life by fasting (*abstinentia*) and by starvation (*inedia*) but chose to drink the hemlock to submit to the laws and to benefit his friends. This remark reminds us that the Stoic “well-reasoned exit” entails a careful consideration of a person’s social duties, a concern emerging also from Cremutius’ lucid address to Marcia. At the same time, the term *abstinentia* never loses its original connection with the moral values of *continentia* and *temperantia*, which – *qua* equivalents of ἐγκράτεια and σωφροσύνη – are among the distinguishing traits of a Stoic wise man. Seneca’s entire account of Cremutius’ death is expressly designed to show Cremutius’ possession of virtues such as self-mastery, parental love, and – in one word – rational deliberation.

Complexus: Cremutius’ hugging of Marcia and his use of the adjective *carissima* are consistent manifestations of his communicative rationality, which avails itself of both verbal and non-verbal signs. At the crucial moment of death, Cremutius displays an affection for his daughter which confirms his conscious understanding of the social duties arising from the process of οἰκείωσις. Indeed, the very act of embracing Marcia seems to give body to Hierocles’ account of the origins of parental love (*ap. Stob. Ecl.* 4.671.7–673.11 = Long/Sedley 1987, 349; Ramelli 2009, 90–93; Gourinat 2016), according to which it is “as if each one of us were entirely encompassed by many circles” (οἷον κύκλοις πολλοῖς περιέγραπται), the second circle embracing parents, siblings, wife, and children. Likewise, Cremutius’ address to his “dearest daughter” (*carissima filia*) reminds us that parental love is an extension of the same encompassing process by which, in Seneca’s words (*Ep.* 121.14), every human being becomes “dear to himself” (*sibi carus*) in respect of his rational part. Cf. also above, note on *Marc.* 20.3, *beneficio mortis*.

nec debes nec potes: By employing such modal verbs, Cremutius highlights two different moral concepts, both of which have solid roots in Stoic ethics. On the one hand, Marcia *should* not call her father back since it is not morally right to interfere in the rational deliberation of another person who is exerting his capacity for “correct reasoning” (ὀρθὸς λόγος), all the more so as the choice of suicide is an exclusive prerogative of the wise man – an *officium sapientis*, as Cicero (*Off.* 3.60) has it (cf. also *SVF* 3.757–763). On the other hand, Marcia *cannot* change the course of things insofar her father’s life and body are “not up to her”, in Stoic terms (cf. Epict. *Ench.* 1.1–2). Cremutius himself has no power over what fortune can do to his body and reputation, but, as a rational creature, he is the only subject entitled to rule his life by means of the faculties of judgment, choice, desire, and aversion – which are central to the process of decision-making leading to a “well-reasoned death”.

se in tenebras condidit: Since the verb *condo* is commonly used with the meaning of “burying” (i.e., “hiding a corpse in the grave”), and Cremutius’ shutting out of daylight (*lumen praecludi*) recalls the ritual act of closing the eyes of the dying (*lumina claudere*, cf. Verg. *Aen.* 10.746; 12.310; Mart. 10.63.6) – which was “an important sacred rite among the Romans” (*Quiritium magno ritu sacrum*, Plin. *HN* 11.150) – what Seneca portrays in this dramatic scene is Cremutius’ deliberate burying of himself, which actualizes the triumph of the conscious suicidal rationality of Seneca’s hero.

22.7 *avidissimorum luporum*: After the death of Cremutius as an innocent “prey” (*praeda*) has demonstrated their savage and bloody nature, Sejanus’ henchmen are turned from “fierce dogs” (*acerrimi canes*) into “greedy wolves” in accordance with a strategy of metaphorical degradation which is extremely frequent in ancient contexts of canine symbolism (Franco 2014, 28–37, Tutrone 2019b, 79–83).

ut interpellarent quod coegerant: Whereas **A** reads *interpella* and the **γ** manuscripts have *interpellant*, some *codices recentiores* amend to the grammatically correct form *interpellarent*. However, even with the restoration of the subjunctive, the general construction and the meaning of the sentence remain awkward, and it is more than possible that Seneca’s original phrasing has been truncated in the MS tradition. Basically, Seneca seems to imply that Cremutius’ prosecutors submitted a complaint to the consuls Cornelius Cossus and Asinius Agrippa (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 4.34), in an attempt to prevent (*interpellarent*) Cremutius from doing what they had forced him to do – that is, from committing suicide. Sejanus’ henchmen were, of course, afraid of losing the rich reward that awaited Roman *delatores* after the conclusion of the *maiestas* trial (cf. above, note on

Marc. 22.4, congiarium). On the basis of *Dig. 48.4.11*, Manning 1981, 132, argues that Cremutius could hope to save his property from confiscation because the case which had so far been made against him amounted to the less serious charges under the *lex Iuliae maiestatis* – only the most serious accusations of high treason (*perduellio*) entailing posthumous confiscation. This is indeed likely to be the case, but the general impression remains that, as noted by Plass 1988, 112, “Seneca is not interested in legal details” and instead makes such a wry remark to “bring out the irrationality of the situation” – which stands in contrast with the exemplary rationality of Cremutius’ existential choice.

ille se absolverat: A paradoxical image aiming to celebrate the final victory of Cremutius’ self over the evils of fortune. In the end, it is Cremutius himself who serves as a judge in his own trial, giving an acquittal verdict which coincides with his ethical liberation.

22.8 *ingruant*: A military verb, usually describing the rushing of soldiers. Although the same verb can be used with reference to natural agents (e.g., Verg. *G. 2.410*; Liv. 37.23.2), it has a strong epic flavor (cf. Verg. *Aen. 11.899*; 12.628). Seneca seems to have been the first to use *ingruo* in a metaphorical sense with the purpose of emphasizing the unexpected violence of life’s evils.

paene non licuit: In the conclusion of his chapter, Seneca deploys an elegant conceit to connect Cremutius’ story with his opening remarks about the unpredictability of fortune – and with the apparently different fate of Metilius. According to Seneca, if Marcia reads her family history through the lens of the Stoic notions of fated necessity and moral will, a unifying (and consoling) interpretation can be offered. Just as Metilius was led by the immanent and fated necessity of nature to face an early death (*mori necesse fuit*), Cremutius responded to the challenges of his equally unavoidable and painful fate by vindicating his right to a self-determined death – his naturally sanctioned *mortis ius*, an expression restored in the text by Madvig (cf. Sen. *Ben. 6.3.1*).

23.1 *facillimum ad superos iter*: Seneca’s view that one’s behavior on earth influences the soul’s journey and condition after death is indebted to Plato’s dialogues – particularly to the *Phaedo* (64A–67E; 80A–83D) – as well as to their varied reception in the history of philosophy and consolation literature. Plato (*Phd. 80E–81C*) makes a clear-cut distinction between the destiny of the soul of the wise man, which “drags with it nothing of the body (μηδὲν τοῦ σώματος συνεφέλκουσα) because it never willingly associated with the body in life (οὐδὲν κοινωνοῦσα αὐτῷ ἐν τῷ βίῳ)”, and the fate of the “defiled” (μειμασμένη) and “impure” (ἀκάθαρτος) soul, which during its life cared for the body and corporeal

pleasures. The former swiftly “goes away into that which is like itself (εἰς τὸ ὅμοιον αὐτῆ . . . ἀπέρχεται), into the invisible, divine, immortal, and wise (τὸ θεῖόν τε καὶ ἀθάνατον καὶ φρόνιμον)”, where “it lives in truth through all after time with the gods” (ὡς ἀληθῶς τὸν λοιπὸν χρόνον μετὰ θεῶν διάγουσα, cf. Seneca’s *ad superos*). The latter “will be interpenetrated with the corporeal (διειλημμένην . . . ὑπὸ τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς), which intercourse and communion with the body have made a part of its nature (ὃ αὐτῆ ἢ ὁμιλία τε καὶ συνουσία τοῦ σώματος [. . .] ἐνεποίησε σύμφυτον)”. Seneca includes Metilius in the first class of Plato’s souls and tries to instill in Marcia the same “good hope” (ἀγαθὴ ἐλπίς) that Socrates had about his *post-mortem* journey (ἀποδημία, cf. Seneca’s *iter*) – a hope which, in Plato’s words, “exists for every man who thinks that his mind has been purified and made ready” (οἱ παρεσκευάσθαι τὴν διάνοιαν ὡσπερ καθαρμένην, *Phd.* 67C). By the time of Seneca, this eschatological doctrine had come to be associated with the Stoicized Platonism of Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* (6.29), where we read that a soul exercised by the most noble concerns (*optimis in rebus*) “will fly more swiftly to this, its dwelling and home” (*velocius in hanc sedem et domum suam pervolabit*) and “will do so all the more swiftly if even when it is enclosed in the body it projects outward and by contemplating those things that are outside it draws itself as much as possible from the body” (*idque ocius faciet, si iam tum, cum erit inclusus in corpore, eminebit foras et ea, quae extra erunt, contemplans quam maxime se a corpore abstrahet*). By contrast, the souls enslaved to sensual pleasures, “when they have departed from the body, circle around the earth and only after having been harried for many generations do they return to this place” (*corporibus elapsi circum terram ipsam volutantur nec hunc in locum nisi multis exagitati saeculis revertuntur*). The same doctrine, with its mixture of Pythagorean, Platonic, and Stoic echoes, is expounded by Cicero in *Tusc.* 1.75. Although considerable efforts have been made by twentieth-century *Quellenforschung* (e.g., Badstübner 1901, 1–18; Abel 1964) to show that Cicero and Seneca depend on one common source – the perennially elusive Posidonius – a more complex picture seems to emerge from our evidence. On the one hand, in the Hellenistic and Roman era eschatological visions of the journey of the soul had become a standard feature of ancient consolatory literature, as is evident from Plutarch (*Cons. ad uxor.* 611D-F) and Menander Rhetor (414.21-23). On the other hand, Posidonius is only one among the many Stoic philosophers who built on Plato’s legacy to develop a theory about the origin and the destiny of the soul (see e.g., *SVF* 1.137, 147, 519–524; 2.790–800, 809–822; Long 2019, 152–173), and Seneca’s own view of the body-soul relationship “provides no strong grounds for thinking either that the Stoicism he knew and expounds has been strongly affected by newly emergent interests in Platonism or that its identity as a long-standing and distinct movement is under challenge from contemporary

Platonists” (Long 2017b, 224; cf. also Inwood 2007). In the early imperial age, the moral asceticism of the Stoics was fascinatingly combined with Platonic and Pythagorean arguments by thinkers such as Attalus, Sotion, and Papirius Fabianus, who, to varying degrees, took part in the intellectual life of the school of the Sextii (Lana 1973, 1992) and exerted a much more decisive influence on Seneca’s *Bildung* than did the alleged mysticism of Posidonius (Mazzoli 1967, 226–244; Inwood 2005, 7–22; Sellars 2014). Indeed, in all of his works – from his early *consolationes* (cf. *Helv.* 11.6–7) to the *Natural Questions* (1.praef.4–13) – Seneca embraces only those elements of Plato’s eschatology which are consistent with his Stoic faith, while also appropriating Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* as a literarily and philosophically suggestive Latin myth (“un μῦθος latino estremamente suggestivo dal punto di vista letterario oltre che filosofico”, Mazzoli 1967, 243).

faecis, ponderis: According to Plato (*Phd.* 81C), the corporeal is “burdensome” (ἐμβριθές), “heavy” (βαρύ), “earthly” (γεῶδες), and “visible” (ὄρατόν); and an impure soul “is weighed down by this and is dragged back into the visible world” (βαρύνεται τε καὶ ἔλκεται πάλιν εἰς τὸν ὄρατόν τόπον). Seneca takes on both the idea of weight (*pondus*) and that of earthly sediment (*faex*).

ad originem suam: The theory that the human soul has its origin in the heavenly bodies and has to travel back up the same way to return to its eternal home was influentially established by Plato in his *Timaeus*. Having shown that stars and planets are rational living beings of divine nature, Plato (41D-42B) went on to argue that the Demiurge “divided the whole into souls equal in number to the stars and assigned each soul to one star” (συστήσας δὲ τὸ πᾶν διείλεν ψυχὰς ἰσαριθμούς τοῖς ἄστροις, ἔνεμῆν θ’ ἐκάστην πρὸς ἕκαστον). At the end of his life, “a man who has lived his appointed time well shall return again to his abode in his native star and will gain a life that is blessed and congenial” (ὁ μὲν εὖ τὸν προσήκοντα χρόνον βιούς, πάλιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ συννόμου πορευθεὶς οἴκησιν ἄστρου, βίον εὐδαίμονα καὶ συνήθη ἔξει; cf. also 90A-D). Early Stoics such as Chrysippus (*ap. Philod. Piet.* 2 in *PHerc.* 1428, coll. 6.9–16; Vassallo 2015, 99–105) were equally persuaded that the heavenly bodies are gods (cf. also Cic. *Nat. deor.* 1.39–41; 2.39–44) and that “humans change into gods” ([ἀ]νθρώπους εἰς θεούς φησι με[τ]αβάλλει[ν] – presumably after death (cf. Sext. *Emp. Adv. Math.* 9.74 = *SVF* 2.812; Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.151 = *SVF* 2.1102; Algra 2009, 369–372). They devoted special attention to Plato’s *Timaeus*, with its crucial focus on the similarity between cosmic and individual rationality, since, as Betegh 2003, 289–293, points out, “from the whole Platonic corpus, and indeed from the entire pre-Stoic literature, the *Timaeus* is the work that argues for the rationality and teleological organization of the cosmos in the most comprehensive and detailed manner”. However, in the Stoic system “cosmology becomes eventually not mathematics and dialectic but a

specific pantheistic conception of theology” (Betegh 2003, 300; cf. also Reydam-Schils 1999, 2013). In addition, the Stoics “took the further step of expanding the realm of the gods to the entire cosmos” (Collette 2022, 72) – the Stoic cosmos, unlike Plato’s cosmos, being entirely material. As Wilderberger 2006a, I, 221–241, has shown, Seneca’s repeated claims about the heavenly nature of the human soul (cf. *Ep.* 41.5; 66.12; 79.12; 92.30; *QNat.* 1.praef.12; *De ot.* 5.5) are perfectly consistent with the Stoic view of humans as rational creatures akin to the gods and the stars. Yet, for Seneca and his fellow Stoics, humans’ kinship to such divine beings (cf. e.g., Cleanthes *ap. Stob. Ecl.* 1.1.12 = *SVF* 1.537: ἕκ σου γὰρ γένος ἔσμεν; Musonius Rufus *ap. Stob. Ecl.* 4.50c.94.24–25: ἄνθρωπος μίμημα θεοῦ) can fully manifest itself only in the perfection of reason (λόγος). Only those humans who bring their rational nature to its teleological completion – which is moral virtue (ἀρετή) – give due expression to the seeds of the rational cosmic god (λόγοι σπερματικοί) and demonstrate that, as Epictetus (*Diss.* 2.8.11) puts it, every human is “a fragment of god” (ἀπόσπασμα τοῦ θεοῦ; cf. *Diog. Laert. Vit.* 7.143 (= *SVF* 2.633), *Marc. Aur.* 5.27, and Zeno’s definition of semen as ψυχῆς ἀπόσπασμα in *SVF* 1.128). In a passage of his *Tusculan Disputations* (1.42–47) which draws on both Panaetius and Posidonius (Wilderberger 2006a, II, 789–790, n. 1098, with further references), Cicero provides a detailed account of this doctrine about the nature of the stars and the dwelling of the soul in the celestial regions (*in locis caelestibus*), reinterpreting Plato’s beliefs in light of the Stoic materialist understanding of the physical elements (particularly of fire and air). Hence, in the eyes of Seneca’s readers, the depiction of Cremutius’ and Metilius’ souls going back to their original celestial abode at the end of a virtuous and properly rational life seems indeed to convey “a Stoic teaching mixed with Platonic teaching” (*mixtum dogma cum Platonico Stoicum*) – to borrow the comment of a Bern scholiast on Lucan’s picture of Pompey’s ascent to heaven (*Comm. Bern. in Lucan.* 9.6 = *SVF* 2.817). At the same time, an educated reader is aware that, given Plato’s long-standing reception in Stoic thought (Bonazzi/Helmig 2007, Long 2013, Engberg-Pedersen 2017), this literary and philosophical device “does not affect Seneca’s basic Stoic orthodoxy” (Setaioli 2013, 475, *pace* Hoven 1971, 129–130). What is even more remarkable is that philosophical eschatology, too, is driven by the pressure of history, for whereas in Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* the perfection of reason attaining a heavenly reward is exemplified by Scipio’s “concerns for the safety of the fatherland” (*curae de salute patriae, Rep.* 6.29), Seneca is led by the *Zeitgeist* of the Julio-Claudian era to extol a senatorial martyr of imperial tyranny and his politically inexperienced grandson.

23.2 *exire atque erumpere gestiunt*: According to Plato’s Socrates (*Phd.* 67E), “true philosophers” (οἱ ὀρθῶς φιλοσοφοῦντες) are not afraid of death because they “practice dying” (ἀποθνήσκειν μελετῶσι), “are in every way hostile to the body” (διαβέβληνται μὲν πανταχῆ τῷ σώματι) and “desire to have the soul apart by itself alone” (αὐτὴν δὲ καθ’ αὐτὴν ἐπιθυμοῦσι τὴν ψυχὴν ἔχειν). Seneca ascribes the same eschatological tension to “great intellects” (*magnis ingeniiis*) in general, thus taking on the more ‘extensive’ interpretation of Cicero and the Stoics. In *Rep.* 6.25, Cicero describes heaven as the place “where all things exist for great and outstanding men” (*in quo omnia sunt magnis et praestantibus viris*), and in *Tusc.* 1.44, he makes the general anthropological point that “there is naturally in our minds a certain insatiable desire to perceive the truth” (*natura inest in mentibus nostris insatiabilis quaedam cupiditas veri videndi*), which can be fully satisfied only in the celestial regions. Both Cicero and Seneca bear witness to the universalistic anthropology of the Stoics, which readapts Socrates’ view of human nature and the purpose of knowledge to the cosmopolitan aspirations of the Hellenistic and Roman elites.

Platon: This ‘Hellenizing’ nominative occurs other seven times in Seneca (*Ep.* 6.6; 44.4; 47.12; 108.38; *Ben.* 4.33.1; 5.7.5; 6.18.1), but – *pace* Favez 1928, 91 – the standard form *Plato* remains more frequent (*Ira* 1.19.7; 2.20.2; 3.12.5–7; *Ep.* 58.16–17, 22, 26, 30; 65.7–10; *QNat.* 5.18.16) – although, of course, the manuscript tradition may have obliterated some instances. By explicitly mentioning Plato, Seneca signals to his reader that he is taking direct inspiration from such an outstanding philosophical authority – a fact that, as noted earlier, is confirmed by several intertextual echoes. Yet, this open homage – which modern literary theory would call an “onomastic reference” (Nicolaisen 1986, Müller 1991) – should not lead us to ignore Seneca’s profound debt to the Stoic tradition, which had carefully digested and reframed Plato’s lesson, as well as to Cicero’s literarily elaborated accounts. Just like Panaetius – who, according to Cicero (*Fin.* 4.79 = fr. 55 van Straaten), had Plato’s name always on his lips – and Posidonius – who presented Plato as having anticipated key elements of Stoic psychology (Tieleman 2003, 198–287) – Seneca knew that by referring to Plato “he did not do anything unusual for a Stoic” (Tieleman 2007, 136). It is no accident that at *Ep.* 64.10 Plato figures prominently in Seneca’s pantheon of Stoic saints, together with Cato, Laelius, Socrates, Zeno, and Cleanthes. According to Tieleman 2007, 140–141, the apparent inconsistency of Seneca’s reference to Platonic transcendence and ascetism is justified by the “therapeutic context” of the *consolatio*. Yet, on closer inspection, there is no doctrinal inconsistency in Seneca’s quotation from Plato’s *Phaedo* – a dialogue dominated by the Stoic hero Socrates – nor do we need to see Seneca’s praise of the great

souls struggling to leave their bodies as an emergency argument tailored to Marcia, as Tielemann suggests. In fact, Socrates' description of the true philosophers and their metaphysical aspirations is radically reframed in the wholly material structure of the Stoic cosmos, where the souls of virtuous men (such as Metilius) leave their mortal bodies to reach an equally material "heavenly citadel" (*arce caelesti*, *Marc.* 26.1) which, as Cremutius explains (26.6–7), is itself bound to dissolve into the final conflagration.

***in mortem prominere*:** Here, too, the prime source of Seneca's picture of the *sapiens* is Plato's *Phaedo*, where Socrates teaches (64A) that those who pursue philosophy in the right way (ὁρθῶς) "study nothing but dying and being dead" (οὐδὲν ἄλλο αὐτοὶ ἐπιτηδεύουσιν ἢ ἀποθνήσκειν τε καὶ τεθνάναι), which leads to a definition of philosophy (81A) as practice of, or meditation upon, death (μελέτη θανάτου; cf. also 67D). Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.74) takes up Socrates' definition and translates μελέτη θανάτου as *commentatio mortis*, which puts into the foreground the Socratic (and Stoic) understanding of philosophy as spiritual exercise (Hadot 1995). Whereas the verb *meditari*, which appears immediately thereafter in our text, is reminiscent of both the Greek (viz. Platonic) μελέτη and the Latin (viz. Ciceronian) *commentatio*, Seneca's use of the verb *prominere* bears a distinctively Ciceronian mark, for it is Cicero who in *Rep.* 6.29 describes the most intellectually vivacious souls "projecting outward" (*eminebit foras*) and "contemplating those things that are outside" (*ea, quae extra erunt, contemplans*, cf. Seneca's *in exteriora tendentem*). Seneca's debt to Cicero in the present passage is made even more conspicuous by Seneca's own predominantly negative usage of *prominere* in other similar contexts, in which the same verb captures a wrong tendency to project oneself into the future (*Tranq. an.* 2.7: *in spem toti prominent*) or into external goods (*Ep.* 101.9: *si vita nostra non prominebit*). Cf. Traina 1987, 118.

23.3 *Quid tu, Marcia?*: All modern editors, including Reynolds 1977, write *Quid? Tu, Marcia* – although **A** reads *Quid tu Marcia*, with a little punctuation mark at the start of the new line after Marcia's name. Ricottilli 1982, 118, has convincingly argued that in this and many other similar contexts the modern editions of classical texts have obscured the colloquial formula *quid tu?* (or *quid vos?*), which is typical of the Latin *Umgangssprache* and is sometimes deployed in literary texts with the purpose of investing them with a dialogic quality. As a "formula allocutivo-introductiva" with a strong *phatic* and *conative* function (in the sense of Jakobson 1990, 73), *quid tu* serves to capture (or re-capture) the addressee's attention, especially when the author shifts to a new and more important topic or raises a relevant objection (Ricottilli 1982, 129–132). With their peculiar dialogic structure, Seneca's works provide several examples of the use

of *quid tu?* “nella continua allocuzione esplicita ad un *tu* che può conglobare in sé una parte dello stesso *ego*” (Ricottilli 1982, 146–151).

***prudentiam*:** From *Marc.* 23.3 to 24.4, Seneca engages even more fully with the traditional Roman genre of the *laus mortui*, extolling Metilius’ moral and physical qualities (cf. above, 17.7; 22.2). At this final stage, Seneca’s portrait of Metilius is enriched through more direct allusions to Stoic moral theory, for Metilius is said to possess the cardinal virtue of *prudentia* – which is Cicero’s translation for *φρόνησις* in *Off.* 1.153 (cf. also *Inv.* 2.160, and the Stoic definition in Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.5b1) – to have an intellect (*animus* = *λόγος*) free from vice (*caurentem vitio*) in a specifically anti-hedonistic sense (*victorem omnium voluptatum*), and to be able to use external goods without developing the attendant vices. The last point is made through a rhetorically effective triad of parallel expressions (*divitias sine avaritia, honores sine ambitione, voluptates sine luxuria*), which jointly point out Metilius’ exemption from three common “sicknesses” (*νοσήματα*), as the Stoics had them (Stob. *Ecl.* 2.7.10b-e; 2.7.21; Graver 2007, 142–143): fondness for money (*avaritia* = *φιλαργυρία*), love of fame (*ambitio* = *φιλοδοξία, δοξομανία*), and fondness for pleasure (*luxuria* = *φιληδονία*). With an emphatic tone which is line with the conventions of the Roman *laudatio funebris*, Seneca claims that Metilius had already achieved “perfect virtue” (*perfecta virtus*) – a moral condition that in more ‘technical’ contexts is said to be extremely rare (*Const. sap.* 7.1; *Ep.* 42.1).

***ad summum pervenit*:** The idea that people living shorter lives are also more virtuous is a consolatory commonplace with deep roots in folkloric and poetic wisdom. Plutarch (*Cons. ad Apoll.* 111B), for instance, argues that “moral excellence” (*τὸ καλόν*) does not reside in “length of time” (*ἐν μήκει χρόνου*) but in “virtue and timely fitness” (*ἐν ἀρετῇ καὶ τῇ καιρίῳ συμμετρίᾳ*), which are the real “tokens of good fortune and of divine favor” (*εὐδαμον καὶ θεοφιλές*). According to Plutarch (who quotes Hom. *Od.* 15.245–246), this is the reason why ancient poets traditionally represent “those heroes who were pre-eminent and sprung from the gods” (*τοὺς ὑπεροχωτάτους τῶν ἡρώων καὶ φύντας ἀπὸ θεῶν*) as “quitting this life before old age” (*πρὸ γήρωσ ἐκλιπόντας τὸν βίον*). When including Metilius in such a privileged class of individuals (cf. also Men. fr. 125 Kock; Plaut. *Bacch.* 817), Seneca introduces the general biological principle that whatever reaches its climax is close to its end. This principle is carefully expounded by ancient scientific writers – especially by those writers, such as Aristotle and the Stoics, who adopt a teleological perspective on natural life (Rocca 2017) – but its spread is reflected in both scientific and non-scientific texts with moralizing purposes: for the former category, see e.g., Plin. *HN* 21.1 (*magna [. . .] admonitione hominum, quae spectatissime floeant, celerrime marcescere*); for the latter, see Sen. *Suas.* 1.3 (*quidquid ad summum pervenit, incremento non relinquit locum,*

which is remarkably close to Seneca's second formulation of the same idea at 23.4: *ubi incremento locus non est, vicinus occasus est*). Moreover, by deploying the example of the duration of fires, Seneca shows his interest in the properly physical side of the argument. This becomes even more evident if one considers that in Stoic physics fire is one of the two fundamental components of the soul, and that Seneca's text creates a studied parallelism between "brighter fire" (*ignis clarior*) and "brighter intellects" (*ingenia inlustriora*). Notably, whereas some sources report that the Stoics see the soul as a mixture of fire and air (e.g., *SVF* 2.786–787), many other texts attest that early Stoic philosophers, including Zeno, define the soul simply as fire or warmth (*SVF* 1.134; 2.785, 806, 1045), a definition which "is related to excellence or the divine" and is especially relevant to the case of the sage insofar as "the change to wisdom should apparently be understood as a physical change to the level of fire only" (Brouwer 2014, 75–76). Hence, by including Metilius among the "brighter intellects" comparable to intense fires, Seneca subtly strengthens his point about Metilius' early achievement of perfect virtue.

23.5 Fabianus: Papius Fabianus was a respected rhetorician and philosopher of the early Julio-Claudian era who lectured the young Seneca (Griffin 1976, 39–40). According to Seneca the Elder (*Contr.* 2.praef.1–5), Fabianus was a pupil of the rhetoricians Arellius Fuscus and Rubellius Blandus and started his career as a declaimer, displaying a simple but allegedly obscure and weak style (see Huelsenbeck 2018, 65–152, for a critical reassessment). He soon turned to philosophy, studying under Q. Sextius and showing a typically Sextian interest in both ethical and physical issues (Lana 1992, 117–122; Hadot 2007, 187–188). Seneca (*Ep.* 100) is more generous than his father in judging Fabianus' style and describes him as "a man noteworthy because of his life, his knowledge, and, less important than either of these, his eloquence also" (*vir egregius et vita et scientia et, quod post ista est, eloquentia quoque, Ep.* 40.12; cf. also *Ep.* 11.4; 52.11; 58.6; *Brev. vit.* 10.1; Berti 2018, 313–315). It has been convincingly argued that Seneca's unusual early exposure to a man like Fabianus played an essential role in his choice of doing 'primary' philosophy rather than exegetical or 'missionary' work (Inwood 2005, 13). Certainly, Fabianus' original combination of moral vigor and scientific curiosity – as displayed in his lost work in several books *On Natural Causes* (*Libri Causarum Naturalium*, cf. Charisius, *Ars Gramm.* 135.19–23 Barwick) – exerted a long-standing influence on Seneca, who still recalled Fabianus' physical theories in his late *Natural Questions* (3.27.3). It is possible also that the story of the boy with the physique of an enormous man reported in the present passage is borrowed from Fabianus' writing *On Natural Causes* (whose enduring relevance is confirmed by Pliny, *HN* 36.125), especially

because Seneca's *Natural Questions* discuss a number of similar *portenta*. However, since Seneca (*Ep.* 100.9) claims that Fabianus wrote more philosophical works than Cicero – including a treatise on legal and/or political issues (*Libri Civilium*, *Sen. Ep.* 100.1) which may have recorded curious anecdotes of Rome's recent past (*quod nostri quoque parentes videre . . . Romae fuisse*) – it is impossible to attain any certainty regarding the exact source of Seneca's *exemplum*.

statura ingentis viri tante: The reading *ante* in **A** may be either the prefix of a lost verb or the preposition before a lost noun. Both possibilities have been contemplated over the past two centuries, and a host of conjectures has been offered (many of them involving substantial textual additions and unnecessary corrections of the preceding words). A rich list of emendations can be found in Traina 1990, 52–54, who proposes his own correction (*statura<m> ingentis viri <aequ>ante<m>*) but agrees with Reynolds 1977 that “questo è un caso da *crux*”. Since Seneca's sentence has a clear meaning even without *ante*, earlier editors (including Haase) simply deleted *ante*, but it is difficult to think that the MS reading is not the vestige of a longer expression. Among the less invasive solutions are Abel's *ante annos* (cf. *Verg. Aen.* 9.311) and Thörnell's *ante tempus*, the latter finding support in other Senecan *loci* (*Ira* 1.17.5; *Ep.* 13.4; 22.6; 74.33; 88.33). Recently, Hine 2014, 41 n. 88, has transposed *ante* to before *dixit*.

consumpta sunt: The last two sentences of the present chapter are further formulations (the third and the fourth ones, respectively) of the general teleological principle that a natural entity reaching its maturity heads towards the end (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 23.4, *ad summum pervenit*). Seneca's insistence is not just a matter of rhetorical *variatio* and *repetitio* but mirrors a willingness to inculcate in Marcia a fundamental truth of Stoic cosmology, the rational understanding of which – unlike the *exempla* and the appeals to moderation of the first part of the *consolatio* – has the potential to shut down grief completely. In a few lines, Marcia's own father is going to proclaim that the whole cosmos – which the Stoics regard as a living being (*Diog. Laert. Vit.* 7.142) – will disintegrate “when the time comes” (*cum tempus advenerit*, 26.6), that is, when the cosmic organism reaches its maturity.

24.1 non annis: Resuming his earlier critique of the popular concept of untimely death (cf. 20.1–4; 21.4), Seneca urges Marcia to realize that Metilius lived sufficiently long (*satis diu vixit*), since the life of a person should be assessed in terms of his virtues (*virtutibus*), not of his years. As usual, Seneca's stance is in perfect agreement with the Stoic tradition, for whereas Aristotle (*Eth. Nich.* 1098A18–20; cf. also 1177a.24–26) contends that to be happy takes “a complete lifetime” (ἐν βίῳ τελείῳ) insofar as “one day” (μία ἡμέρα) or “a brief period”

(ὀλίγος χρόνος) of happiness do not make a man “blessed and happy” (μακάριον καὶ εὐδαίμονα), both the Epicureans and the Stoics make the counter-cultural point that the achievement of happiness and wisdom is not dependent on the length of life. For the Epicurean position, see Torquatus’ account in Cic. *Fin.* 1.63 (cf. also 2.87–88). As for the Stoics, the above-mentioned point is strongly made by Chrysippus (*SVF* 3.54) and is effectively summarized by Cicero’s Cato (Cic. *Fin.* 3.45 = *SVF* 3.524), according to whom moral appropriateness (*opportunitas* = εὐκαιρία), right conduct (*recta effectio* = κατόρθωσις), and the good (*bonum* = ἀγαθόν) “are not made greater by prolongation” (*non fiunt temporis productione maiora*). As Cato explains, “on this ground the Stoics do not deem a happy life to be any more attractive or desirable if it is lasting than if it is brief” (*ob eamque causam Stoicis non videtur optabilior nec magis expetenda beata vita, si sit longa, quam si brevis*, Cic. *Fin.* 3.46). The same view is upheld by Marcus Aurelius (12.35) and lies at the heart of Seneca’s *Epistle* 93 (cf. also *Ep.* 73.13; 74.27; 77.20; *Ben.* 5.17.6). Seneca’s restatement of the superiority of virtue over time is particularly suitable here since both Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.109) and Plutarch (*Cons. ad Apoll.* 111A) attest that this is one of those philosophical arguments that had easily entered the consolatory tradition (Kassel 1958, 83–84).

Pupillus: Seneca provides us with further valuable details about the life of Metilius and his family. It was typical of the *laudationes funebres* (whose style Seneca echoes here) to present a eulogistic description of the deceased and the surrounding family. We are told that Marcia’s husband died when Metilius was a little child and that Metilius was left as a ward in the care of guardians (*sub tutorum cura*) until he was fourteen. This picture agrees with what we know about the legal institution of *tutela*, which was regarded by the Romans as a most sacred public duty (*officium*), coming ahead of duty to *clientes*, *hospites*, and *cognati* (e.g., Gell. *NA* 5.13.1–5; Saller 1994, 190–191), precisely because, as Cicero (*Verr.* 2.1.153) reminds us, it was of utmost importance to assure that the children’s “deprivation and young years” (*solitudo et pueritia*) would be “protected by as firm a protection as possible” (*quam firmissimo praesidio munita sit*). Metilius’ father (whose identification with Metilius Rufus, the dedicatee of Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ *On Literary Composition*, is much more shaky than Griffin 1976, 57, is prepared to admit) must have appointed his son’s guardians in his will, for this was the common practice in Roman law (Gai. *Inst.* 1.144–145), which also prescribed that boys remained under tutelage until they reached the age of puberty (*inpuberibus*) – a fact confirmed by Seneca’s mention of the age of fourteen. By contrast, girls remained under tutelage (under the so-called *tutela mulieris*) even when they grew up, got married, and became women *sui iuris* (cf. Cic. *Mur.* 27). This fact can help us better appreciate the strong rhetorical effect achieved

by Seneca's assertion that Metilius was "always under his mother's guardianship" (*sub matris tutela semper*). In fact, although the practical importance of the *tutela mulieris* became increasingly marginal over time (as women could compel their guardians and conduct business without involving them: Gai. *Inst.* 1.150–154; 190–192), "the *tutela mulieris* worked to bar women from assuming the guardianship over minors, the *tutela impuberis*" on the basis of the principle that "a person under guardianship lacks the capacity to be a guardian" (Benke 2012, 223). Therefore, by suggesting that Marcia was Metilius' guardian (in a moral and symbolic sense), irrespective of his age, Seneca implies that Marcia had always exhibited superior moral strength, vastly superior to the strength that the Romans commonly attributed to women – a point that Seneca had first made at the start of his *consolatio*.

suos penates: As gods of the inner house, the *Penates* (or *dii Penates*) became synonymous with the concepts of house, hearth, and patrilineal identity (e.g., Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 23; Verg. *Aen.* 8.123; Liv. 28.18.2; Jenkyns 2013, 201–230). Again, Seneca's emphasis on the bond of affection between Marcia and Metilius draws on, and plays with, the cultural imaginary of Roman readers, for we are told that although Metilius had his own – i.e., paternal – *penates*, he was not afraid of making the less culturally predictable choice of embracing his maternal *penates* – a choice actualized by Metilius' still living with Marcia. Seneca's underlying claim is that such morally advanced individuals as Metilius are able to overstep the traditionally narrow boundaries of kinship identity – which are embodied in the text by the opposition *suos/tuos* – to build true and enduring relationships. Thus, as often in Seneca, philosophical pedagogy both re-uses and revises social models.

militiam recusavit: This is the peak of Seneca's strategy of cultural revision for eulogistic and moralizing purposes. As both Favez 1928, 94, and Manning 1981, 140, point out, Seneca's praise of a young man refusing military service to stay at home with his mother stands in stark contrast with earlier Roman paradigms of manliness, patriotism, and family education. Although one can admit that Roman values changed over time, and that the imperial era witnessed an increasing predominance of the politically inoffensive *Privatleben* over the martial ideology of the Republican elite, it is also clear that Seneca's personal views and rhetorical leanings played a decisive role in the construction of this anti-traditional discourse. On the one hand, by mentioning Metilius' "stature (*statura*), fine appearance (*pulchritudine*), and robust physical strength (*certo corporis robore*)", Seneca includes in his *laudatio* the conventional element of "the praise of the body" (*laus corporis*), which according to the *Auctor ad Herennium* (3.10) is an integral part of epideictic rhetoric (*demonstrativum*

genus = ἐγκωμιαστικόν/ἐπιδεικτικόν, cf. Quint. *Inst.* 3.4.12–14) and consists in references to a person’s vigor (*vires*) and health (*valetudo*). On the other hand, however, Seneca uses the *laus corporis* to make the unconventional point that the natural bond between parent and child – as understood in the Stoic theory of οἰκείωσις, with its series of concentric circles (Stob. *Ecl.* 4.671.7–673.11) – comes before other social obligations such as the military tribunate (*militia*) – which was often used by upper-class young men to start a political career but was famously shunned by Seneca himself (Griffin 1976, 46).

24.2 *Computa*: A straightforward appeal to Marcia’s rationality in accordance with the Stoic view of emotions as cognitive beliefs (Graver 2007, 16–34). At this final stage of his therapeutic program, Seneca can reduce the space for conventional rhetoric and *exempla* and engage Marcia in an ethically constructive use of ‘computational’ rationality, which is exemplified here by a quantitative (and comparative) assessment of time.

***excellentis ingeni et aequaturi avum*:** This *laus animi* complements Seneca’s earlier *laus corporis* in compliance with the standards of ancient epideictic rhetoric (*Rhet. Her.* 3.10). Since the duty of a noble Roman youth was to equate, and compete with, his ancestors – especially by practicing the virtues most characteristic of his *genus* (Hölkeskamp 2010, 123; Tutrone 2019a, 96–104) – Seneca maintains that Metilius would have turned out to excel in the field of “intellectual pursuits” (*studia*) in which his grandfather (*avum*) Cremutius Cordus had already excelled. The cultural logic behind this claim is the same as that which underlies Seneca’s statement at the start of the *consolatio* that Marcia’s *studia* are “a blessing inherited from her father” (*hereditarium et paternum bonum*, 1.6). As for Seneca’s assertion that Metilius’ intellectual career was inhibited by his modesty (*verecundia*, cf. above, 19.6: *verecundae aures*), a useful point of comparison is provided by the apologetic tone of Roman aristocratic epitaphs for the prematurely dead. A case in point is the second century BC inscription on the sarcophagus of Scipio Hispanus (*ILLRP* 316), who died around the age of forty and could not achieve any higher post than the praetorship. Just as Scipio Hispanus is praised for being a virtuous member of his family despite his failure to achieve the higher offices held by his father and grandfather (Flower 1996, 169–170; Hölkeskamp 2010, 108, 115–116), Metilius is eulogized by Seneca for his outstanding intellectual qualities, which nonetheless remained mostly unrealized if compared to those of Cremutius.

24.3 *feminarum turba viros corrumpentium*: An allusion to Metilius’ “uncommonly handsome appearance” (*rarissimae formae*) – which is a further concession to the rhetoric of the *laus corporis* – allows Seneca to contrast the moral virtue of his *laudandus* with the vicious inclinations of contemporary Roman women. In another consolatory context (*Helv.* 16.3–4; 19.2), Seneca adopts a very similar strategy as he contrasts the merits of his mother and his aunt with the shamelessness (*inpudicitia*) and wantonness (*petulantia*) of other women – two faults that are included in the more general notion of *inprobitas* recalled in the presented passage. Both in his consolations and in his *Epistles*, Seneca contends that men and women should stay within the moral boundaries set by providential nature – which, of course, are artfully superimposed on culturally sanctioned gender roles (Williams 2010, 269–274). More precisely, as Gazzarri 2014, 211–217, remarks, Seneca’s recurring complaint is that most women display a disruptive tendency to depart from their passive, receptive, and reproductive role (but see the important correctives mentioned above in the notes on *Marc.* 1.1; 16.1–4). Just like the licentious *feminae* of *Ep.* 95.20–21, who dare to act as the insertive partner in sexual intercourse, the women who court Metilius are blamed for subverting the natural order of male power, for in Roman culture sexual advances typically pertain to the sphere of the masculine active role. This is a point often made by Roman epigramists and satirists (Boehringer 2007, 261–331). It is no accident that in our passage Metilius’ ‘paradoxical’ reaction to feminine *inprobitas* is the redness of the blush (*erubuit*), which is a characteristic manifestation of *pudor*. As Barton 1999, 212, points out, “the blush and the sensitivity to shame were so inextricably linked in Roman thought that the words *pudor* and *rubor*, ‘shame’ and ‘redness’, were often used together or interchangeably” (cf. also Pl. *Chrm.* 158C, for a Greek parallel). By blushing, Metilius exhibits the *pudor* that his ‘inverted’ female admirers have failed to show in blatant disregard of cultural rules (cf. e.g., *Ov. Am.* 2.5.36). However, this does not mean that Metilius behaves outside of traditional gender norms, for in *Ep.* 11.1–5 Seneca makes clear that, as a pre-emotion (προπάθεια), the blush can be an unmistakable sign of modesty (*verecundia*) appearing in youths and adults alike – wise men included. See also *Sen. Ira* 2.2.1.

***sacerdotio*:** Metilius’ early achievement of a priesthood has already been mentioned by Seneca at 12.3 (*cito sacerdos*). It is impossible to ascertain with precision which priesthood Metilius was awarded and when. Like the adverb *cito* at 12.3, the term *puer* is a rhetorical ploy emphasizing Metilius’ precocious virtue in accordance with the conventions of the *laudatio* genre. Although, as Manning 1981, 141, reminds us, Julius Caesar was appointed *flamen Dialis* at the age of thirteen, there is no need to imagine that Metilius obtained his

sacerdotium at such an early age, since Latin writers often describe grown-up youths as *pueri* (a case in point is Cicero’s mention of Octavian in *Fam.* 12.25.4, and *Phil.* 4.3.1; cf. also Verg. *Aen.* 11.42; Sil. *Pun.* 15.33) and, as Weinrib 1990, 143, observes, “there is no indication that at the time of his priesthood Metilius was too young to be married: he was certainly of sufficient age to hold a military tribunate”. Just as Metilius refused a *militia* when he was *adulescens*, he was granted a *sacerdotium* when he was *puer admodum* – the words *adulescens* and *puer* being substantially synonyms in Seneca’s eulogy of Metilius’ precociousness (Balbo 1997, 17–21). Of course, one can safely rule out the possibility that Metilius held his priesthood between the time of Cremutius’ prosecution (25 AD) and that of Sejanus’ fall (31 AD), for Sejanus (and Tiberius) would have hardly tolerated it. According to Giancotti 1957, 54–58, Metilius’ appointment after 31 BC could be part of an anti-Sejanian reaction, but there is admittedly no evidence for this and, as Giancotti himself acknowledges, Metilius was primarily seen by his patriarchally minded contemporaries as the son of his father – rather than as the grandson of his maternal *avus*. Furthermore, there is good reason to agree with Wallace-Hadrill 1996, 303, that Seneca’s allusion to Marcia’s “maternal backing” (*materna suffragatione*) refers to the intercession of empress Livia, whose friendship with Marcia has been recalled at 4.2. We know that Livia supported the careers of several senators (see e.g., Suet. *Galb.* 5.2; Plut. *Galb.* 3.2; Suet. *Otho* 1.1; Tac. *Ann.* 5.2.2; Boatwright 2021, 29), and since Livia died in 29 AD, Metilius is likely to have held his priesthood before that date – i.e., before Cremutius’ trial in 25 AD, a fact that would contribute to explaining Seneca’s insistence on a ‘rhetoric of precocity’. If, as is likely, Marcia was born around 25–20 BC (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 4.2. *Juliae Augustae*), Metilius may well have been in his twenties in the period immediately preceding 25 AD. At that time, Metilius was a *puer* just as the nineteen-year-old Octavian was a *puer* in 44 BC (Cic. *Fam.* 12.25.4).

24.4 *filium gere quasi <sinu>*: Since both the reading of **A** (*gere quam si*) and that of **γ** (*geri quid si*) are meaningless, the most recent editors (including Vianino 1963 and Reynolds 1977) accept Haase’s correction *gere quasi sinu* (which is preferable to Madvig’s *in sinu*) and add a full stop before *nunc*. This is a more than reasonable *restitutio textus*, not only because the expression *sinu gerere* (or *gestare*) is commonly used with reference to a mother’s embrace (see e.g., Vell. Pat. 2.75.3; Tac. *Ann.* 1.40, both describing Livia’s flight with the little Tiberius after the Perusian War), but also because Seneca’s metaphor in this final section nicely complements his initial metaphorical depiction of Marcia “embracing” (*teneas*) and “clinging” (*amplexeris*) to her grief as to an emotional surrogate of Metilius (cf. above, 1.5). Just as Marcia’s cognitive error was mirrored

by her mistaken use of imagination, the philosophical “contemplation of virtues” (*contemplatione virtutum*) suggested here by Seneca is a therapeutic exercise in visualization which can present to Marcia the true self of her son. Quite significantly, whereas in 1.5 Marcia’s grief (*dolorem*) had been described as a shallow and illusory replacement for the loss of Metilius, the lucid contemplation of Metilius’ moral achievements is now introduced as a guarantee of painlessness (*numquam maerori erit*) – that is, of ἀπάθεια.

plena voluptatis: Here the term *voluptas* is equivalent to *gaudium* (= χαρά), the rational joy included by the Stoics among the ‘good’ emotions (εὐπάθειαι): see above, notes on *Marc.* 3.3, *voluptates honestas, permissas*, and on 5.2, *maxima voluptate*. Seneca puts repeated emphasis on the importance of rational knowledge and understanding for the experience of this special kind of pleasure, as he claims that Marcia will have a happy future only if she knows (*scis*) how to enjoy her son and understands (*intellegis*) what was most valuable about him. The edifying emotion that Seneca promises Marcia closely resembles one of the three sub-species of Stoic joy mentioned by ps.-Andron. *De pass.* 6 (= *SVF* 3.432), that is, the “cheer” (εὐφροσύνη) aroused by the deeds of a sound-minded person (ἐπὶ τοῖς τοῦ σώφρονος ἔργοις).

24.5 aeternus: Seneca’s claim that Metilius is now “eternal”, and his subsequent statement that “eternal rest” (*aeterna requies*) awaits the human soul, might be thought to be inconsistent with Stoic orthodoxy, since no Stoic philosopher seems to have ever regarded the soul as everlasting or imperishable (ἀφθαρτος) – which, as Long 2019, 63–85, has shown, is not synonymous with “immortal” (ἀθάνατος), the former adjective implying not only that the soul does not die with the body, but also that it is never destroyed (see also Ramelli/Konstan 2007, on the Greek language of eternity). To mention three representative precedents, Cleanthes maintains that all souls perish in the final conflagration, Chrysippus argues that only the souls of the wise last until the end of each cosmic cycle (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.157), and Panaetius, though arguing for the eternity (ἀφθαρσία) of the world (Philo, *De aetern. mund.* 76), holds that all souls are born, suffer, deteriorate, and die (Cic. *Tusc.* 1.79 = frs. 56, 83 van Straaten). Seneca’s position on the soul’s destruction has been characterized as “agnostic” or “undecided” (Long 2019, 162–163), and his “multifarious and often discordant statements” have been said to become consistent only when they are seen in the light of the predominant moral *adhortatio* (Setaioli 2013, 469) or of its “larger rhetorical and therapeutic momentum” (Williams 2021, 322, noting nonetheless that Seneca “implicitly favors” the belief in the survival of the soul after death). True, in *Epistle* 102 – where the meditation upon the eternity of the soul (*cogitatio . . . aeternitatem proponere*) is warmly recommended

and a glowing picture of the celestial afterworld is painted (*Ep.* 102.26–29) – Seneca compares his own meditation on this subject to a pleasant, Ciceronian-like dream (*iucundum somnium*) and admits that many great authors promise, but hardly manage to prove, this most pleasing state of affairs (*magnorum virorum rem gratissimam promittentium magis quam probantium*, *Ep.* 102.2). Moreover, the first ‘materialistic’ side of the Socratic alternative (on which see above, the general introduction to 19.3–25) is never discarded in Seneca’s writings. Yet, there is good reason to think that in the present passage Seneca is not departing from Stoic orthodoxy as he is not really arguing that Metilius’ soul is imperishable. The meaning of the adjective *aeternus* here is the same we find at the end of the *consolatio* (26.7), where Cremutius proclaims that during the final conflagration “the blessed souls destined for eternity” (*felices animae et aeterna sortitae*) shall be returned to their original elements. As already recognized by Hoven 1971, 110; 120, in the *ad M.* the sense of the word *aeternus* is narrowed in view of the Stoic theory of the universal ἐκπύρωσις (“le sens du mot [. . .] doit être restreint en fonction de la croyance stoïcienne en la conflagration universelle”; see also Benoit 1948, 43 n. 26). This is by no means a uniquely Senecan usage of *aeternus*, for, as Philippon 1941, 20–36, pointed out, Cicero’s Stoic spokesman Balbus repeatedly employs the words *aeternus*, *sempiternus*, and *aeternitas* with reference to one cosmic cycle (see e.g., *Nat. D.* 2.16, 36, 43, 51). The same usage is widely attested in Cicero’s *On the Commonwealth* (1.26; 3.3, 34b; 6.17, 25–28), whose finale is the most important intertextual presence in the concluding chapters of our *consolatio* (cf. also Long 2019, 79). It would be odd to suppose that – here as well as in *Helv.* 11.7, and *Polyb.* 9.7 – Seneca gives a more comprehensive (or a technically different) meaning to *aeternus*. Thus, *pace* Setaioli 2013, 477, one can confidently rule out “the possibility that Seneca’s sentimental longing for an unlimited immortality of the soul may have superimposed itself upon orthodox Stoic doctrine”.

Imago: This is just the first of a series of metaphors of the body which are overtly indebted to the Platonic tradition. In *Leg.* 959A–B, for instance, Plato claims that “in actual life what makes each of us to be what he is is nothing else than the soul (ἐν αὐτῷ τε τῷ βίῳ τὸ παρεχόμενον ἡμῶν ἕκαστον τοῦτ’ εἶναι μηδὲν ἀλλ’ ἢ τὴν ψυχὴν), while the body is a semblance which attends on each of us (τὸ δὲ σῶμα ἰνδαλλόμενον ἡμῶν ἐκάστοις ἔπεσθαι), and it is well said that the bodily corpses are images of the dead (καὶ τελευτησάντων λέγεσθαι καλῶς εἶδωλα εἶναι τὰ τῶν νεκρῶν σώματα)”. As mentioned earlier (see above, notes on *Marc.* 23.1–2), no deviation from Stoic orthodoxy can be detected in Seneca’s re-use of such famous Platonic images, which were already part of the Stoic reception of Plato and had become a ubiquitous feature of the Hellenistic and Roman reflections on death, the soul, and the afterworld –

consolatory literature being just one facet of this constellation of reflections. Here it may be worth citing for comparison Cicero’s claim in *Rep.* 6.26 that a human is not what his physical shape (*forma*) reveals as his inner divine self is a fragment of the cosmic god – a Platonic idea which had long been assimilated in the Stoic tradition (Wildberger 2006a, I, 221–243). Moreover, it should be recognized that “in Seneca a material meaning, more in keeping with Stoic monism, tends to superimpose itself upon the metaphysical import of the original conception, as confirmed by Seneca’s own statement that the supposed ‘punishment’ ends up affecting the body rather than the soul” (Setaioli 2013, 471).

oneribus alienis: The metaphor of the body as a burden has clear Platonic roots as well (see e.g., Pl. *Phd.* 81C), has already been recalled in the *consolatio* (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 23.1, *faecis, ponderis*), and often recurs in Seneca’s writings (e.g., *Helv.* 11.6; *Ep.* 24.17, 26.2, 65.16, 102.26). Seneca carefully re-frames the metaphor to promote his Stoic idea of the self, for he claims that, once stripped of external baggage, Metilius “is left with just himself” (*sibi relictus*).

ossa: Seneca’s focus on human anatomy, with its gradual shift from internal to external organs – from bones and muscles to skin, face, and hands – has no exact parallel in Plato’s dialogues and is more likely to mirror Seneca’s own interest in medical knowledge (Courttil 2015; Gazzarri 2020, 171–222). Cf. *Ep.* 102.25.

vincula animorum tenebraeque: Plato had famously maintained that “we humans are in a kind of prison” (ὡς ἐν τινι φρουρᾷ ἐσμὲν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, *Phd.* 62B) and that the soul should accustom itself to living “free from the body as from fetters” (ἐκλυομένην ὡσπερ δεσμῶν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος, *Phd.* 67D; cf. also 114B: ὡσπερ δεσμοπηρίων; *Phdr.* 250C: δεδεσμευμένοι). Closely connected to this image is that of the body as a tomb and a dark abode of the soul (cf. e.g., Pl. *Grg.* 493A; *Crat.* 400C), which puns on the paronomasia between σῆμα and σῶμα and is indebted to the Orphic tradition (Nightingale 2021, 150–155). As usual, Seneca is likely to have drawn also on later sources, both Greek and Roman, which had reworked Plato’s metaphors. Prominent among such sources are Cicero – according to whom the souls of the wise “have escaped from the chains of the body as if from a prison” (*e corporum vinculis tamquam e carcere evolaverunt, Rep.* 6.14; cf. also *Div.* 1.110; *Tusc.* 1.118) – and the (largely lost) corpus of consolation literature (cf. e.g., Plut. *Cons. ad uxor.* 611D-F; Ps.-Pl. *Ax.* 365E). The same metaphorical associations will frequently resurface in Seneca’s consolatory, philosophical, and scientific oeuvre (e.g., *Helv.* 11.7; *Polyb.* 9.3, 8; *Ep.* 65.21; 76.25; 79.12; 102.30; *QNat.* 1. *praef.*12; 3. *praef.*11).

in falsa: This is another eloquent example of how an originally Platonic notion can acquire consistent meaning in the Stoic system. Plato’s view that worldly realities are *untrue* reflections of archetypal ideas can now be read by Marcia in light of the Stoic doctrine that earthly goods – such as one’s body and life – are not *true* goods but ‘indifferents’, a point which has often been made throughout the *consolatio* (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 7.4; 10.1; 12.3; 17.7; 18.8; 19.5–6; 20.2; 22.3). By entering the condition of death, Metilius ceases to be cut off “from what is real, from where he truly belongs” (*a veris et suis*) – just like the Stoic sage, who, as Seneca notes echoing Chrysippus (*Ep.* 9.14–19), “has a use for hands and eyes and many other things that are needed for everyday living, and yet lacks nothing” (*et manibus et oculis et multis ad cotidianum usum necessariis opus est, eget nulla re*) insofar as “he is self-sufficient” (*se enim ipse contentus est*).

cum hac gravi carne: Seneca is the first Latin writer to use *caro* as a translation for the Greek σάρξ, a term indicating the body – *qua* seat of fleshly appetites – in the works of such differently minded thinkers as Plato (e.g., *Phd.* 96D; *Symp.* 211E; *Resp.* 556D, *Grg.* 518C) and Epicurus (e.g., *RS* 18; *Sent. Vat.* 33). Seneca’s translation (for which see also *Ep.* 65.22; 74.16; 92.10; 102.25; 121.21) may indeed entail a polemic against Epicurean thought (as suggested by Traina 1987, 122) and, conversely, a further appropriation of Plato. Certainly, as already noticed by Manning 1981, 142–143, there is no reason to follow Abel 1964, 230–231, in the belief that Seneca’s usage bears the imprint of the influence of Posidonius and his anti-Epicurean polemic (“eine Art Leitfossil poseidonischen Einflusses”). What is truly noteworthy is that Seneca’s rendering – which stands in contrast with Cicero’s usual translation of σάρξ as *corpus* – is not adopted by any other author until the advent of Christianity, whose supporters will assign a central role to the concept of *caro*/σάρξ in their controversial reflection on the body, death, and resurrection (Perkins 2010).

pura et liquida: The conclusion of the chapter makes even clearer that the transition experienced by Metilius’ soul is of a strictly material character and is thus in accord with Stoic monism. Having returned to its heavenly abode, Metilius’ soul contemplates “pure and bright elements” instead of “mingled and dense ones” (*ex confusis crassisque*), for since the time of Zeno (*SVF* 1.115–116, 120) the Stoics had argued that the heaven and the stars are made up of fire – particularly of “creative fire” (πῦρ τεχνικόν) or “ether” (αἰθήρ) – which is the same ‘intelligent’ substance composing the soul (ὁ δὴ φύσις ἐστὶ καὶ ψυχὴ, *Stob. Ecl.* 1.25.5 = *SVF* 1.120; cf. *Sext. Emp. Adv. Math.* 9.71 = *SVF* 2.812). By contrast, during their life on this planet humans mostly come in contact with earth, water, and their mixtures – which, however, stand in a relation of

‘sympathy’ (συμπάθεια) to the heavenly fire due to the movements of air (see e.g., Sen. *QNat.* 2.4; Wildberger 2006a, I, 19–20). The physical cause of both the purity and the brightness mentioned in the present passage is precisely the fire of the heavenly spheres – the *igneus aether* which, according to Seneca (*QNat.* 6.16.2), is “the highest part of the cosmos” (*mundi summa pars*) and, according to Chrysippus (*SVF* 2.642, 644), is “the purest and cleanest element” (τὸν καθαρώτατον καὶ εἰλικρινέστατον). Insofar as such fiery ether liquefies (and purifies) the surrounding environment with its heat and its light, Seneca’s adjective *liquida* can refer to both the fluid and the bright nature of the celestial bodies, which constitute the object of Metilius’ contemplation – the verb *visentem* clearly alluding to the soul’s continuing experience of θεωρία. Already Zeno – whose thoughts about the divine nature of heavenly matter were developed by later Stoics such as Chrysippus and Posidonius (e.g., Diog. Laert. 7.148 = *SVF* 2.1022; Wildberger 2006a, II, 498–501) – had held that the source of the light of the universe lies in the ether of the sky (ἐξ οὗ καὶ ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶ πάντα ἐμφανῶς, *SVF* 1.115), and Cicero (*Nat. D.* 2.39 = *SVF* 2.684) reminds us that according to the Stoics all *sidera* “are formed from the most mobile and the purest part of the ether (*ex mobilissima purissimaque aetheris parte gignuntur*), are not compounded of any other element (*neque ulla praeterea sunt admixta natura*), and are warm and translucent (*totaque sunt calida atque perlucida*)”. Also telling is Pliny’s report (*HN* 2.85) about Posidonius’ view of the “pure and bright air” (*purum liquidumque aëra*) of the heavens. In addition, Seneca’s adjectives *pura et liquida* can be seen as a contrastive allusion to, and a self-conscious Stoicization of, Lucretius’ claim (3.31–40) that “unclouded and pure pleasure” (*voluptatem liquidam puramque*) can be attained only by realizing the material and mortal nature of the soul – which, in turn, leads one to dispel “the fear of Acheron” (*metus Acheruntis*). With his intertextual gesture, Seneca points out that whereas Epicurean philosophy offers only a limited form of happiness and peace, bound as it is by an atomic understanding of the soul, Stoic physics and eschatology pave the way for a future of “eternal rest” (*aeterna requies*; see above, note on *aeternus*), celestial purity, and astral brilliance (cf. also *Ep.* 102.28).

25.1 sepulcrum: A strong attachment to the grave is often observed among bereaved parents of different cultural and historical backgrounds. Contemporary sociological and psychological research has shown that the tomb typically serves as an *interface* – insofar as it is “a point of reference for mediating between the inhabitants of this and other realms” (Refslund Christensen/Sandvik 2014, 256) – and as a *heterotopia* – that is, according to the comprehensive definition of Foucault 1986b, 24, as “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within culture, are simultaneously

represented, contested, and inverted”. Seneca’s insistence on the irrelevance of the body, and consequently of the grave, seems to imply that Marcia’s “complicated grief” (Jedan 2017, 165, referring back to Machin 2009, 45–47) features such a common form of attachment and contestation. This is not surprising since Roman culture, like other ancient Mediterranean cultures, conceives of graves as socially meaningful art objects, whose commemorative function is important “not only to assert the success and status of the family, but as a method of providing comfort and continuum for both the bereaved relatives and for those contemplating and planning for their own death” (Ackers 2019, 123). *Qua* art objects reaffirming the identity and the bonds of the family, Roman aristocratic *sepulcra* – such as that of Metilius – become “devices for securing the acquiescence of individuals in the network of intentionalities in which they are enmeshed” (Gell 1992, 43). In this respect, too, ancient philosophy has disseminated a countercultural message at least since the fourth century BC, when Plato’s Socrates (*Phd.* 115C-E) mocks Crito’s widely shared concern about the ways of burial – a concern rooted in the archaic Greek myth of the “beautiful death” (Vernant 2001, Loraux 2018). Socrates uses the same argument employed here by Seneca, i.e., that one’s true self does not remain in the corpse. Along with other Socratic teachings, this line of argument is inherited by the Stoics, who regard the body as an ‘indifferent’ and argue for the separation of soul and body at death *qua* distinct physical entities (*SVF* 2.790–800; Brennan 2009). Seneca’s disapproval of the ancient preoccupation with funeral rites and monuments emerges also from other works (*Brev. vit.* 20.6; *Ep.* 92.34–35). However, outside the Socratic movement, the same polemic is found among the Epicureans (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 10.118 = fr. 578 Usener; Lucr. 3.870–893; Diog. Oen. fr. 73 Smith), who, in contrast to the Stoics, base their criticism of burial rites on the view that the soul and any form of sensation are destroyed with the body (Epicurus, *Ep. Men.* 125).

vestes: The metaphor of the body (σάρξ) as a garment (χιτών) is a common place attested from Empedocles (fr. 126 Diels) to Teles (16 Hense) and Porphyry (*Abst.* 1.31). It seems to have been originally connected with the Orphic-Pythagorean belief in metempsychosis (Dodds 1963, 307–308) – i.e., with the belief that a soul can inhabit different bodies just as a man can wear different clothes – a belief which is known to Seneca (*Ep.* 108.19–21) but is never embraced in his extant writings (Setaioli 2013, 464–474). Crucial for the *Fortleben* of this metaphor are Plato’s dialogues (e.g. *Phd.* 87B-E; *Grg.* 523C-525A) and their multi-faceted reception in Jewish and Christian writers (e.g., Clem. Al. *Exc. Theod.* 3.61.8, 63.1; Hoon Kim 2004), for Plato variously describes the body as a “cloth” (ἱμάτιον), a “woven robe” (ὑφασμα), or “wraps” (ἀμφιέσματα). Yet, it is far from certain that Seneca – who deploys the same image in *Ep.* 92.13;

102.25 – is borrowing directly from Plato or from other philosophical sources, since the body-clothing analogy appears in a wide range of genres, including Attic tragedy (Eur. *HF* 1269), and must have been readily incorporated into the consolatory tradition. Remarkable evidence on the latter point comes from Plutarch’s verbatim quotation (*Cons. ad Apoll.* 120D-121D) of one of Plato’s garment metaphors (*Grg.* 523A-524B).

supra nos commoratus: The place where Metilius’ soul is purified and gets rid of any remaining faults is the sublunar atmosphere “between the heavens and earth” (*inter caelum terrasque*) mentioned in the *Consolation to Helvia* (20.2), where this transitory abode of the soul is also identified with the seat of meteorological phenomena (of the so-called μετέωρα). A clear-cut division of natural events into *terrena*, *sublimia*, and *caelestia* is presented in the *Natural Questions* (2.1.1–2), which in fact situate meteorological phenomena in the sphere of *sublimia* as “they go on between the heavens and the earth” (*inter caelum terramque versantia*; cf. also Cic. *Tusc.* 1.43, on the belief that the soul goes through the sphere of the μετέωρα before reaching the fiery heavens). According to Setaioli 2013, 476, Seneca’s belief that the soul undergoes a period of purgation in the sublunar atmosphere is a “Platonizing element” with no appropriate parallel in the Stoic tradition, and the present passage contains “the only unquestionable trace of retribution for faults incurred during earthly life that can be found in Seneca” (cf. also Setaioli 1995, 207–237, with further references). However, as already noticed by Manning 1981, 144–145, a crucial difference separates Seneca’s idea of purgation and retribution from that of Plato (*Phd* 113A-114C; *Resp.* 611A-621D) and of the Platonic tradition, for whereas Seneca understands the removal of the soul’s impurities as a preparatory stage for the blessed life in the heavenly spheres, Plato and his followers develop the Pythagorean idea that the soul purifies itself to reincarnate in a new body. Among Roman writers, Virgil (*Aen.* 6.735–742) influentially illustrates this Pythagorean-Platonic theory, assigning to such classical μετέωρα as wind, whirlpools, and heavenly fires a morally purgative function. By contrast, Cicero (*Rep.* 6.29), like Seneca, argues that after circling “around the earth” (*circum terram*) and “having been harried for many generations” (*multis exagitati saeculis*), the souls previously enslaved to pleasure return to heaven (cf. also *Tusc.* 1.75, and above, notes on *Marc.* 23.1). A very similar conception underlies Plutarch’s eschatological myth in *On the Face in the Moon* (*De fac.* 943C), where every soul is said to “be destined to wander in the region between earth and moon but not for an equal time” (εἰμαρμένον ἐστὶν <ἐν> τῷ μεταξύ γῆς καὶ σελήνης χωρὶς πλανηθῆναι χρόνον – οὐκ ἴσον). For Plutarch, while “unjust and licentious souls pay penalties for their offences” (αἱ μὲν ἄδικοι καὶ ἀκόλαστοι δίκας τῶν ἀδικημάτων τίνουσι), [. . .] “the good souls must

come to the gentlest part of the air, which they call ‘the meads of Hades’, and pass a certain set time sufficient to purge and blow away the pollutions contracted from the body” (τὰς δ’ ἐπιεικείς, ὅσον ἀφαγνεῦσαι καὶ ἀποπνεῦσαι <τοὺς> ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος ὡσπερ ἀτμοῦ πονηροῦ μiasmouς, ἐν τῷ πραοτάτῳ τοῦ ἀέρος, ὃν λειμῶνας Ἄιδου καλοῦσι, δεῖ γίνεσθαι χρόνον τινὰ τεταγμένον), so as to finally “savor joy most like that of initiates” (γεύονται χαρᾶς, οἷαν οἱ τελοῦμενοι μάλιστα). Although it is impossible to identify with precision Cicero’s, Seneca’s, and Plutarch’s sources, it is reasonable to imagine that the Pythagorean and Platonic idea of *post-mortem* purgation has been taken on, and purposely modified, in the Stoic tradition about the ascent of the soul to heaven – a tradition on which all three authors seem to draw. It has been convincingly shown that, despite his well-known Platonic leanings, in the final myth of his *De facie* Plutarch sometimes departs from Plato, sides with Aristotle, and re-uses the materials of Stoics like Posidonius (Bos 1989, 58–59, 71–74; Donini 2011, 336–339, rightly criticizing the thesis of Reinhardt 1926, 313–353, that the whole myth is of Posidonian origin). Even if there is not sufficient evidence to accept Abel’s 1964, 232, reconstruction of the Posidonian background behind “die Läuterung der Seele im sublunarischem Luftraum”, one should concede that this physical-cum-psychological doctrine is consistent with our evidence about the Stoic idea of the afterlife – which, as Meijer 2007, 121–122, points out, features the belief that “there is a life of the souls in the air below the moon”. Noticeably, Plutarch’s identification of Hades with sublunar air finds correspondence not only in the Platonic tradition (Procl. *In R.* 132–133; Olympiodorus, *In Grg.* 237.10–13; Hermias, *In Phdr.* 161.3–9), but also among the Stoics, for Chrysippus’ allegorical interpretation of myth understands Hades as “dark air” (τὸν δὲ σκο[τ]εῖν [scil. ἀέρα] Ἄιδην, *ap. Philod. Piet.* 2 in *PHerc.* 1428, coll. 6.2–4; Vassallo 2015, 99), and in Seneca’s day Cornutus (*Theol.* 5; 35) maintains that Hades is “the densest form of air, closest to the earth” (ὁ παχυμερέστατος καὶ προσγειότατος ἀήρ), “which receives souls” (τὸν δεχόμενον τὰς ψυχὰς ἀέρα). Hence, there is good reason to think that in this respect, too, Seneca’s range of Stoic models extends well beyond Posidonius’ writings – which should in fact be seen as part of the wider Stoic engagement with Plato (Long 2013). Further evidence about the Stoic acceptance of the theory of sublunar purgation comes from Lactantius and Tertullian (*SVF* 1.147; 2.813), who know, and can be influenced by, Cicero and Seneca, but are also likely to draw on other (now lost) sources – mostly doxographical (Waszink 1947, 549–550; Barnes 2009, 447–449). According to Lactantius (*Div. Inst.* 7.7), the Stoic ‘physical’ interpretation of the mythical belief in Hades (*inferi* = Ἄιδης) is as old as Zeno, who locates “the afterlife abodes of the blessed souls” (*sedes piorum*) in “peaceful and delightful regions” (*quietas et delectabiles regiones*) and holds that wicked souls “purge

themselves in dark places” (*luere poenas in tenebrosis locis*, with *tenebrosus* resembling Chrysippus’ σκοτεινός). Elsewhere (*Div. Inst.* 7.20), Lactantius explains that according to the Stoics the souls contaminated by bodily pleasures “have a sort of intermediate nature between mortality and immortality” (*mediam quandam gerere inter immortalem mortalemque naturam*), and that “although they do not become completely perishable by virtue of their divine origin, they nonetheless become susceptible of pain” (*ut si non extinguibiles in totum, quoniam ex Deo sunt, tamen cruciabiles fiant*). Both Tertullian (*De An.* 54.2–3; 55.4) and Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 9.73 = *SVF* 2.812) confirm that the physical location of this eschatological destiny is the air below the moon. In addition, Tertullian reports the entirely compatible view of the Stoic Arius (on whom see above, note on *Marc.* 4.2, *Areo, philosopho viri sui*) that wise souls are lifted up in the air (*sublimantur animae sapientes, apud Arium in aerem, apud Stoicos sub lunam*) and restates that the souls of the unwise (*imprudentes animas*) dwell “around the earth” (*circum terram*, cf. *Cic. Rep.* 6.29) at a lower level than those of the wise (note that von Arnim’s nonsensical reading *prudentes animae*, which is accepted by Manning 1981, 144, should be replaced with the correct reading restored in the edition of Waszink 1947, 73, *imprudentes animae*). Whatever the degree of accuracy of Lactantius’ and Tertullian’s reports, it is hard to deny that Seneca’s description of Metilius’ purification above the earth (*supra nos*) is based on Stoic precedents. By suggesting that Metilius lingered only for a short time (*paulumque*) between the heaven and the earth, Seneca uses Stoic doctrine to corroborate his earlier point that, as a virtuous young man, Metilius was not tainted by any significant flaws (cf. above, *Marc.* 23.1).

25.2 *coetus sacer, Scipiones Catonesque*: By using the words *coetus* and *Scipiones*, Seneca provides a further intertextual clue linking his finale with Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio*. In *Rep.* 6.16, Cicero has Lucius Aemilius Paulus (whom Seneca has mentioned at 13.3) explain to his son Aemilianus that by cultivating justice and piety (*iustitiam et pietatem*) in relation to one’s parents, family, and fatherland – i.e., by rationally following the dictates of Stoic οἰκείωσις (cf. *Cic. Off.* 1.57) – it is possible to join the gathering of those who have ceased to live on earth (*coetum eorum, qui iam vixerunt*) and have moved to heaven. Quite cunningly, Seneca’s plural *Scipiones* includes among the blessed souls Scipio Aemilianus, who is just a sleeping mortal in Cicero’s dialogue. Likewise, the plural *Catones* strengthens the Stoic coloring of Seneca’s description by recalling the figures of Cato the Censor and Cato Uticensis (on the latter see above, *Marc.* 20.6 and 22.3).

<*mortis*> *beneficio*: The reading of **A** is simply *beneficio*, which does not make sense. The scribes of more recent manuscripts tried to find a solution by offering the conjectures *benefici liberi* (instead of *beneficio liberos*) – which is unhelpful – and *mortis beneficio*. The latter conjecture is endorsed by Viansino 1963 and Reynolds 1977 on the basis of Seneca’s phrasing at 20.3 and in *Ep.* 24.11 (*contemptores mortis . . . beneficio eius*, scil. *mortis*). However, since Seneca is referring to suicidal victims “who despised life” (*contemptores mortis*) – a reference made even more conspicuous by Seneca’s inclusion of Cato Uticensis and Cremutius Cordus in Cicero’s *coetus* – it should be acknowledged that Gertz’s emendation *beneficio suo* (accepted by Manning 1981, 145, and Traina 1987, 122–124) is not less reasonable. Such emendation is especially plausible from a paleographic point of view (as *suo* is more likely to be missed than *mortis*) and can rely on several Senecan parallels: *Ep.* 20.7 (*beneficio tuo*); 53.11 (*beneficio suo*); 80.1 (*meo beneficio*). Philosophically, Seneca’s emphasis on the freedom and blessedness resulting from suicide is a restatement of the Stoic doctrine of “well-reasoned exit” (εὐλογος ἐξαγωγή; cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 20.1 and 22.6), which contrasts with Plato’s (*Phd.* 61C; 62B) and Cicero’s (*Rep.* 6.15) denial of the moral legitimacy of suicide.

nepotem suum: Another intertextual clue pointing to the parallel situation in Seneca’s Ciceronian model: Cremutius welcomes Metilius in heaven just as Scipio Africanus had welcomed Scipio Aemilianus. Yet, Seneca also offers an intriguing *variatio* on Cicero’s description, for whereas Scipio Aemilianus was embraced and kissed by his father Aemilius Paulus (*complexus atque osculans*, *Cic. Rep.* 6.14), Seneca has Cremutius “take his grandson under his wing” (*adplicat sibi*). This intertextual shift further overshadows the role of Metilius’ father – a detail which must not have escaped the attention of the patriarchally minded Roman reader.

omnibus omne cognatum est: Seneca recalls the Stoic theory that all rational beings – humans and gods alike – belong to a cosmopolitan community (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 18.2, *urbem dis hominibus communem*). Since the Stoics hold that a fully developed social consciousness arises from the perfection of reason, and that the souls of the wise and the gods embody precisely this kind of perfection (Wildberger 2006a, I, 244–275), it is a logical deduction that life in heaven – as experienced by gods and sages – brings to completion the rational process of social ‘appropriation’ (οἰκείωσις). It is in heaven that the soul realizes a totalizing experience of its natural kinship (συγγένεια = *cognatio*) with the gods (cf. Cleanthes *ap. Stob. Ecl.* 1.1.12 = *SVF* 1.537; *Cic. Leg.* 1.24–26; *Div.* 1.64 = Posidonius, fr. 108 Edelstein-Kidd; *Epict. Diss.* 1.3.3–7; *Gal. Plac. Hipp.*

Plat. 5.6.4–5 = Posidonius, fr. 187 Edelstein-Kidd). Manning’s 1981, 146, doubts in this regard are hard to understand.

nova luce: On the purer and brighter light of the heavens, see Cic. *Rep.* 6.16, and Seneca’s own remarks in *Polyb.* 9.8; *Ep.* 102.28. Pliny (*HN* 2.85 = fr. 120 Edelstein-Kidd) reports Posidonius’ meticulous calculations about the distance between the earth, the intermediate realm of *μετέωρα*, and the clean air of the heavens, which is said to be characterized by “unruffled light” (*inperturbatae lucis*).

meatus: A term often employed in Roman poetical descriptions of the motion of the planets (see, e.g., Lucr. 1.128; Verg. *Aen.* 6.849–850; Lucan. 1.663–664). In this finale (as already in chapters 17–18), Seneca’s language creates a multi-layered network of allusions to both poetic and prose texts. Although, quite regrettably, most of Seneca’s models have not survived to us, one can safely assume that Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio* is just the tip of the iceberg.

nec ex coniectura: It is a common assumption among ancient writers that astronomical knowledge is necessarily conjectural (Barnes 2015, 3–5). After quoting Posidonius’ calculations, Pliny (*HN* 2.85) acknowledges that “these things are not discovered and cannot be disentangled” (*inconperta haec et inextricabilia*), and that the purpose of astronomers is not to achieve “an exact measurement” (*mensura*) – “since to hanker for this is the sign of an almost deranged mind” (*id enim velle paene dementis otii*) – but to content themselves with “a conjectural estimation only” (*ut tantum aestimatio coniectanti constet animo*). When estimating the diameter of the sun, even such a prodigiously gifted scientist as Archimedes (*Aren.* 11) maintains that “it is not easy to grasp this matter with precision (τὸ μὲν οὖν ἀκριβὲς λαβεῖν οὐκ εὐχέρές ἐστι), for neither the eyes nor the hands nor the instruments with which we must grasp it are trustworthy guarantees of precision (διὰ τὸ μήτε τὰν ὄψιν μήτε τὰς χεῖρας μήτε τὰ ὄργανα, δι’ ὧν δεῖ λαβεῖν, ἀξιόπιστα εἶμεν τὸ ἀκριβὲς ἀποφαίνεσθαι)”. For Seneca, knowledge of the heavenly laws is thus a typical instance of the “secrets of nature” (*arcana naturae*, an expression occurring both here and in *Ep.* 102.28), which shall be disclosed after death in all their spectacular splendor (cf. *Polyb.* 9.3: *rerum naturae spectaculo*). This, too, is a *topos* of ancient eschatological thought paradigmatically reflected in Cicero (*Rep.* 6.16–17; *Tusc.* 1.44–47). Yet, whereas Cicero argues in a Platonic fashion that the ultimate understanding of cosmic nature, like every form of human knowledge, has nothing to do with the body and the senses (cf. esp. *Tusc.* 1.46), Seneca observes that Cremutius “relies on his experience of everything as it truly is” (*omnium ex vero peritus*) – that is, on the infallible perception of truth that the Stoic material soul achieves after death.

domesticus interpres: For Metilius, Cremutius is a “domestic expounder” of celestial mysteries just as Cato the Elder was a “domestic example” (*domesticum exemplum*) inspiring Cato the Younger (Cic. *Mur.* 66). The comparison with the guide (*monstrator*) of a visitor to an unfamiliar city posits a subtle contrast between the *comparatum* and the *comparandum*, for while the *monstrator* is usually a foreigner met abroad (e.g., Lucan. 9.979; Tac. *Germ.* 21.2), Cremutius is Metilius’ kindred guide in what ultimately is the true homeland of their souls.

in profunda terrarum: The privileged, far-sighted view of the earth from on high is described as a morally revealing experience also by Cicero (*Rep.* 6.20–25), who has Scipio Africanus urge his grandson to “look at the heavenly bodies and scorn what is human” (*haec caelestia semper spectato, illa humana contemnit*). As noticed by Traina 1975, both Cicero and Seneca are indebted to a cultural tradition that goes back to Plato, if not to Pythagorean thought (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 21.2, *puncti loco*). Also remarkable is the poetically flavored partitive construction *profunda terrarum*, in which the adjective *profundus* is used in a substantivized form with the deeply negative meaning of “bottomless abyss”. The comprehensive survey by Mantovanelli 1981 has shown that, from the time of Ennius to late antiquity, the adjective *profundus* is very often charged with a negative connotation due to its association with the immensurable dimension of vertical space. Seneca offers especially compelling evidence of this usage (e.g., above, *Marc.* 17.2; *Brev. vit.* 10.5; *Polyb.* 9.6; *Ep.* 21.5; 49.3; *Ben.* 7.2.6; Mantovanelli 1981, 175–200), which undergoes substantial changes only in the writings of Augustine and later Christian authors.

permittere aciem <iubet>: In *A* *permittere* lacks a governing verb, for *iuvat* is clearly connected with *despicere* (which is Thomas’ rightful correction of the MS reading *respicere*: cf. above, 23.2; *Polyb.* 9.3; *QNat.* 1.praef.8). Hermes’ supplement *iubet* (which is preferred by Reynolds 1977 to the repetitive *delectat* of γ) is both simple and appropriate – *pace* Viasino 1963, whose emendation of *permittere* into *permittenti* results in an awkward syntactic construction.

25.3 *tamquam sub oculis patris filique*: Seneca’s suggestion that Marcia should behave as though she were in full view of her father and her son follows the same logic which underlies several letters to Lucilius. At the beginning of his course in Stoic philosophy, Lucilius is reminded of what Seneca considers a useful Epicurean precept: “do everything as if Epicurus were watching you” (*Ep.* 11.8–10; 25.5–6 = frs. 210–211 Usener). Seneca’s Stoic version of Epicurus’ precept is that every student of wisdom should interiorize an inspiring (and intimidating) role model such as Cato, Scipio, or Laelius, who will serve as a guard (*custos*) and an example (*exemplum*) by virtue of his moral prestige (*auctoritas*). Seneca adds that it may even be enough to act as if anyone at all were looking on

(*tamquam spectet aliquis*, *Ep.* 25.5), and elsewhere (*Ep.* 32.1) he concedes that he himself could serve as Lucilius' interiorized guard (Reydams-Schils 2011, 300–302; cf. also above, notes on *Marc.* 2.1). Marcus Aurelius (11.26), too, appreciates the spirit of Epicurus' teaching, which, as Bartsch 2006, 200–201, observes, stands in continuity with the Roman aristocratic tradition insofar as “the gaze of the *imagines* was also an imaginary form of surveillance”. Indeed, although Seneca makes clear that the Stoic ideal for more advanced practitioners is self-reliance (*Ep.* 25.6–7), he is also aware that, in Bartsch's words, “the move to self-reliance would come less naturally to a Roman than reliance on the imagined surveillance of a Cato”. Significantly, in the present passage Marcia is invited to conceive of Cremutius and Metilius not as she knew them but as deified wise men – as “far nobler, living in the highest heaven” (*tanto excelsiorum et in summo locatorum*). As in chapters 2–5, the traditional Roman discourse of family exemplarity and memory is combined with, and made functional to, the methods of Stoic psychagogy (Roller 2018, 265–289). Yet, whereas in the first section of the *consolatio* Seneca conjures up more culturally conventional and gender appropriate models (such as Livia and her moral opposite Octavia), he now urges Marcia to contemplate and introject two psychologically engaging – albeit familiar – paradigms of unexpected death, personal suffering, and manly virtue. Of course, one might wonder whether Marcia will ever be ready to move on to the level of self-reliance, but the answer to this question admittedly lies outside our text.

mutatos in melius: It is a well-known commonplace of consolatory literature that the dead should not be mourned over as they have moved on to a better life (*Men. Rhet.* 414.16–27). However, Seneca's use of the substantivized neuter adjective *melius* – which implies that Cremutius and Metilius have been changed into “something better” – alludes more specifically to the Stoic theory that death is a physical transformation improving the material status of the soul. According to Sextus Empiricus (*Adv. Math.* 9.73 = SVF 2.812), the Stoics argued that the souls immersed in the pure air below the moon “manage to live longer (πλείονα πρὸς διαμονὴν λαμβάνουσι χρόνον), find a congenial food in the exhalation that rises from the earth as the rest of the stars do as well (τροφῆ τε χρώνται οικεία τῇ ἀπὸ γῆς ἀναθυμιάσει ὡς καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ ἄστρα), and do not have anything that dissolves them (τὸ διαλυθόν τε αὐτὰς ἐν ἐκείνοις τοῖς τόποις οὐκ ἔχουσιν)”; “therefore, if souls continue to live, they take on the nature of divine beings” (εἰ οὖν διαμένουσιν αἱ ψυχαί, δαίμοσιν αἱ αὐταὶ γίνονται).

†***Aeternarum rerum per libera et vasta spatia dimissit***: Reynolds' 1977 choice of putting a *crux* here is disputable since the reading of **A**, though syntactically elaborated, makes perfect sense. In fact, Viansino 1963 accepts **A**'s reading as genuine. However, a host of conjectures has been offered since the

time of Seneca's medieval scribes. The fifth hand of **A** writes *in aeterna rerum et libera* and the manuscripts of the γ group read *in aeterna rerum per libera et vasta spatia dimissos*. Since both these corrections make the syntactic structure of the sentence even more complicated, modern editors have made other emendations, many of which are listed in Traina 1990, 54–56. Traina builds on Gertz's correction *aeternarum rerum <potiti> per libera et vasta spatia dimissi <sunt>* – which has been accepted by several scholars, including Hine 2014, 41 n. 89 – but tries to make it simpler by writing *aeternarum <potiuntur> rerum per libera et vasta spatia dimissi*. Most recently, Lucarini 2021, 382, has restated that the syntax in **A** is genuine (as shown also by the cretic and spondaic feet in the clausula *spatia dimissi*) and has proposed to correct only *dimissi* into *inmissi* (on the basis of *Ilias Lat.* 45–46 and *Ps.-Quint. Decl. mai.* 8.16). Still, it should be noted that the verb *dimitto* is used with specific reference to the departure of the soul from life both in our *consolatio* (19.1) and in *Brev. vit.* 19.1; *Ep.* 99.22 (cf. also Richter 1956, 197–198).

incertarum vada Syrtilium: *Syrtis* (= Σύρτις) was the name of two dangerous shallow gulfs off the coast of Libya (already mentioned by Hdt. 2.32, 150), which had caused several shipwrecks and had thus become synonymous with the idea of 'destructive obstacle' in both Greek and Latin literature (see *Timoth. Pers.* fr. 15, col. 3.88, and *Cic. De or.* 3.163, the latter, like many poets, mentioning *Syrtis* together with *Charybdis*). Seneca's elegant description of geographical space, with its chiasmic arrangement of marine and terrestrial landscapes (*maria/altitudo montium/valles/vada*), may well be reminiscent of earlier poetic texts (e.g., *Catull.* 64.156). Especially important may have been the influence of Virgil and Augustan poetry: *Prop.* 2.9a.33 (*incerto mutantur flamine Syrtes*); 3.19.7, 24.16; *Verg. Aen.* 1.111, 146; 4.41; 5.51, 192; 6.60; 7.302; 10.678; *Hor. Carm.* 1.22.5; 2.6.3, 2.20.15; *Epod.* 9.31; *Tib.* 3.4.91.

†***omnium plana***: The reading of **A** *omnium plana* is untenable as it is at odds with the syntactic context. The γ manuscripts have *omnia plana*, which, though printed in Viansino 1963, sounds awkwardly incomplete and has been variously emended. Gertz writes *omnia ibi plana*, while Traina has *omnia is (= iis) plana*. Yet, since the remaining part of the phrase is based on a series of plural nominatives (*mobiles, expediti, pervii, intermixti*) referring to the souls of the deceased, it may be preferable to add a verb which has the souls as subject, so as to better connect the different segments of Seneca's assertion. Koch proposes *omnia ineunt plana*, which Reynolds in his apparatus transforms into the more Senecan *omnia plano adeunt*: cf. *Const. Sap.* 1.2 (*plano aditur excelsum*); *Ira* 2.13.1 (*plano adeuntur*). Hine 2014, 41 n. 91, follows Reynolds, but it should

be admitted that this is a deeply transformative emendation, and that Reynold's own choice of putting a *crux* in his text is a wise one.

in vicem pervii sunt intermixtique sideribus: In the conclusion of his penultimate chapter, Seneca puts further emphasis on the Stoic belief that the soul is a material substance, thereby allaying any suspicion that his earlier use of Platonic images implies an adhesion to Platonic dualism. Indeed, Seneca's claim that the souls extracted from the "total blending" (κρᾶσις) with the body (Alex. Aphr. *Mixt.* 217.32–218.10 = *SVF* 2.473) are accessible to each other and mingle with the stars is consistent with what we learn from several other sources. For instance, not only do we know that the Stoics regard the soul as a mixture of fire and air, or as simple fire (see above, note on *Marc.* 23.3, *ad summum pervenit*) – which is the same oscillating description the Stoics give of the heavenly bodies (*SVF* 2.650, 669–674, 677, 682, 684, 686, 692) – but there is also evidence that in Stoic eschatology (*Comm. Bern. in Lucan.* 9.6; 7.816 = *SVF* 2.817, 818) the souls of the wise "travel through the air like stars" (*in modo siderum vagari in aëre*) and are released (*resolvantur*) in the form of their original elements, so as to experience a sense of unity which is impossible to find in the material differentiation of earthly bodies (*quamdiu vivimus, habemus discretionem: mortui unum sumus omnes*). According to Abel 1964, 224–234, the view that there is perfect intercommunication among the souls by virtue of the "unmittelbarer Kontakt von Geist zu Geist" goes back to Posidonius, and Seneca basically offers an ethical interpretation ("eine ethisierende Wendung") of Posidonius' theory. Yet, since the (dubious) evidence for a Posidonian origin of such theory comes only from Cicero – whom Abel simplistically labels as "Posidonios-Cicero" – there is no reason to rule out the possibility that in this case, too, Seneca builds on a wide range of Stoic models.

26 A Consoling and Familiar Apocalypse: Cremutius Cordus' *Prosopopoeia* and Stoic Truth

Seneca chooses to conclude his therapeutic program with a fictional speech – a προσωποποιία or *sermocinatio/conformatio* (*Rhet. Her.* 4.65–66; *Quint. Inst.* 9.2.29–31) – by Cremutius Cordus, Marcia's revered father. This final strategy of persuasion succeeds in combining several discursive forms which have played a major role in the *consolatio* (and are thus familiar to Marcia) with the exposition of an ultimate (and harsh) truth of Stoic philosophy: the unavoidable destiny of death and destruction that awaits not only every individual self but also the entire cosmos, a destiny that the wise person should contemplate and accept with a spirit of sublime ἀπάθεια. This is Seneca's most authentic and effective – though consciously paradoxical – consolation for Marcia and for every bereaved parent.

The first element of Seneca's finale which most naturally arouses Marcia's feeling of familiarity is, of course, the figure of Cremutius Cordus, who has been evoked at the beginning of the work to create a sort of *Ringkomposition* (1.2–4) and has already addressed Marcia in his own voice within the framework of Seneca's crucial discussion of Metilius' situation (22.4–8). Moreover, Cremutius' *prosopopoeia* encapsulates the definitive truth of Stoic cosmology in the captivating mode of the rhetoric of exemplarity, which Seneca has lavishly drawn on since the beginning. It is no accident that among the several devices of Seneca's discourse of exemplarity the προσωποποιία constitutes the work's truest ending, for Marcia's moral consciousness has gradually progressed through the contact with a series of *personae* (or πρόσωπα) – from Livia's house philosopher Areus (4.3–5.6) to the candid voice of Nature (17.6–7) and of Seneca himself as a 'prenatal advisor' (18.1–8). It is also easy to see behind this choice the continuing influence of Seneca's rhetorical education, for Quintilian (*Inst.* 9.2.29–37) bears witness to the lively interest of early imperial rhetorical theorists in the different uses of προσωποποιία – which, of course, include the sustained evocation of the departed (*et inferos excitare concessum est*, *Inst.* 9.2.31). As in the preceding chapters, Seneca's arguments seem to rely on a vast array of literary and philosophical models, of which Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* is just the most evident. Yet, as a skilled practitioner of the art of *imitatio/aemulatio*, Seneca arranges a judicious blend of recognizably Ciceronian and distinctively un-Ciceronian features, thus inviting his reader “to recognize the resemblances between the two texts in order to appreciate the variations more fully” (Conte 2017, 47; cf. Conte 1986, 23–99). For instance, whereas Cicero's eschatological tale makes only a cursory mention of cyclical catastrophes (*Rep.* 6.23,

echoing more Plato, *Ti.* 22C–23C, than the Stoics: cf. Zetzel 1999, 100 n. 30) and teaches that, as a divine principle of motion, the soul “can neither be born nor die, otherwise the whole heaven and all nature would collapse and come to a stop” (*nec nasci potest nec mori; vel concidat omne caelum omnisque natura et consistat necesse est*, *Rep.* 6.27), Seneca builds his conclusion on the morally instructive teaching that both the cosmos and the souls of the dead will be overwhelmed in the physical processes of conflagration (ἐκπύρωσις) and regeneration (παλιγγενεσία or ἀποκατάστασις). In so doing, Seneca sides with earlier Stoics such as Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus, who had embraced the doctrine of universal conflagration (*SVF* 1.106–109; 2.585–632), and not with other members of his school who had rejected it, such as Boethus and Panaetius (Philo, *Aetern. mund.* 76–84 = *SVF* 3.6 [= Boethus].7; Cic. *Nat. D.* 2.118 = *SVF* 2.593). This is, of course, “nothing more than one of the familiar internal school divisions over individual points of doctrine” (Sedley 2003, 24), which should induce us to revise the modern ‘rigid’ idea of Stoic orthodoxy and its application to Seneca. Remarkably un-Ciceronian is also the lack of a positive political message comparable to Scipio Africanus’ final exhortation (*Rep.* 6.29), which is replaced in Seneca by a polemical reference to the civil wars (*civilia bella*) and their attendant proscriptions (26.1). The contrastive effect is made even more pronounced by Seneca’s interspersions of Cremutius’ *peroratio* with several allusions to Cicero’s life and works. Indeed, a forceful restatement of the ethical value of Stoic physics, combined with a persuasive strategy of rhetorical personification and literary *aemulatio*, is the most natural ending to a *consolatio* which is entirely based on the primacy of philosophy as a therapeutic art of speech.

26.1 *Putat*: As often in his work, Seneca appeals to Marcia’s imaginative faculties and tries to put them to good use by stimulating the rational creation of mental images (φαντασίαι). See Armisen-Marchetti 2008, and above, note on *Marc.* 18.1, *puta*.

***ex illa arce celesti*:** As in chapter 25, Seneca is deliberately vague about where Cremutius and the other blessed souls reside. Here and elsewhere, he simply states that the souls of the departed have reached a supremely high abode, which they share with the stars (cf. *Marc.* 25.1: *supra nos . . . ad excelsa*; 25.3: *in summo . . . aeternarum rerum per libera et vasta spatia . . . intermixtique sideribus*). This general description can be compared with Cicero’s picture in *Tusc.* 1.43, where disembodied souls are said to dwell in the fiery realm of the highest heavens together with the planets. Seneca’s attitude – which is consistent with his typical inclination to favor moral knowledge over physical technicalities (cf. e.g., *QNat.* 3.praef. 11–18; Williams 2012) – is all the more remarkable as several earlier sources offer

greater detail on the same issue. In *Rep.* 6.16, for instance, Cicero specifies that the souls of the wise inhabit the Milky Way (*orbem lacteum*), and it has already been mentioned that some Stoics refer to the space below or around the moon (see above, note on *Marc.* 25.1, *supra nos commoratus*). According to Augustine (*Civ. Dei* 7.6), Varro's theological work contained an especially careful discussion of the destiny of immortal souls "in the ether and in the air" (*in aethere et aëre*) – with the "ethereal souls" (*aetherias animas*) living in the area "from the highest part of the heavens to the orbit of the moon" (*ab summo autem circuitu caeli ad circum lunae*), and the "aerial souls" (*aërias animas*) dwelling "between the orbit of the moon and the peaks of clouds and winds" (*inter lunae vero gyrum et nimborum ac ventorum cacumina*). However, by using the word *arx*, Seneca consciously distances himself from the field of scientific and theological speculations and chooses instead to echo the language of poetry, as *arx* is often employed to indicate the citadel of heaven, or the heavens themselves, in Augustan poetry, particularly in Ovid (see *Ov. Met.* 1.163; 2.306; *Am.* 3.10.21; *Tr.* 5.3.19; *Hor. Carm.* 3.3.10; *Verg. Aen.* 1.250).

quantum tibi: Equating the moral influence (*auctoritas*) of a *paterfamilias* over his daughter with that of a mother over her son may seem natural to the modern reader but is an extremely generous concession by Roman cultural and legal standards. This is a further sign of Seneca's appreciation of women's moral potential, and specifically of Marcia's integrity (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 1.1, *ab infirmitate muliebris animi*). Furthermore, Seneca's equation is consistent with the Stoic theory of οἰκείωσις as elucidated by Hierocles (*Stob. Ecl.* 4.671.7–673.11 = Long/Sedley 1987, 349; Ramelli 2009, 90–93), who in fact deploys the gender-neutral terms γονεῖς and παῖδες for parents and children, respectively, when describing the second circle of social 'appropriation'.

civilia bella: As Cornell 2013, I, 499, points out, the exact scope of Cremutius' *Annales* is uncertain. It can be safely assumed that Cremutius dealt with the Second Triumvirate and the early Augustan period, for it was his praise of Brutus and Cassius that allegedly plunged him into disgrace (see above, note on *Marc.* 1.2, *Mortem A. Cremuti Cordi*), and Cassius Dio (57.24.2–4) contrasts Cremutius' bold claims about Caesar's murderers with his respectful treatment of Caesar and Augustus. Moreover, Seneca the Elder (*Suas.* 6.19) quotes verbatim Cremutius' narrative of Cicero's death and mutilation, and Suetonius (*Aug.* 35.1–2) mentions Cremutius as his source for Augustus' purgation of the senate. These facts alone can explain Seneca's assertion that Cremutius lamented the civil wars and cast blame on those responsible for the proscriptions (*proscibentis*) – which on this reading are, of course, Mark Antony's proscriptions. However, if one considers that Cremutius lavished praise on Cicero in a more general way (*Sen. Suas.* 6.23), his mention of Caesar – as well as of Brutus and Cassius – might be taken

as evidence that his *Annales* also covered an earlier phase of the late Republican civil wars. Cf. also Manuwald 1979, 254–257.

proscripsit: The polyptoton *proscribens/proscripsit* plays on the double meaning of the verb *proscribo*, which usually indicates the politically damaging placement of a citizen’s name on the *tabulae proscriptionis* (see above, note on *Marc.* 20.5, *divisa percussoribus occisorum bona*), but can also refer, in more general terms, to any writing put on public display (e.g., *Cic. Verr.* 2.2.129; *Gell. NA* 15.4.3). The obvious implication is that, as a historiographic masterpiece committed to literary eternity (*in aeternum*, cf. above, 1.3–4), Cremutius’ *Annales* were placed on a much more solid and enduring basis than that on which the late Republican lists of proscriptions stood.

26.2 Cur: The profoundly rhetorical character of Cremutius’ *peroratio* immediately emerges in the first lines – with the alliteration of *t*, the double anaphora of *cur*, and a wealth of rhetorical interrogatives. As a *persona loquens*, Cremutius embodies the Senecan idea of a therapeutic overlap between philosophical knowledge, rhetorical power, interpersonal communication, and poetic vision.

aegritudo: Cremutius defines Marcia’s grief with a key term of the Stoic theory of emotions, which had been pioneeringly adapted into Latin by Cicero. Both in *Fin.* 3.35 and in *Tusc.* 3.23–27, Cicero illustrates the Stoic fourfold classification of the emotions (cf. *Stob. Ecl.* 2.7.10; Graver 2002, 93–94) and translates the Greek λύπη with *aegritudo* – which, as McConnell 2022, 159, notes, “is presented as the worst emotion of all”, is said to pose “the greatest therapeutic challenges”, and thus forms the focus of *Tusculan Disputations* 3. As a Stoicizing martyr of the earlier generation and a fervent admirer of Cicero (cf. *Sen. Suas.* 6.19; 6.23), Cremutius is the most entitled to speak this Ciceronian and Stoic language, and it is especially striking to see that this is the only occurrence of *aegritudo* in the *ad M.* – not to mention that in all of Seneca’s works “manca soprattutto l’uso tecnico del termine *aegritudo*” (Malaspina 2015, 45). Quite visibly, Seneca complies with the ancient rhetorical precept that a good *sermocinatio* should “assign to some person language which as set forth conforms with his character” (*cum ratione dignitatis*, *Rhet. Her.* 4.65; cf. also *Quint. Inst.* 9.2.30).

veri ignorance: Cremutius reaffirms the Stoic view that grief, like all other emotions, is an essentially cognitive phenomenon arising from incorrect knowledge (cf. also below, *nescis*) and hence from a misguided rational judgment. In this and in several other respects, Cremutius, like Areus, acts as an *alter Seneca* summarizing, and enhancing the moral weight of, Seneca’s most important

teachings. The Stoic understanding of the emotions as judgments (κρίσεις, Gal. *Plac. Hipp. Plat.* 5.1.4; cf. also Cic. *Acad.* 1.39: *opinionis iudicio*) is clearly echoed in Cremutius' explanation of Marcia's distress as a result of her erroneous belief that Metilius has been unjustly treated (*inique actum cum filio tuo iudices*). Here, too, we are brought back to Cicero's definition of Stoic λύπη/*aegritudo* (*Tusc.* 3.25) as "a belief that a serious evil is present" (*opinio magni mali praesentis*) and that "it is right to be pained by it" (*in eo rectum videatur esse angere*). The polyptoton *integro/integer* serves precisely to underline the idea that Metilius has suffered no harm, for he has joined his ancestors (*maiores*) without impairing his family's status – a culturally resonant note which introduces the perspective of Roman family memory into the Stoic discourse on grief.

fortuna: Cremutius resumes the characteristically Senecan theme of the human struggle against the storms of fortune. This theme, too, creates the effect of a *Ringkomposition*, as it is mentioned by Seneca at the start (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 1.1, *fortunam tuam absolveres*) and repeatedly resurfaces throughout the *consolatio* (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 5.5–6; 9.3; 10.6). Especially remarkable is the fact that the storm/helmsman metaphor appears in the first and in the last of Seneca's *prosopopoeias* – i.e., in both Areus' and Cremutius' treatments of the power of *fortuna* – with the clear purpose of strengthening the Stoic point that the sage should bear steadfastly the reverses of fortune.

Regesne tibi nominem: Again, Cremutius' *peroratio* sums up and reinforces an earlier Senecan argument: the *topos* of εὐκαιρος θάνατος/*mors opportuna*, which was firmly entrenched in the consolatory tradition and was dealt with at length in *Marc.* 20.4–6. Seneca's examples of great Roman generals (*Romanos duces*) and noble and famous men (*nobilissimos viros clarissimosque*) who would have benefited from an earlier death were Pompey, Cicero, and Cato the Younger. According to Favez 1928, 100, Cremutius' mention of Roman generals is especially reminiscent of Pompey's story, while the reference to illustrious men who left their necks vulnerable to beheading may allude to Cicero's death as described by Livy (*ap. Sen. Suas.* 6.17: *prominenti ex lectica praebentique inmotam cervicem caput praecisum est*). An allusion to the *exitus* of Pompey and Cicero is certainly implied here, and the image of decapitation recapitulates the fate of both these late Republican heroes – who in fact were hit by a soldier's sword (*militaris gladii*) in Egypt and in Formia, respectively (cf. above, notes on *Marc.* 20.4–5). Moreover, since a complex Ciceronian intertextuality underlies Cremutius' speech, it is extremely likely that Seneca is also echoing Cicero's *Consolation to Himself*, with its impressive gallery of "very grievous deaths that befell some of Rome's most illustrious men" (*clarissimorum hominum nostrae civitatis gravissimos exitus*, Cic. *Div.* 2.22). Indeed, since no Greek or Roman king is cited in the

previous chapters of our *consolatio*, Cremutius' initial (and hence conspicuous) reference to kings is probably meant to be a complementary expansion of Seneca's earlier arguments drawing on Marcia's (and the reader's) knowledge of famous royal *exempla*. The stories of Priamus and Croesus, for instance, were widely known.

composita cervice †formatos†: The unanimous reading of the Senecan manuscripts is *formatos*, which makes no sense and has been variously emended. Reynolds 1977's *firmatos* stresses the idea of the victims' fortitude (*firmitas* = καρτερία, cf. e.g., *Ep.* 18.3–6) and is paleographically simple, but sounds rather odd because the virtue of the beheaded is expressed through a passive verbal form. Other emendations such as Schultess' *curvatos* (printed in Viansino 1963) and Gertz's *deformatos* (accepted by Traina 1987 on the basis of *Helv.* 9.6) refer to physical posturing – which in principle is consistent with Seneca's theatrical taste. Yet, since Seneca's main point here is that people like Pompey and Cicero would have benefited from an earlier death, Waltz's *servatos* is not less plausible – the confusion of *s* and *f* at the beginning of a word being common in minuscule script. Perhaps a *crux* is the best choice.

26.3 *avum tuum*: No other ancient source mentions Marcia's grandfather or his “foreign assassin” (*alieni percussoris*), but Seneca's allusion makes sense only if Marcia's *avus* was known to the Roman audience as a man of high standing. Since Marcia's grandfather belonged to the generation before Cremutius, his violent death may have been one among the many episodes of the late Republican civil wars.

cibo prohibitus: On Cremutius' suicide by self-starvation see above, note on *Marc.* 22.6, *abstinuit*.

quam vivebam: The perfect correspondence between art and life in which Cremutius takes pride has nothing to do with modern Romantic and Realist ideals. Rather, it is a typically Roman (and Stoic) vindication of the consistency of one's *persona* (= πρόσωπον) – which, once again, brings Cremutius close to the Ciceronian prototype of orator, senator, and writer. As for the exact wording of the text, one should acknowledge that Waltz's minimal correction of the reading of **A** (*quam magno me quam vibar animo scripsisse*) into *tam magno me quam vivebam animo scripsisse* is the soundest solution. This correction is accepted by Reynolds 1977, who rightly discards both the impossible reading of **γ** (*quam vivaci animo scripsissem*) and other (sometimes clumsy) emendations such as Haase's *videbar* (printed in Manning 1981, 149), Gertz's *tam magno me*

quam infausto animo scripsisse, and Viansino's *tam magno me <mori> quam vi<de>bar animo scripsisse*.

qui felicissime moritur: Cremutius' depiction of Metilius' death as "most fortunate" echoes the consolatory commonplace quoted above, note on *Marc.* 23.3, *ad summum pervenit*.

omnes in unum: An allusion to the profound unity of the souls of the departed, whose gathering in heaven results in the formation of an ideal political community (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 25.2, *omnibus omne cognatum est*) and has a physical basis in the process of transformation of the psychic substance (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 25.3, *in vicem pervii sunt intermixtique sideribus*, and especially *SVF* 2.818 = *Comm. Bern. in Lucan.* 7.816: *mortui unum sumus omnes*).

nil apud vos, ut putatis, optabile: Cremutius' contempt of earthly life and goods from the vantage point of heavenly beatitude echoes Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* (*Rep.* 6.20–25), which in turn draws on Platonic and Stoic traditions. By starting his series of anaphoras (*nil* [. . .] *optabile*, *nil excelsum*, *nil splendidum*) and of asyndeta (*et gravia et anxia et* [. . .]) with the moral-cum-cognitive notions of opinion (*ut putatis*) and choice (*optabile*), Seneca gives a more distinctively Stoic flavor to his intertextual allusion. In fact, these notions recall the Stoic doctrine on the misleading effects of δόξα, the relative value of 'indifferents' (ἀδιάφορα), and the importance of recognizing what is truly 'choiceworthy' (αἰρετόν) – which ultimately coincides with virtue (cf. e.g., *SVF* 3.38–40). For the use of the adjective *optabilis* in the Latin adaptation of Stoic thought, see *Cic. Fin.* 3.46 (= *SVF* 3.524); 4.50 (= *SVF* 3.37).

humilia cuncta et gravia: The moral connotations of this description of the human world are strictly related to the principles of Stoic physics. Whereas air and fire, which are the constitutive elements of the heavens, create an atmosphere of lightness and brilliance, the prevalence of earth mixtures – to which the adjective *humilis* alludes – gives human reality its characteristically mean, dark, and burdensome nature.

26.4 nulla hic arma: The absence of any form of conflict by land and sea is one of the characteristics of the ancient myth of the Golden Age – a myth rooted in Mediterranean folklore which had been richly elaborated before Seneca, from Hesiod's idea (*Op.* 109–119) of a primitive "golden race" (χρύσειον γένος) living in ease and peace (ἔθειλημοὶ ἤσυχτοι) to the Roman (particularly Augustan) projection of such politically resonant utopias as Vergil's *Saturnia regna* (*Ecl.* 4.6; see now Evans 2008, 31–92, and Star 2021, with further references). Cremutius' remark that in heaven there is no naval combat is not as pleonastic as it might

seem, for this remark combines the theme of peacefulness with that of the absence of navigation and maritime mobility, which is often mentioned in Roman accounts of the Golden Age (e.g., Virg. *Ecl.* 4.31–39; Tib. 1.3.37–40; Hor. *Carm.* 1.3.9–40; Ov. *Met.* 1.94–96). Overall, Cremutius’ repeated use of negations is strongly reminiscent of the ancient tendency to view the Golden Age in contrastive terms with those of normal life. Moreover, given the strict connection between Cremutius’ praise of heavenly blessedness and his contempt of earthly existence, there is further evidence here that in the Roman discourse on the *aurea aetas* “degeneration can only exist if seen in association with the utopian, and the two are involved in a complex relationship” (Evans 2008, 32). From a literary and rhetorical point of view, even Cremutius’ subsequent picture of the final destruction of the universe has an evident link with the ancient belief in the cyclical alternation of races and ages, since, from Hesiod onwards, this alternation implies moments of annihilation followed by new beginnings. Although Stoic philosophy itself draws on earlier myths of decadence and resurgence, one should acknowledge that, as Star 2021, 127, points out, “there is no other author in Greek and Latin literature for whom the poles of a golden age and apocalypse are as central and reoccurring as they are for Lucius Annaeus Seneca”. Cf. esp. *Ep.* 90, with the comments of Edwards 2019, 254–281.

***parricidia*:** It is no accident that Cremutius mentions parricide among many other possible crimes. As famously argued by Veyne 1987, 29, the Romans had a national obsession with parricide, which was a consequence of the overwhelming – often despotic – role of the *paterfamilias* in Roman society (see also Thomas 1986, 2017; Cantarella 2003, 2017). In other words, by evoking the threat of *parricidium*, Cremutius is evoking the Roman crime *par excellence*. Cf. Sen. *Clem.* 1.23, with Malaspina 2004, 363–365.

***fora*:** Just like parricide, forensic disputes and lawsuits were a quintessential ingredient of Roman social life and thought. Cremutius’ hyperbolic statement that court cases could be discussed “all day and every day” (*dies perpetuos*) is not far removed from historical fact. To mention just one example, “if it became apparent that too many litigants had appeared at his court and that he would not be able to deal with everyone’s claim on the day, the praetor would by the afternoon issue a blanket order instructing those litigants whose cases had not yet been heard to come back on the next court day” (du Plessis 2014, 113). However, in classical Athens, too, judicial disputes were so heated that the protagonists of Aristophanes’ *Birds* famously sought a utopia to escape constant litigation.

***detectas mentes*:** According to Abel 1964, 233–234, Seneca’s claim that heavenly minds are perfectly transparent is indebted to Posidonius’ theory of

the “unmittelbarer Kontakt von Geist zu Geist” (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 25.3, *in vicem pervii sunt intermixtique sideribus*). Manning 1981, 150, observes that this “is pressing the evidence too far”, and it should be admitted that the evidence supporting a specifically Posidonian origin is scanty. It may suffice to assume that, like other details of Seneca’s eschatology, this psychological doctrine has a physical basis in the Stoic view of the transformation of the soul after death. In fact, as bodies of pure air and fire, the divinized souls of the heavenly spheres are made up of the most transparent and porous matter of the natural world (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 24.5, *pura et liquida*). What is perhaps more interesting to note is that Christian writers of consolations such as Augustine (*Ep.* 92.2) will take on the same argument, which is in fact consistent with the Pauline teaching (1 *Corinthians* 4.5) regarding the final advent of God, who “both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness (φωτίσει τὰ κρυπτὰ τοῦ σκότους) and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts (φανερώσει τὰς βουλὰς τῶν καρδιῶν)”. It is on this mystical, ‘dematerialized’ basis that Dante will build the architecture of his *Paradiso*, where God is directly present “as if speaking, his love revealing itself in the transparency of speech, the divine Mind immediately communicating what it intends” (Franke 2021, 59).

omnis aevi prospectum venientiumque: That disembodied souls have the power of divination is orthodox Stoic doctrine. As Algra 2009, 376–377, points out, this power is ascribed by Chrysippus to surviving human souls, and by Posidonius to ‘demons’ (δαίμονες) in general. In *Div.* 1.56–57, Cicero describes two dreams “often recounted by Stoic writers” (*quae creberrime commemorantur a Stoicis*), the first of which concerns the soul of a murdered man showing his dreaming friend the location of his unburied corpse (cf. *Suda* s.v. Τιμωροῦντος = *SVF* 2.1205). Elsewhere in the same work, Cicero maintains that Chrysippus’ and Antipater’s works were full of similar stories (*Div.* 2.144 = *SVF* 2.1206) and reports the Stoic belief (*Div.* 1.63) that “the soul withdrawn by sleep from contact and union with the body (*somno sevocatus animus a societate et a contagione corporis*) remembers the past, comprehends the present, and foresees the future (*meminit praeteritorum, praesentia cernit, futura providet*)”. The same prophetic power is allegedly enhanced “after death when the soul is wholly free of the body” (*post mortem, cum omnino corpore excesserit*) – an assumption that the Stoics share with earlier thinkers such as Aristotle (*ap. Sext. Emp. Adv. Math.* 9.21 = fr. 10 Rose). Immediately thereafter (*Div.* 1.64), Cicero bears witness to Posidonius’ belief in the divinatory faculties of dying persons (which is illustrated by the *exemplum* of a Rhodian man) and relates Posidonius’ (admittedly problematic) account of three forms of divination in sleep (= fr. 108 Edelstein-Kidd). On the basis of this Ciceronian *testimonium*, Abel 1964, 234, argues that

Cremutius' assertions in our *consolatio* are indebted to Posidonius' eschatology ("der posidonischen Seelenschatologie verdankt"). However, as Kidd 1988a, 429–432, warns, although the survival of the soul after death is taken for granted in the previous section (*Div.* 1.63), the reconstruction of Posidonius' ideas about the prophetic qualities of spirits, gods, and 'demons' is highly controversial (cf. Hoven 1971, 58–59). Therefore, in this case, too, it may suffice to conclude that Seneca relies on a widely shared Stoic doctrine – on the view that the heavenly souls, which have an intimate, material kinship with the rational God, develop the divine quality of foresight as they are aware of all time simultaneously. This is another aspect of ancient eschatology that the Christian tradition will take on and 'spiritualize', for according to Dante (*Par.* 17.16–18) blessed souls are lifted up so high that, "gazing on that Point to which all time is present" ("mirando il punto a cui tutti li tempi son presenti"), they see contingent things "before they themselves exist" ("anzi che sieno in sé").

26.5 unius saeculi facta: If one takes the word *saeculum* in its strict sense of "generation" – a time span covering one hundred years, according to Varro (*Ling.* 6.11) – the hypothesis that Cremutius' *Annales* dealt with events earlier than the Second Triumvirate and the early Augustan era appears more likely (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 26.1, *civilia bella*). But since *saeculum* is often used for indefinitely long periods, Cremutius' words can hardly be seen as evidence of chronological order. The main point here resides in the contrast between cosmic time and the narrow limits of a historical work.

in parte ultima mundi: Cremutius' assertion that the Roman empire is a remote region of the inhabited world (οἰκουμένη) hosting a tiny number of people echoes Scipio Africanus' cosmographical description in *Cic. Rep.* 6.20–22, according to which humans "inhabit small and scattered portions of the earth, and huge emptiness separates the blotches of human habitation" (*habitari in terra raris et angustis in locis et in ipsis quasi maculis, ubi habitatur, vastas solitudines interiectas*). Scipio expounds a division of the globe into five zones, with icecaps at either pole and two temperate zones isolated from one another by a torrid one. Since the temperate zones themselves are divided into two halves, "there are only four habitable regions of the earth, of which the Roman world occupies a part of one" (Zetzel 1999, 99–100 n. 29). According to Strabo (2.2.1–3 = fr. 49 Edelstein-Kidd), Posidonius had offered a careful treatment of this fivefold geographical division in his work *On Ocean* (Περὶ ὠκεανοῦ), but he was not its inventor. Rather, Posidonius himself acknowledged his debt to, and tried to correct the views of, earlier thinkers such as Parmenides and Aristotle – Parmenides allegedly being "the first introducer of the division into five zones"

(τῆς εἰς πέντε ζώνας διαίρέσεως ἀρχηγόν, Strab. 2.2.2). There is also other evidence that it was the Presocratics who first proposed a division of the celestial sphere into five circles and applied it analogically to the terrestrial globe. Ps.-Plut. *Plac. Philos.* 2.12; 3.14, refers us back to Thales and Pythagoras, the latter reportedly arguing for a correspondence between five heavenly and earthly regions. Moreover, it is likely that Cicero drew “primarily on poetic descriptions” (Zetzel 1999, 100 n. 29), which were very fashionable in late Republican culture. Seneca consciously embraces Cicero’s moralizing use of cosmographical knowledge – which may well reflect a Roman, not a Posidonian, approach to science – for both Scipio and Cremutius build on ancient cosmography to show the fleet-ness and vanity of human ambitions.

tot aetatum contextum, seriem: The asyndeton *contextum seriem* is the reading of **A**, accepted without modifications by Reynolds 1977. Since this is an uncommon syntactic pattern, it is no wonder that the *codices recentiores* have corrected it into *contextum et seriem* or *contextam seriem*. The latter reading is endorsed by Viansino 1963 and Traina 1987 and may find some support in *Ep.* 66.35 (*rerum ordo seriesque contextitur*). However, the use of the noun *contextus* with reference to the Stoic idea of a coherent logical sequence is attested by Cicero (*Fin.* 5.83: *mirabilis est apud illos [scil. Stoicos] contextus rerum*), who elsewhere reports Carneades’ criticism of the Stoic view that “all events take place in a closely knit web of natural interconnexion” (*conserte contexteque*, *Fat.* 31–32). Indeed, both Cicero and Seneca refer to the Stoic conception of cosmic fate as a rational chain or string of causes (εἰρμός = *series*, cf. above, note *Marc.* 1.1, *fortunam tuam absolveres*), which unfolds in time and history, and there is no reason to obliterate Seneca’s use of two different terms – *contextus* and *series* – both of which had already been employed to render in Latin the Stoic doctrine on εἰμαρμένη (cf. below, *Marc.* 26.6, *commune fatum*). Moreover, one cannot ignore that the asyndeton *contextus series* is a *lectio difficilior* transmitted by the most valuable of our manuscripts.

magnarum urbium lapsus: On the common consolatory theme of the decline of glorious cities and monuments, which is used by Seneca in several different versions, see above, note on *Marc.* 21.1, *urbium saecula*.

26.6 *vetustas:* The beginning of Cremutius’ treatment of the destructibility of the cosmos is reminiscent of Lucretius (3.964–975), who twice refers to “old age” (*vetustas*, both times in the nominative as in Seneca) at the end of his *prosapopeia* of Nature, arguing that one should peacefully accept the flow of time and the coming of death (for an earlier Senecan allusion to the same passage of Lucretius’ poem, see above, note on *Marc.* 10.1, *alieni commodatique apparatus*). Cremutius may

also be echoing the very last word of the famous finale of Lucretius' Book 2 (*spatio aetatis defessa vetusto*, 2.1174), which expounds the Epicurean approach to the issue of the perishability of the cosmos (Galzerano 2019, 71–98). Of course, Marcia and the educated reader are invited to spot the remarkable difference between Lucretius' atomistic, non-providential idea of natural decline – which cannot support any other psychological doctrine than that of the mortality of the soul – and Seneca's providential eschatology.

fortuitae potentiae portio: Cremutius' belittling depiction of human beings as a tiny fraction of the power of fortune is reminiscent of both Cicero's radical relativization of human glory (*Rep.* 6.20–24) and Lucretius' recurring attacks on anthropocentrism (e.g., 5.156–234). However, within the consistently Stoic framework of our *consolatio*, the ultimate purpose of this 'downsizing' of the human dimension (and of its attendant literary echoes) is not an un-Stoic (Platonic or Epicurean) rejection of anthropocentric cosmology. Rather, as in the much-discussed flood passage of his *Natural Questions* (3.27–30), Seneca moves us "toward a revised perspective on our place in the universal whole, [. . .] wiping away all misconceptions about our (self-)importance by simply wiping us off the map" (Williams 2012, 113). The allure of literary memories is meant to reinforce, and to show the wide acceptance of, such an edifying moral lesson.

mundi partibus ludet: Before describing the final conflagration (ἐκπύρωσις) *sensu proprio* – which arises from the prevalence of fire as "the strongest of all elements" (τοῦ ἰσχυροτέρου τῶν ἄλλων στοιχείου) resolving everything into itself (Orig. *C. Cels.* 8.72 = *SVF* 2.600; see below, note on *ignibus vastis*) – Cremutius offers an overview of other cyclical, providentially established disasters which can be ascribed to the action of the remaining three elements (Favez 1928, xlvii–xlviii; Mader 1983, 63). While the flattening of mountains (*totos supprimet montes*) and the appearance of new cliffs (*rupes in altum novas exprimet*) represent a transformation of earthly bodies, the draining of the seas (*maria sorbebit*), the diversion of rivers (*flumina avertet*), and the occurrence of floods (*inundationibus*) drowning every living creature (*omne animal*) bear witness to the cycles of water. Likewise, the emergence of earthquakes (*tremoribus*) swallowing entire cities and the spread of pestilential miasmas (*pestilentiae halitus*) are due to the movements of air, readily followed by the huge fires (*ignibus vastis*) of the concluding conflagration. The order followed in this description closely corresponds to the physical theory of early Stoics such as Chrysippus, who builds on the "deliberate attempt on the part of Zeno and his followers to portray the origin of the cosmos as the birth of a living animal, and to make this birth conform to Aristotle's biological theories in as many details as possible" (Hahm 1977, 78; cf. also White 2003, 133–146; Wildberger 2006a, I, 49–79). According to Chrysippus (Stob. *Ecl.* 1.10.16c

= *SVF* 2.413), just as in process of cosmogony “the first change is from fire to air by contraction (πρώτης μὲν γιγνομένης τῆς ἐκ πυρός κατὰ σύστασιν εἰς ἀέρα μεταβολῆς), the second from air into water, and the third when water contracts still more into earth (δευτέρας δ’ ἀπὸ τούτου εἰς ὕδωρ, τρίτης δ’ ἔτι μᾶλλον κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον συνισταμένου τοῦ ὕδατος εἰς γῆν)”, in the process of cosmic dissolution an inverse path is followed from the ‘central’ to the ‘peripheral’ element: “then again, from earth, dissolved and liquefied, there is first a pouring into water (πάλιν δ’ ἀπὸ ταύτης διαλυομένης καὶ διαχεομένης πρώτη μὲν γίνεται χύσις εἰς ὕδωρ); then a second pouring from water into air and a third and last into fire (δευτέρα δ’ ἐξ ὕδατος εἰς ἀέρα, τρίτη δὲ καὶ ἐσχάτη εἰς πῦρ)” (cf. also Cic. *N. Deor.* 2.84). As an *alter Seneca*, Cremutius is thus picturing a ‘sublime’ poetic landscape which sums up the physical and cosmological teaching of the Stoics. Cremutius’ special emphasis on the role of water – which is in fact cited twice in this account, after the section on earthly bodies and after that on ‘aerial’ phenomena – is consistent with Stoic orthodoxy as well (*pace* Mader 1983, 64–65), for Stoic sources mention specifically floods (κατακλυσμοί) as a preparatory stage for the conflagration (*Comm. Lucan.* 7.813 = *SVF* 2.608; Origen, *C. Cels.* 4.64 = *SVF* 2.1174) and regard the drying up and the liquefaction of the earth as “small-scale changes” (βραχείας μεταβολάς), which, in contrast to the universal fire, cannot trigger the genesis and the end of all things (Alex. Aphrod. *In Aristot. Meteor.* 62 = *SVF* 2.594). In the deluge narrative of his *Natural Questions* (3.27–30), Seneca will further extend the role of water as an agent of cosmic processes – apparently with the purpose of emulating earlier literary models such as Ovid (Degl’Innocenti Pierini 1990, 177–210; Garani 2022) and of distancing himself from a recent and dramatic event “which surely appeared as an apocalypse to the contemporary Romans, and which many of them ascribed to the emperor”: the fire of Rome in 64 AD (Berno 2019, 86–92). In addition, Seneca’s focus on different natural elements, with special regard to water, may betray the influence of Papirius Fabianus, who, according to Seneca (cf. *QNat.* 3.27.3), held that “when that inevitable moment arrives, fate sets in motion many causes at once” (*cum affuerit illa necessitas temporis, multas simul fata causas movent*), producing a general “shaking of the world” (*concussione mundi*) which starts with “excessive rains” (*immodici imbres*). Overall, a profound literary consciousness underlies Cremutius’ *prosopopoeia*, as the present description cannot fail to remind readers of a long tradition of mythical, poetic, and philosophical accounts – written both before and after the rise of Stoicism. Cataclysms by fire and flood figure prominently in the myths of Phaeton and Deucalion, which mirror the Greek cyclical view of time and find a thorough reception in Latin (particularly Augustan) literature. Working at the border between literary fascination, cosmological inquiry, and historical speculations, Plato (*Leg.* 677A) influentially restates the truth of

such “ancient tales” (παλαιοὶ λόγοι), according to which “the world of human beings has often been destroyed by floods, plagues, and many other things, in such a way that only a small portion of humanity has survived” (πολλὰς ἀνθρώπων φθορὰς γεγονέναι κατακλυσμοῖς τε καὶ νόσοις καὶ ἄλλοις πολλοῖς, ἐν οἷς βραχὺ τι τῶν ἀνθρώπων λείπεσθαι γένος). In *Ti.* 22C-22D, fire and water are singled out as the main triggering factors for cosmic catastrophes, which are said to depend on a shifting (παράλλαξις) of the heavenly bodies and to recur at long intervals (διὰ μακρῶν χρόνων; cf. also *Criti.* 109D-111D, and *Plt.* 270B-272B, the latter work referring to a revolution or κύκλισις of the heavenly bodies which causes both destruction and regeneration). Especially relevant for the development of Stoic thought is Aristotle’s natural philosophy, which presents the biological cycles of birth, growth, reproduction, and decay as general patterns for the interpretation of physical changes. According to Censorinus (*DN* 18.11 = fr. 19 Ross), in one of his lost works Aristotle expounded the theory of the Great (or ‘Greatest’) Year (*annus, quem Aristoteles maximum potius quam magnum appellat*), which saw a major cosmic shift in the conjunction of Sun, Moon and the five planets in the same constellation (cf. *Pl. Ti.* 39D; *Cic. Rep.* 6.24; *Hortensius*, fr. 35 Müller = *Tac. Dial.* 16.7). It seems no accident that the Stoics, too, use the ‘Greatest Year’ as an alternative description of the conflagration (ἐνιαυτὸν τὸν μέγιστον, *Euseb. Praep. evang.* 15.19.1 = *SVF* 2.599; White 2003, 141–142). Moreover, in *Mete.* 351A19–353A28, Aristotle argues that the vital processes of the earth take place “gradually and in immense periods of time” (ἐκ προσαγωγῆς καὶ ἐν χρόνοις παμμήκεσι, 351B9–10) and adds that, although the world is eternal, periodical floods such as that of Deucalion’s time do take place when “a great winter of a great year” (περιόδου τινὸς μεγάλης μέγας χειμῶν, 352A30–31) comes. In the same context, Aristotle insists that long periods of moistening and drying affect only individual parts of the earth, not the whole world (Wilson 2013b, 156–178); and in fact, the Stoic accounts echoed in *Cremutius’ prosopopoeia* reframe the changes to single “sections of the world” (*mundi partibus*; cf. *SVF* 2.598: κατὰ μέρος) and to particular elements as preparatory stages for the all-embracing conflagration (cf. also *Sen. QNat.* 3.29.4–6, setting the deluge in the context of a multifactorial aetiology, and *Berno* 2019, 83–84). However, other classical Greek thinkers such as the Pythagorean Philolaos of Croton (*DK* 44 A 18) and the astronomer Meton of Athens (Bowen/Goldstein 1988) also envisaged the destruction of the cosmos, and in the Hellenistic and Roman eras writers of scientific works assembled an impressive amount of material concerning the earth’s successive changes – changes that, as *Strabo* (1.3.3) observes quoting *Eratosthenes*, “result from the action of water, fire, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and other similar agencies” (συμβαίνουσιν ἕκ τε ὕδατος καὶ πυρὸς καὶ σεισμῶν καὶ ἀναφουσημάτων καὶ ἄλλων τοιούτων). Some of the

historical and mythical episodes discussed in the Hellenistic tradition and cited by later writers such as Strabo (1.3.3–4, 10, 16–20) and Pliny (*HN* 2.191–194, 206) may be echoed in Cremutius’ general references to cataclysms (see the notes below for further details), but their ascription to specific sources is discouraged by the large number of (almost entirely lost) works on which Seneca could draw. After referring to Eratosthenes (and to Eratosthenes’ own sources Strato of Lampascus and Xanthus of Lydia), Strabo (1.3.17) acknowledges that “many writers have made collections of such instances” (πολλῶν δὲ συναγωγὰς ποιησαμένων τοιαύτας) and that it may suffice to quote from Demetrius of Scepsis because his anecdotes are “appropriately cited” (οἰκείως παρατεθέντα). Of course, as a careful investigator of natural phenomena, Posidonius is likely to have made an important contribution to the above-mentioned tradition, and Seneca may well have relied on his authority for this concluding section – just as he will do at several points in the *Natural Questions*. Yet, regarding Posidonius as the only or the principal source of Seneca’s finale would be tantamount to ignoring the breadth of the ancient tradition on cosmology, meteorology, and natural cycles – as well as the breadth of Seneca’s own learning as a philosophical writer. What is much more relevant to observe is that at the end of his *consolatio* Seneca makes his final and most cogent attempt to re-educate Marcia’s rationality by showing that Metilius’ death is part of a larger process of cosmic annihilation, which should not arouse wonder in anyone. As in his later *Natural Questions* (Williams 2012, 219–220), Seneca aims to promote the Stoic virtue of ἀπάθεια – which is purposely recalled by Strabo (1.3.16) in his section on natural disasters as “the virtue of not marveling at such changes” (τὴν ἀθαυμαστίαν τῶν τοιούτων μεταβολῶν). Like Strabo, Seneca expects that “if a large number of such instances are placed in view, they will put a stop to one’s amazement” (ἄθροα γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα παραδείγματα πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν τεθέντα παύσει τὴν ἔκπληξιν) – and, hopefully, to one’s grief.

montes: By envisaging the flattening of mountains and other similar cataclysms, Cremutius stands out as one of those few men who – as Cicero (*Div.* 1.111) notes echoing “a combined Platonic, Peripatetic, and Stoic tradition” (Tarrant 2000, 76) – “withdraw themselves from carnal influences and are wholly possessed by an ardent concern for the contemplation of divine things” (*se a corpore avocent et ad divinarum rerum cognitionem cura omni studioque rapiantur*). Some of these men, Cicero argues, “make predictions not as the result of direct heavenly inspiration, but by the use of their own reason (*horum sunt auguria non divini impetus, sed rationis humanae*). For example, by means of natural law, they foretell certain events, such as a flood, or the future

destruction of heaven and earth by fire (*nam et natura futura praesentiunt, ut aquarum eluviones et deflagrationem futuram aliquando caeli atque terrarum*). At the same time, Cremutius' predictions about the ultimate fate of natural and human life clearly draw on a long tradition of reports about ancient catastrophes. As for the disappearance of mountains, Pliny (*HN* 2.206) emphatically remarks that the earth “has devoured the highest mountain in Caria, Cibotus, together with the town of that name, Sipylus in Magnesia, and previously the very celebrated city in the same place that used to be called Tantalus, the territories of Galene and Galame in Phoenicia with the cities themselves, and the loftiest mountain range in Ethiopia, Phegium” (*devoravit Cibotum altissimum montem cum oppido Cari<a>e, Sipylum in Magnesia et prius in eodem loco clarissimam urbem, quae Tantalus vocabatur, Galenes et Gamales urbium in Phoenice agros cum ipsis, Phegium, Aethiopiae iugum excelsissimum*). That “Mt. Sipylus in the reign of Tantalus was shattered” (Σίπυλος κατεστράφη κατὰ τὴν Ταντάλου βασιλείαν) is reported also by Strabo (1.3.17), who shortly thereafter (1.3.18) adds that “around Methone in the Hermionic Gulf a mountain seven stadia in height was cast up in consequence of a fiery eruption” (περὶ Μεθώνην δὲ τὴν ἐν τῷ Ἑρμιονικῷ κόλπῳ ὄρος ἑπταστάδιον τὸ ὕψος ἀνεβλήθη γεννηθέντος ἀναφυσήματος φλογώδους). Especially relevant for the history of ancient philosophy is Anaximander's alleged prediction of a devastating earthquake in Sparta, during which “a large part of Mount Taygetus projecting in the shape of a ship's stern broke off and crashing down on it added to the catastrophe” (*Taygeti montis magna pars, ad formam puppis eminens, abrupta cladem eam insuper ruina pressit*, Plin. *HN* 2.191; cf. Cic. *Div.* 1.112 = DK 12 A 5).

maria: Building on the abundant evidence gathered by earlier scientists such as Xanthus of Lydia and Eratosthenes of Cyrene, Strabo (1.3.4) maintains that “one may admit that a great part of the continents was once covered by water for certain periods and was then left bare again” (τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐπικλύζεσθαι ποτε πολὺ μέρος τῶν ἡπείρων ἐπὶ καιροὺς τινὰς καὶ πάλιν ἀνακαλύπτεσθαι δοίη τις ἄν) – an idea originally developed by Presocratic philosophers such as Xenophanes (*ap.* Hippolytus, *Ref.* 1.14.5 = DK 11 A 33), who cited as proof the discovery of seashells on dry land. The same evidence leads Strabo to project other analogous changes into the future, since “the part of the earth above water, on which we live, is subject to all the changes mentioned by Eratosthenes” (τὴν ἕξalon, ἐν ἧ οἰκοῦμεν, τοσαύτας δεχομένην ὅσας αὐτὸς Ἐρατοσθένης εἶρηκε μεταβολάς). According to Alexander of Aphrodisias (*Mete.* 67.3–12 = DK 2 A 27), the thesis that the sea will eventually dry up was at least as old as Anaximander and Diogenes of Apollonia. For Strabo (1.3.9–10), who also cites Posidonius, “it is possible for the sea, beginning at its beaches, to be

entirely silted up, if it receives the inflow from the rivers uninterruptedly” (οὕτω μὲν οὖν ἐνδέχεται προσχωσθῆναι τὸ πέλαγος πᾶν, ἀπὸ τῶν αἰγιαλῶν ἀρξάμενον, ἂν συνεχεῖς ἔχῃ τὰς ἐκ τῶν ποταμῶν ἐπιρρύσεις) – a case in point being the inpouring of mud into the Euxine or Black Sea. At a more general level, Strabo points out that “deluges, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and upheavals of the submarine ground raise the sea, whereas the settling of the bed of the sea lowers it” (κατακλυσμοὶ καὶ σεισμοὶ καὶ ἀναφυσήματα καὶ ἀνοιδήσεις τῆς ὑφάλου γῆς μετεωρίζουσι καὶ τὴν θάλατταν, αἱ δὲ συνιζήσεις ταπεινοῦσιν αὐτήν).

flumina: In 8.8.4, Strabo lists not fewer than five Arcadian rivers which allegedly changed their courses. In 1.3.19–20, he quotes the Hellenistic historians Duris of Samos and Demetrius of Callatis to show that such phenomena are often related to the occurrence of earthquakes. Famous examples include some rivers in Media which “underwent changes of various kinds” (ποικίλας μεταβολὰς δέξασθαι), Greek hot springs and fountains which ceased to flow for several days, and the river Spercheius in central Greece which “changed its course and made the roadways navigable” (ἀλλάξει τὸ ρεῖθρον καὶ ποιῆσαι πλωτὰς τὰς ὁδοὺς). The aetiological connection between diversion of rivers and seismic tremors – which is mirrored in the joint mention of huge chasms (*hiatibus vastis*), tremors (*tremores*), and floods (*inundationibus*) in Cremutius’ speech shortly thereafter – is confirmed by Pliny (*HN* 2.193), according to whom earthquakes “cause remarkable consequences, in some places overthrowing walls (*mira eduntur opera, alibi prostratis moenibus*), [. . .] in others sending out torrents (*alibi emissis amnibus*) and sometimes even fires or hot springs (*nonnumquam etiam ignibus calidisve fontibus*), in others diverting the course of rivers (*alibi averso fluminum cursu*)”. A more detailed treatment of the modification of water flows as a sign of the end of times is offered by Seneca at *QNat.* 3.27.8–10, a passage immersed in a network of Ovidian allusions (Garani 2022). In the present passage, too, a subtle Ovidian intertextuality may underlie Seneca’s focus on *maria* and *flumina* (cf. esp. *Ov. Met.* 1.276–287; 2.241–259 on rivers; 1.291–312; 2.262–271 on seas).

commercio gentium rupto: The disintegration of human society and communication is described in very similar terms in *QNat.* 3.27.11–12, where Seneca imagines that after the flood the last humans flee to the tallest peaks, so that “communication and travel is cut off between these wretched people” (*diremptum inter miseros commercium ac transitus*). As in his *Natural Questions*, Seneca may be echoing Ovid’s deluge narrative, which includes a dystopic description of people isolated on mountain peaks, house roofs, and treetops (*Met.* 1.293–300). Indeed, the breaking up of human relationships and settlements is a characteristic feature of ancient Mediterranean (i.e., Greek and Near Eastern) tales about

cosmic catastrophes (Haubold 2013, 54–71) – such as the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha, whose desolate loneliness in a post-flood world is given great emphasis in Ovid (*Met.* 1.313–367).

tremoribus: From Aristotle onwards, earthquakes are one of the most debated topics in ancient meteorology (Taub 2003, 77–88). Seneca wrote a book *de motu terrarum* at a young age (*iuvenis*, as we read in *QNat.* 6.4.2, hence “early in Tiberius’ reign”, with Griffin 1976, 47 n. 2, on the basis of *Ep.* 108.22) and will devote the entire sixth book of his *Natural Questions* to the same issue (Williams 2006). Cremutius’ mention of earthquakes and “vast chasms” (*hiatibus vastis*) at this point of his speech relies on the view that such seismic phenomena are due to the action of subterranean air, a view illustrated in detail in Seneca’s *Natural Questions* (6.16–18, 21–31). At *QNat.* 6.24.5, Seneca remarks in very similar terms that when an earthquake occurs and the ground opens up, “sometimes entire cities are swallowed and buried in the chasm” (*totas nonnumquam urbes et recipit hiatus ille et abscondit*). Therefore, once again, Cremutius projects into the future the notions and the reports of the ancient scientific tradition. A rich list of ancient cities swallowed up by earthquakes is provided by both Strabo (1.3.16) and Pliny (*QNat.* 2.205–206), the former making explicit references to Posidonius’ discussion of Phoenicia, Syria, the Cyclades, and Euboea (= fr. 231 Edelstein-Kidd). Seneca (*QNat.* 6.24.6 = fr. 232 Edelstein-Kidd), too, mentions Posidonius’ narrative of a devastating earthquake in the Phoenician city of Sidon, but in the same context he also cites (and exaggerates) Thucydides’ account of an analogous event on the island of Atalante (Thuc. 3.89.3). Moreover, Book 6 of the *Natural Questions* is replete with references to famous cities destroyed by earthquakes, from the initial (and concluding: 6.31.1–3) mention of the Campanian towns damaged in 62 AD to the well-known story of Helice and Buris (6.23.4), for which Seneca refers to Callisthenes.

pestilentiae halitus: Like earthquakes, pestilences are explained by Seneca as a consequence of the movements of subterranean air, which eventually emerges “from deep below” (*ex infimo*). As Seneca points out in *QNat.* 6.27.2, a huge quantity of polluted air lies beneath the earth, and “when this emerges from its long decay, it infects and pollutes our pure, clear atmosphere, and when people inhale this unfamiliar breath, it causes new kinds of disease” (*cum e longo situ emissus est, purum hunc liquidumque maculat ac polluit insuetumque ducentibus spiritum affert nova genera morborum*). As Jouanna 2012, 121–136, has shown, the theory that epidemic diseases are due to miasmas carried in the air goes back to the Hippocratics and is embraced by such influential medical writers as Galen and Palladius. As for Hellenistic philosophy, an ‘aerial’ aetiology of plague is incorporated into the atomistic system of the Epicureans

(cf. Lucr. 6.1090–1137), and it is possible that at some stage it also entered the writings of the Stoics, presumably in a ‘pneumatic’ version (Tutrone 2017, 779–781). Posidonius seems to have devoted one of his works to a plague that occurred in Libya in his time (Oribasius, *Collect. Med.* 44.14.2 = fr. 113 Edelstein-Kidd). However, given the lack of explicit evidence, it is better to assume that Seneca draws on the medical tradition he knows so well.

omne animal: The point that the earth’s “old age” (*vetustas*) will kill every living creature “as the earth drowns” (*orbe submerso*) is made in more detail in *QNat.* 3.27.13–14, where Seneca criticizes Ovid for describing in his flood narrative a wolf swimming among sheep and other animals (*Met.* 1.304–306). According to Seneca, when the earth is swallowed up (*devorato orbe terrarum*), every animal (*pecus omne*), with no exception, will be drowned by the same force that has swept it away. As Garani 2022, 159, points out, “Seneca suggests that, although Ovid was efficient in his description of both multiple causes and the general picture, he failed to take his proto-scientific or philosophizing thought any further, and so properly to grasp what happened to the earth as its total devastation approached”. An Ovidian allusion may also be implied in the present depiction of the deluge (*inundationibus*), which, like other sections of the *consolatio*, builds on the reader’s literary memory to strengthen the author’s philosophical lesson. In criticizing earlier poetic accounts of the end of times, Seneca is true to Stoic doctrine, for already Zeno (*SVF* 1.106a = Philo, *Aetern. mund.* 131) seems to have remarked that neither humans nor any other living being (οὐδ’ ἄλλο τι ζῶον) will survive the conflagration (cf. also *SVF* 2.591, 607).

ignibus vastis: Seneca’s rhetorically elaborate list of the different material stages of the cosmic dissolution culminates in a philosophically orthodox reference to fire as the real agent of the final conflagration (ἐκπύρωσις). According to the Stoics, “god as δημιουργός or craftsman is immanent in the cosmos as its active, rational, and corporeal principle, and is particularly identified with the creative fire (πῦρ τεχνικόν) from which the world cycle arises and into which it periodically returns” (White 2003, 129–130; cf. *SVF* 1.106–109; 2.585–632). As recognized by Gloyn 2017, 17 n. 7, the notion of ἐκπύρωσις “is not inherently consolatory, and it is an innovation of Seneca’s to introduce it in such a context”. By so doing, Seneca sets his final seal on his ongoing Stoicization of the *consolatio* genre.

mundus renovaturus: An allusion to the Stoic theory of cosmic regeneration (παλιγγενεσία or ἀποκατάστασις), according to which “after the conflagration all the things that are in the cosmos will be born again individually, so that in the new cosmos their specific qualities will be the same as before” (μετὰ

τὴν ἐκπύρωσιν πάλιν πάντα ταῦτὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ γίνεσθαι κατ' ἀριθμόν, ὡς καὶ τὸν ἰδίως ποιὸν πάλιν τὸν αὐτὸν τῷ πρόσθεν εἶναι τε καὶ γίνεσθαι ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ κόσμῳ, Alex. Aphrod. *In Aristot. Analyt. Pr.* 180.33–36, quoting from Chrysippus' treatise *On the Cosmos* = SVF 2.624). Cf. Sen. *QNat.* 6.30.7–8; *Ep.* 36.11.

viribus ista se suis: The poetically flavored alliteration of *s* draws attention to the Stoic principle that both the conflagration and the palingenesis of the cosmos are the product of an internal corporeal force – that is, of the action of the “creative fire” (πῦρ τεχνικόν) – not of an external metaphysical intervention.

sidera sideribus incurrent: The polyptoton *sidera sideribus* creates an almost visual representation of the apocalyptic collision of the heavenly bodies. Since the stars are regarded by the Stoics as divine beings (cf. above, note on Marc. 23.1, *ad originem suam*), their mortal destiny embodies the totalizing impact of the ἐκπύρωσις as well as the natural inevitability of death (cf. *Ep.* 71.13; Mader 1983, 63). One may perceive an Ovidian allusion also in the present passage and in the subsequent remark that “all matter goes up in flames” (*omni flagrante materia*), for in his picture of the conflagration generated by Phaethon's misadventure with the sun chariot (*Met.* 2.204–213), Ovid maintains that Phaethon's horses “strike against the fixed stars in deep ether” (*altoque sub aethere fixis/ incursant stellis*) and that “the scorched corn provides the matter for its own destruction” (*materiamque suo praebet seges arida damno*).

ex disposito: All stars shine in an orderly configuration since they have been purposefully arranged by the immanent rationality of Stoic providence. However, just as the rising of the heavenly bodies is the effect of a providential decree, their ultimate destruction inevitably take place “when god decides to recreate the world” (*cum deo visum erit iterum ista moliri*). For a Stoic, this is an *a fortiori* demonstration of the fact that both the birth and the death of Metilius – of Metilius' body *and* soul – are signs of divine intelligence.

26.7 felices animae et aeterna sortitae: As already recognized by Setaioli 2013, 475 n. 136, “Manning 1981, 135; 152, is wrong in stating that it cannot be determined whether Seneca follows Cleanthes or Chrysippus”, for Seneca clearly accepts the latter's doctrine (Diog. Laert. *Vit.* 7.157) that only the souls of the wise – the *felices animae* – last until the end of each cosmic cycle (see now also Williams 2021, 322, according to whom “for all the Platonizing color of the emancipated soul as pictured here, Seneca's Stoic allegiance is with Chrysippus”). As blessed souls, Cremutius and Metilius have attained the only kind of eternity Stoic physics promises – eternity relative to one cosmic cycle, i.e., to one *aevum*, to which the adjective *aeternus* (= *aeviternus*) originally refers (cf. above, note on

Marc. 24.5, *aeternus*). Seneca's use of the adjective *aeternus* in this context is thus deliberately paradoxical and thought provoking as it reminds Marcia that any aspiration to eternity, in an absolute sense – for oneself or for one's children – constitutes an irrational repudiation of natural law.

in antiqua elementa: Cremutius concludes his eschatological picture with a forceful reaffirmation of Stoic corporealism – which has the additional effect of eliminating any possible doubt about the literary and metaphorical character of Seneca's Platonizing images. Indeed, *qua* material bodies made up of fire and/or air (cf. above, note on *Marc.* 23.3, *ad summum pervenit*), the souls of the wise will eventually be returned to their original elements (*elementa* = στοιχεῖα). On the Stoic idea that the cyclical transmutations of the four elements result in a “union of the parts of the cosmos” (*mundi partium coniunctio* = συμπάθεια) which is “everlasting in this same form in which we see it, or at all events extremely durable and destined to endure for an almost immeasurably protracted period of time” (*aut sempiterna* [. . .] *hoc eodem ornatu quem videmus, aut certe perdiuturna, permanens ad longinquum et immensum paene tempus*), see Cic. *N. Deor.* 2.84–85 – a testimony which, among other things, sheds further light on the meaning of the word “eternity” (*aeterna*) in this and other Senecan contexts.

Felicem: As the *consolatio* draws to a close, Seneca speaks again in his own voice and delivers what ancient readers could easily identify as a macarism (μακαρισμός) – the literary form of pronouncing someone blessed, which goes back to Homer (e.g., *Od.* 6.153–161), Hesiod (*Op.* 170–173; *Theog.* 96–97), and the Homeric Hymns (*Hom. Hymn Dem.* 480) and has a long history in Roman, Jewish, and Christian literature (Nwachukwu 2005). Since Seneca's macarism presents Metilius' blessedness as a consequence of his perfect knowledge of cosmic laws (*qui ista iam novit*), the most direct model of the present passage can be seen in Virgil's eulogy of Lucretius (*G.* 2.490–492) as a brave thinker who has been able to “discover the causes of things” (*rerum cognoscere causas*) and defeat the fear of death (Gale 2000, 9–11). Both the theme of natural knowledge and that of tranquility in the face of death are central to Seneca's discourse, but, as Marcia should by now be ready to appreciate, they are given a coherent Stoic interpretation which does not align either with Lucretius' or with Virgil's didactic. For Seneca, true happiness is to gain a deep understanding of the cosmic order and its moral consequences in accordance with the principles of Stoic philosophy – that is, to achieve the complete ἀπάθεια that the souls of the wise are already enjoying and the attentive reader can strive to anticipate.

Abbreviations

- BNJ* Ian Worthington, *Brill's New Jacoby*, Leiden 2007–.
- DK* Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 3 vols., Berlin 1903–1952.
- FrGrH* Felix Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, 6th ed., 3 vols., Berlin 1923–.
- SVF* Hans Friedrich August von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, 4 vols., Stuttgart 1903–1924.

Throughout this volume, references to ancient works are given according to the abbreviations of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. References to ancient works which survive in fragments are always accompanied by the name of the editor. Journals and standard works are abbreviated as in *L'Année philologique*.

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Index Rerum

For Greek and Latin key terms, the English equivalents regularly used in the present volume are listed, with the original words in brackets.

- Academy/Academic 11, 14–15, 18, 79–81, 83, 86–87, 120, 124, 129, 133, 175, 200, 206, 226
- afterlife 12, 123, 199–200, 262
- allegorism/allegorical 169, 198, 200, 262
- animals (ἄλογα ζῶα) 92, 101–104, 106, 121, 124–125, 127, 130–131, 166–167, 186–187, 222, 229, 237, 281, 288
- anthropology/anthropological 98, 117, 120, 124–126, 151, 166, 245
- apocalypse/apocalyptic 270, 277, 282, 289
- appropriation (οἰκειώσεις) 15, 47–49, 53, 73, 91, 127–129, 195, 207–209, 225–226, 239, 252, 263–264, 272
- assent (συγκατάθεσις) 12, 62, 99–100, 105–106, 192
- astronomy/astronomical 180–183, 219, 265, 283
- bereavement 11, 15, 19, 60, 70, 96–98, 101–103, 107–108, 129–132, 141, 145, 148–150, 192–195, 259–260, 270
- biology/biological 104, 141, 180, 186, 247, 281–283
- bite (δηγμός/δῆξις) 99–100
- body (σῶμα) 18, 48, 100–103, 118, 121, 124–129, 141, 155, 189, 240–242, 245, 251, 255, 257–262, 265, 278, 289
- boldness (θαρσαλεύτης) 52, 156, 188
- breath (πνεῦμα) 18, 48, 106, 126–127, 198, 287–288
- causation 97–98, 120, 165–166
- chance (τύχη) 109, 113, 140, 152, 158–159, 201–204, 224
- cheerfulness (εὐθυμία) 80, 95, 130
- Christianity/Christian 3, 19, 113–114, 120, 122, 126, 192, 258, 260, 266, 278–279, 290
- civil war 143, 209, 214–216, 271–273, 275
- comedy 83, 108, 193, 228
- condition (ἔξις) 14, 64
- conflagration (ἐκπύρωσις) 197, 203, 220, 246, 255–256, 271, 281–283, 288–289
- consistency (*constantia*) 53, 100, 114, 137–138, 154, 275
- contraction (συστολή) 99, 101, 191, 282
- corporealism 17, 201, 290
- cosmopolitanism/cosmopolitan 180, 206, 245, 264
- cosmos/cosmology 14, 50–52, 96, 102–103, 121, 125, 127, 166–169, 177–179, 180–182, 187, 218–220, 223, 243–246, 249, 259, 270–271, 280–284, 288–290
- courage (ἀνδρεία) 52–53, 105, 105, 111, 156
- cowardice (δειλία) 105
- Cynicism/Cynic 120, 123, 164, 198, 205–206,
- deluge 187, 282–283, 286–288
- demons (δαίμονες) 278–279
- desire (ἐπιθυμία) 48–49, 59, 68, 74, 80, 94, 101, 148, 202–203, 240, 245
- determinism 128, 223
- diatribe/diatribic 65, 97, 99, 112, 168
- disposition (διάθεσις) 5, 14, 64, 104, 106, 232
- divination 80, 110, 182, 209, 278
- dualism 121, 126, 269
- duties (*officia*) 58, 80, 144, 147, 180, 213
- earthquake 9, 169, 281–283, 285–287
- eclectic/eclecticism 12, 59, 81, 86–87, 92, 130, 227, 281
- emotions (πάθη) 12–15, 48–49, 58–59, 61–63, 68, 73–74, 78, 80–84, 93–95, 99–107, 120–121, 130, 133, 136, 138, 141–144, 164, 191–192, 202–203, 227, 252–255, 273–274
- enjoyment (τέρψις) 80, 83, 130
- envy (φθόνος) 95, 132, 135, 137, 141, 144, 178, 193, 202, 210

- epic 13, 116, 118–119, 121, 125, 131, 165, 170, 199, 229, 241
- Epicureanism/Epicurean 3, 12, 15, 90, 92–94, 96, 116, 120, 123, 125, 129–130, 165, 177, 183, 193, 198–201, 221–223, 227, 250, 258–260, 266, 281, 287
- epigram 112–113, 193, 206, 253
- epitaph 112, 122, 131, 192–193, 252
- eradication of the emotions. See impassiveness
- eruption (volcanic) 185, 283, 285–286
- eschatology/eschatological 17–18, 197, 199, 242–245, 259, 261, 263, 265, 269–270, 278–279, 281, 290
- eternity/eternal 97, 203, 220, 222, 255–256, 273, 289–290
- ether (αἰθήρ) 258–259, 272, 289
- evil 3–4, 48–49, 58, 60–61, 93, 96, 100–101, 104–105, 107–108, 110, 118–120, 127, 129, 133, 159, 161, 163, 165–166, 178, 189, 191, 195–196, 200–202, 205, 209, 214, 229–231, 234, 241, 274
- examples (*exempla*) 6, 11, 15, 19, 50–51, 58, 64–65, 67–68, 72, 78–79, 81, 84, 91, 96–97, 101–102, 111, 129–130, 132–133, 136, 138, 140–141, 144, 147–148, 151, 153–154, 157, 159–160, 163, 197, 209, 211, 217, 231, 249, 252, 275
- exemplarity 15, 50, 64–65, 67, 129, 153, 155, 197, 267, 270
- exercise (ἄσκησις) 3, 82, 93, 103, 107, 109, 164, 227, 234, 242, 246, 255
- exhortation (παραίνεσις) 11, 16, 64–66, 93–94, 133, 178, 229, 271
- exile 4–5, 110, 143, 148–149, 153–154, 174, 205–206, 216, 231
- fate (εἰμαρμένη) 52, 96–98, 109, 118, 142, 180–182, 189, 202, 221, 223–225, 241, 280, 282, 285
- fear (φόβος) 3, 57, 90–91, 100, 137, 140, 146, 152, 178, 191, 198, 200, 202–203, 259, 290
- feminine/femininity 50, 156–159, 253
- fire 104, 145, 157, 185, 199, 229, 236–237, 244, 248, 258–259, 261, 269, 276, 278, 281–283, 285–286, 288–290
- flood 281–284, 286–288
- folklore/folkloric 119, 132, 157, 169, 199, 234, 247, 276
- fortitude (καρτερία) 47, 52, 105, 136–137, 149, 155–157, 217, 275
- fortune (*fortuna*) 52, 94–95, 109, 117–118, 134, 140–142, 148–149, 155, 157, 182, 201, 205–206, 210, 213, 221, 274
- Forum/forensic 8, 50–51, 72, 78, 96, 109, 134, 142, 150, 157, 162, 237, 277
- freedom 13, 53, 57, 98, 155, 164, 195, 200, 204–205, 209, 217, 264
- funeral 51, 72, 74, 77, 78, 84, 108, 117, 151, 260
- funeral oration (*laudatio funebris*) 92, 98, 132, 153, 178, 227, 247, 250–251, 253
- gender 15, 47, 50–51, 57, 64, 67, 69, 71, 111–112, 118, 121, 129, 153–157, 163, 176, 178, 253, 267, 272
- generalized interlocutor 99, 107
- gift 9, 88, 91, 113–114, 134–135, 156, 191, 212, 233, 235–236, 265
- Golden Age 276–277
- good emotions (εὐπάθειαι) 80, 84, 130, 255
- heaven 4, 87, 180, 182–183, 196, 219, 243–246, 258, 259, 261–267, 269, 271–272, 276–280, 283–285, 289
- high spirit (εὐψυχία) 52
- historiography 56–57, 60, 64, 67, 136, 139, 145, 156, 172, 176, 228
- human condition 96, 116, 190, 220
- ill-repute (ἄδοξία) 105
- imitation (*imitatio*) 13, 97, 184–185, 270
- immortality/immortal 56, 192, 242, 255–256, 263, 272
- impassiveness (ἀπάθεια) 14–15, 65, 78, 81–82, 84, 120, 133, 136–137, 140–141, 144, 159, 161, 164, 255, 270, 284, 290
- impression (φαντασία) 62, 67–68, 83, 90, 105–106, 179–180, 271

- indifferents (ἀδιάφορα) 14, 94–95, 101, 104–105, 109–113, 123, 126, 131, 178, 189, 196, 201, 202, 204–204, 229, 231, 258, 260, 276
- infirmities (ἀρρωστήματα) 49
- intertextuality/intertextual 12, 13, 18, 51, 66, 102, 148, 177, 184, 224, 245, 256, 259, 263–264, 274, 276, 286
- joy (χαρά) 80–81, 83, 92–93, 130, 177, 255, 262
- judgement (κρίσις) 12, 49, 52, 58–59, 62, 80–81, 99–100, 102, 105–106, 148, 179, 191–192
- justice (δικαιοσύνη) 53, 84, 115, 174, 216, 263
- lament 98, 117, 119, 161, 191, 222
- laudatio funebris*. See funeral oration.
- law/legal 14, 48, 52–53, 60–61, 68, 70, 75, 84, 87, 96–97, 107, 109, 112–117, 123–124, 142, 161–162, 165, 167, 174, 176–178, 180, 194, 198–199, 205–206, 221, 223, 232, 234, 239, 241, 249–250, 265, 272, 277, 284, 290
- longing (πόθος, ἕμερος) 59, 102, 116, 157, 191
- love of fame (φιλοδοξία/δοξομανία) 247
- love of labor (φιλοπονία) 52
- love of riches (φιλοπλουτία/φιλαργυρία) 202
- love of wine (φιλοινία) 49, 105
- low birth (δυσγένεια) 105
- lyric 116, 125, 165, 174
- macarism (μακαρισμός) 290
- manliness/manly 111, 153–156, 251, 267
- masks (*imagines*) 51, 108, 267
- Mausoleum of Augustus (*Mausoleum Augusti*) 72, 78
- medicine 48, 62, 66, 121, 226, 229–230
- memory 4, 6, 12, 15, 47–48, 54–56, 65, 72, 74, 79, 91, 139, 143–144, 157–158, 164, 197, 210, 217, 221, 235, 267, 274, 288
- metaphysics/metaphysical 18, 246, 257, 289
- metempsychosis 260–261
- meteorology/meteorological 171, 180, 182–183, 186, 261, 284, 287
- mime 110–111
- mirth (εὐφροσύνη) 80, 130
- moderation of the emotions (μετριοπάθεια) 14–15, 81–83, 99, 120–121, 133
- monism 14, 17, 257–258
- myth 11, 119, 132–133, 147, 153, 155, 170–171, 181, 188, 193, 198–200, 227, 229, 234, 243, 260–262, 276–277, 282, 284
- natural law 14, 48, 52–53, 115, 117, 124, 165, 176, 178, 284, 290
- noble-mindedness (μεγαλοψυχία) 14, 47, 52, 58, 141, 148, 163
- old age 158, 221–222, 225, 227, 247, 280, 288
- opinion (δόξα) 49, 59, 89, 94, 97, 100, 105–106, 191, 202–203, 225, 276
- pain (λύπη) 49, 59, 74, 92, 95, 99–100, 102, 130, 166, 191, 195, 202, 230, 263, 273–274
- paradox/paradoxical 74, 79, 156, 196, 204, 208, 213, 226, 234, 241, 253, 270, 290
- parenthood/parental 47, 53, 105, 116, 136, 143, 166–167, 177, 190, 192–195, 197, 233–234, 239, 252, 259, 270
- parricide 55, 277
- patriarchy/patriarchal 60, 221, 254, 264
- Peripatos/Peripatetic 12, 14–15, 81, 83, 96, 99, 102–104, 120, 124–125, 284
- persona* (πρόσωπον) 9, 49–50, 53, 90, 97–99, 106, 114, 138, 170, 176, 179, 270, 273, 275
- person in progress (*proficiens*) 14, 53, 83–84, 109, 132, 224
- perversion of reason (διαστροφή τοῦ λόγου) 62, 73, 94, 193
- physics/physical 12, 14, 16–17, 18, 48, 63, 96, 99, 102, 107, 124–125, 127–129, 133, 167, 171, 180, 198, 206, 218, 220, 223,

- 227, 244, 248, 259–260, 262–263, 267, 271, 276, 278, 281–283, 289
- piety (εὐσέβεια) 54–55, 137, 263
- Platonism/Platonic 12, 17–18, 81, 86, 121–122, 124–127, 136, 174–175, 196–197, 219–220, 228–229, 242–246, 256–258, 261–262, 265, 269, 276, 281, 284, 289–290
- pleasure (ἡδονή) 62, 80, 92–94, 102, 116, 130, 175–176, 202, 227–228, 242, 247, 255, 259, 261, 263
- politics/political 5–9, 13, 51–52, 54, 56–57, 69–71, 80–81, 86, 112, 117, 137, 139, 144–148, 152, 160–162, 171, 173–174, 180, 194, 202, 207, 210, 215, 217, 226, 228, 232, 235–236, 244, 249, 251–252, 271, 273, 276
- poverty (πενία) 105, 110, 202, 205
- precepts (*praecepta*) 12, 15, 19, 50, 65–66, 84, 96, 105, 129–130, 195
- pre-emotions (προπάθειαι) 14, 78, 84, 95, 99–100, 106, 138, 191, 253
- premeditation of future evils 3, 93, 107–108, 110, 178, 235
- proclivities (εὐκαταφορίαι/εὐεμπτωσίαι) 49, 81
- proficiens*. See person in progress
- progress (προκοπή) 11, 13, 82–83, 94, 107, 125, 133, 166, 188, 195, 205, 270
- proscription 214–215, 271–273
- prosopopoeia (προσωποποιία) 15, 18, 176–178, 197, 220, 270, 274, 282–283
- providence (πρόνοια) 94, 98, 113, 118, 125, 127, 132, 135, 137, 166, 176, 180, 196, 209, 221, 226, 289
- psychagogy/psychagogical 15, 19, 66, 79, 90, 93, 165, 168, 178, 267
- psychology/psychological 12, 14–15, 17–18, 51, 67, 81, 90, 93–94, 100, 126, 129, 133, 165–166, 176, 197, 199, 245, 259, 262, 267, 278, 281
- pudor*. See shame
- purgation 261–262, 272
- Pythagoreanism/Pythagorean 17, 108, 182, 199, 219, 242–243, 260–262, 266, 283
- Quellenforschung* 17, 177, 189, 242
- regeneration of the cosmos (παλιγγενεσία/ἀποκατάστασις) 220, 271, 283, 288
- religion 70, 80, 110, 123, 132, 137, 234
- resilience 140, 147, 149, 238
- rivalry (ζήλος/ζηλοτυπία) 137, 202
- role model 8, 56, 64, 67, 87, 157, 175, 266
- satire 144, 193, 228–229
- self-deception 192, 238
- self-perception (συναίσθησις/συνειδήσις) 129, 195, 226
- shame (*pudor*) 227, 253
- sicknesses (νοσήματα) 49, 59, 62, 68, 73, 202, 247
- slavery 174, 205–207
- Socratic alternative 196–197, 200, 203, 256
- soul (ψυχή) 14, 18, 48–49, 59, 62–63, 67, 74, 82, 87, 94, 99, 103, 106, 111, 121, 123, 125–127, 129, 158, 175, 191, 196–199, 203, 219, 222, 224, 241–246, 248, 255–269, 271–272, 276, 278–279, 281, 289–290
- starvation (*abstinentia*) 54, 239, 275
- steadfastness (εὐστάθεια) 100, 137, 152
- suicide 4, 51, 54, 69, 70, 81, 154–155, 174, 197, 204, 217, 231, 233, 235, 239–240, 264, 275
- symmetry argument 201, 221
- teleology/teleological 14, 101, 104, 125–126, 149, 166, 183, 187, 204, 208, 223, 226, 243–244, 247, 249
- tendency to grief (ἐπιλυπία) 49–50, 59
- theater/theatrical 70, 72, 97, 110, 113–114, 118, 122–123, 207, 236–237, 275
- theodicy 94, 118, 165
- therapy/therapeutic 4, 6, 8, 10–12, 14–15, 17, 19, 47–50, 58–60, 62–63, 67, 78, 82, 87, 93, 97, 118, 120, 130, 133, 163, 165, 175, 191, 195, 197–198, 227, 230, 245, 252, 255, 270–271, 273
- timely death (εὐκαιρος θάνατος) 209, 211, 214, 222, 226, 274

- tomb 73, 257, 259
- tragedy/tragic 13, 48, 108, 111, 121, 174, 201, 234, 261
- triumph (*triumphus*) 77, 134, 138–141, 146, 216
- tyrant/tyranny 88, 95, 117–118, 135, 154, 173–176, 199–200, 207, 244
- untimely death (ἄωρος θάνατος) 71, 88, 105, 129, 134–135, 141, 189, 192, 195, 204, 209, 218, 224, 249
- ‘up to us’ (ἐφ’ ἡμῖν) 148, 192
- violence 144, 152, 175, 177, 207, 214, 218, 226, 241
- virtue (ἀρετή) 5, 14, 47, 49–50, 52–53, 55, 58, 64, 67, 69–71, 78–79, 94–96, 103, 105, 111, 125, 131, 136–137, 141, 152–155, 157–159, 163, 166, 174–175, 188, 196, 204, 210, 217, 224, 231–232, 239, 244, 247–250, 252–253, 255, 267, 275–276, 284
- will (*voluntas*) 11, 81, 84–85, 93, 96–98, 124, 137, 164, 190, 192, 223–224, 241
- wisdom (σοφία) 3, 8–9, 14, 49, 53, 60, 66, 82, 95, 98, 103–104, 111, 123, 145, 153, 165–166, 196, 206, 234, 247–248, 250, 266
- wise person 50, 78–79, 87, 90, 94, 100, 103, 107, 109, 114, 159, 191, 197, 203–204, 216, 239–242, 253, 255, 257, 263–264, 267, 269–270, 272, 289–290
- women/womanly 9–10, 14–15, 47, 49–50, 58, 64, 69–71, 76, 79, 89–91, 98, 101, 103–104, 111, 120–121, 153–159, 161, 163, 175, 188, 230–231, 234, 239, 250–251, 253, 272

Index Nominum

The forms of the names of ancient people are those in common usage. For the names of Greek and Roman writers whose works are cited in the present volume, please refer to the *Index Locorum*.

- Acheron (infernal river) 199, 206, 259
Achillas (Egyptian general) 211–212
Aeacus (mythological king) 199–200
Agrippa, Marcus Vipsanius 72, 78, 86,
148–149, 151
Agrippa Postumus, Marcus Vipsanius 74,
149–150
Agrippina the Elder (Vipsania Agrippina) 72,
149, 239
Agrippina the Younger (Julia Agrippina) 9, 87
Alexander the Great 83, 146, 174, 185
Antipater of Tarsus 86, 278
Antonia the Younger (Julia Antonia Minor) 72
– Marc Antony (Marcus Antonius) 69–70,
118, 214–215, 272
Arcesilaus of Pitane 206
Archedemus of Tarsus 104
Aureus of Alexandria 6, 15, 64, 75, 85–92,
94–98, 118, 227, 270, 273–274
Aristippus of Cyrene 206
Aristo of Chios 13, 53, 64, 94, 114
Atalante (island) 287
Athenodorus of Tarsus (the Younger) 75, 86
Attalus of Pergamon 8, 94, 243
Augustus (Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus) 4,
15, 54, 64, 68–79, 85–88, 90, 147–152,
157, 159–160, 162, 210, 228, 235, 272
- Bibulus, Marcus Calpurnius 141–144,
146–147
Black Sea 222, 286
Blossius of Cumae 159
Boethus of Sidon 52, 98, 271
Britannia/Britain 76, 145, 188
Brutus, Lucius Junius 154–155, 157
Brutus, Marcus Junius 54, 236, 272
Buris (city) 287
- Caecilia Metella 134
Caesar, Gaius Julius 54, 69–70, 76, 86, 110,
141–147, 188, 209–213, 215, 217, 230,
253, 272
Caligula (Gaius Julius Caesar
Germanicus) 4–6, 8–9, 55–56, 61,
71–72, 78, 135, 144, 147, 152, 163, 208,
235–236
Callisthenes of Olynthus 287
Campania/Campanian 72, 158, 211, 287
Caria (region) 285
Carneades of Cyrene 133, 280
Cassius, Gaius Longinus 54, 236, 272
Cassius Severus, Titus 5, 55
Catiline (Lucius Sergius Catilina) 213–216, 228
Cato the Elder/the Censor (Marcus Porcius
Cato Maior) 209, 221, 225, 230,
263, 266
Cato the Younger/Uticensis (Marcus Porcius
Cato Minor) 64–65, 82, 86, 91, 125,
142–143, 145, 174, 197, 210, 213–214,
216–217, 231–233, 245, 250, 263–264,
266–267, 274
Chaeremon of Alexandria 200
Charybdis (mythological creature) 119,
169–170, 268
Chrysippus of Soli 13–15, 18, 48, 50, 52, 58,
62, 64, 80, 82, 84, 86, 98, 100, 105,
108–109, 126, 128, 180, 191, 197, 200,
206, 220, 243, 250, 255, 258–259,
262–263, 271, 278, 281, 289
Cibotus (mountain) 285
Claudius (Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus
Germanicus) 75, 95, 145, 152, 236
Cleanthes of Assos 13, 18, 49, 58–59, 64,
82, 126, 197, 204, 224, 244, 245, 255,
264, 271, 289

- Cleopatra (Cleopatra VII Thea Philopator) 69, 86, 143–144, 211
- Clodius (Publius Clodius Pulcher) 216
- Cloelia 15, 153–157
- Cocytus (infernal river) 198–199
- Collatinus, Lucius Tarquinius 154–155
- Cornelia (Africana, mother of the Gracchi) 15, 70, 153, 158–161
- Cornelia (wife of M. Livius Drusus) 15, 153, 161–162
- Cornelia Metella (wife of Pompey the Great) 212
- Cornelius, Gaius 213
- Cornutus, Lucius Annaeus 86, 200, 262
- Crantor of Soli 11, 13, 81, 120, 129, 133, 206, 234
- Crassus, Marcus Licinius 142
- Cremutius Cordus, Aulus 4–7, 15, 18–19, 47, 49, 51, 54–57, 60–61, 147, 174, 190, 197, 205, 209, 220, 226, 235–241, 244, 246, 252, 254, 256, 264–267, 270–277, 279–287, 289–290
- Cyclades (islands) 287
- Cyprus 216–217
- Dante (Alighieri) 219, 278–279
- Delphi/Delphic 123–124, 126
- Demetrius of Callatis 286
- Demetrius of Scepsis 284
- Deucalion 281, 283, 287
- Diogenes of Apollonia 285
- Diophanes of Mytilene 159
- Drusus, Julius Caesar 149–152
- Drusus, Marcus Livius 161–162
- Drusus, Nero Claudius Germanicus 5, 64, 68, 70–71, 75–78, 88, 92–94
- Duris of Samos 286
- Egypt/Egyptian 7, 9, 86, 131, 143–144, 151, 211–212, 216, 229, 237, 274
- Eratosthenes of Cyrene 219, 283–285
- Ethiopia 188, 285
- Euboea 287
- Fabianus, Papirius 7–8, 18, 168, 243, 248–249, 282
- Fabius Maximus, Quintus (Verrucosus or Cunctator) 139
- Gabinus, Aulus 143
- Gaius (emperor). *See* Caligula
- Galerius, Gaius 7–8, 144, 229
- Germanicus, Julius Caesar 95, 149–152
- Gracchus, Gaius Sempronius 158, 161–162
- Gracchus, Tiberius Sempronius 158, 160
- Hades 123, 198–199, 206, 262
- Helice (city) 287
- Hercules 117, 132, 200, 219, 224
- Hortensius (Quintus Hortensius Hortalus) 145, 226, 283
- Julia Augusta, *see* Livia Drusilla
- Julia (Augusti) 72, 78, 148–149
- Julia (Caesaris) 145–146
- Labienuus, Titus 5, 55
- Laelius, Gaius 245, 266
- Lethe (infernal river) 199
- Libya 268, 288
- Livia Drusilla 5, 15, 19, 64–65, 67–75, 77–79, 81, 84–85, 87–97, 118, 148–149, 160, 162–163, 227, 254, 267, 270
- Lucretia 15, 153–157
- Lutatius Catulus, Quintus 214
- Marcellus, Marcus Claudius 64, 68–70, 72–75, 78, 88, 149
- Marius the Younger (Gaius Marius) 134, 215, 231
- Media (region) 286
- Methone (city) 285
- Metilius 4, 19, 49, 51, 61, 83, 115, 129, 131–132, 134, 163–164, 166, 195, 202–203, 205, 218, 221, 224, 226–227, 234, 241–242, 244, 246–261, 263–264, 266–267, 270, 274, 276, 284, 289–290

- Meton of Athens 283
 Minos (mythological king) 198–200
 Mithridates VI of Pontus 134
 – de Montaigne, Michel 3, 16

 Naples 210–211
 Novatus, Marcus Annaeus 8

 Ocean 76, 145, 185–187, 189, 279
 Octavia the Younger (Octavia Minor) 15, 19,
 64, 67–75, 78–80, 84–85, 96, 149, 159,
 211, 267
 Octavian, *see* Augustus
 Opimius, Lucius 161

 Paul of Tarsus 11, 122, 278
 Paulus, Lucius Aemilius 138–141, 263–264
 Perseus (mythological hero) 119
 Perseus (king of Macedon) 138–139, 141
 Phaeton 282
 Pharsalus (battle) 210–211
 Philippus (king of Macedon) 83
 Philippus, Lucius Marcius 162
 Philolaos of Croton 283
 Phlegethon (infernal river) 198–199
 Phoenicia 285, 287
 Pinarius Natta, Lucius 54, 235
 Pompeia (daughter of Pompey the Great) 146
 Pompeia Paulina 9
 Pompey the Great (Gnaeus Pompeius
 Magnus) 69, 144–146, 197, 209–213,
 217, 236–237, 244, 274–275
 Porsenna, Lars 155–156
 Pothinus (Egyptian eunuch) 211–212
 Ptolemy VIII Physcon 158, 187
 Ptolemy XI Alexander II 216–217
 Ptolemy XII Auletes 143, 211–212, 216
 Ptolemy XIII Theos Philopator 210–212
 Publicola, Publius Valerius 137, 157
 Pulvillus, Marcus Horatius 136–138, 151

 Rhadamanthus (mythological king) 198–200

 Satrius Secundus 54, 235
 Scipio Aemilianus, Publius Cornelius 139,
 159, 263–264
 Scipio Africanus, Publius Cornelius 139,
 158–159, 264, 266, 271, 279
 Scipio Nasica, Publius Cornelius 160, 162
 Scylla (mythological creature) 119, 169–170
 Sejanus, Lucius Aelius 4, 6, 7, 54, 57, 95,
 147, 150, 152, 235–238, 240, 254
 Septimius, Lucius 211–212
 Sertorius, Quintus 146
 Sextii (philosophical school) 18, 243
 Sextius, Quintus 8, 248
 Sextus Pompeius (Magnus Pius) 146
 Sextus Tarquinius 154
 Sicily/Sicilian 86, 167–173, 199
 Sidon (city) 287
 Sipylus (mountain) 285
 Sisyphus (mythological king) 198
 Socrates 3, 16, 79–80, 90, 111, 120,
 124–125, 196, 199, 204, 218, 231–233,
 239, 242, 245–246, 260
 Sparta 285
 Spercheius (river) 286
 Stilpon of Megara 164
 Strato of Lampsacus 284
 Styx (infernal river) 199
 Syrtis (gulfs) 268
 Sulla (Lucius Cornelius Sulla Felix) 133–135,
 145–146, 215, 232
 Sulpicius Rufus, Publius 60, 107, 219, 227
 Syria/Syrian 110, 142–143, 150–151, 287

 Tantalus (mythological king) 198, 285
 Tarquinius Superbus, Lucius 118, 136, 154,
 157
 Taygetus (mountain) 285
 Theodotus of Chios 211
 Theon of Alexandria 86
 Tiberius (Tiberius Julius Caesar
 Augustus) 4–9, 54, 57, 61, 68, 70–72,
 75–79, 85, 88, 95, 147–152, 176, 208,
 210, 228, 235–237, 239, 254, 287

Triptolemus (mythological prince) 199–200
Tullia (daughter of Cicero) 60, 214

Vargunteius, Lucius 213
Varus, Publius Quintilius 151

Xanthus of Lydia 284–285
Xenophanes of Colophon 200, 285

Zeno of Citium 13, 18, 48, 52, 64, 80, 98, 100,
103, 109, 164, 191, 198, 200, 232, 244–245,
248, 258–259, 262, 271, 281, 288

Index Locorum

The names of ancient authors appear in the index as they appear in common usage. Names in square brackets refer to works generally believed to be spurious. Titles of works are given in Latin.

ACCIUS	1.28.4 52
<i>Medea</i> (ed. Ribbeck)	1.29.7 224
403-404 187	2.26.2 181
	4.11.1-4 222
AELIAN	
<i>De Natura Animalium</i>	AFRANIUS
5.43 222	<i>Suspecta</i>
	fr. 327 Ribbeck = Non. 2.273 Lindsay 119
<i>Varia Historia</i>	
3.3 135	ALEXANDER OF APHRODISIAS
12.15 86	<i>De Mixtione</i>
	217.32-218.10 269
<i>Fragmenta</i> (ed. Hercher)	
53 134	<i>In Aristotelis Analyticorum Priorum Librum I</i>
	<i>Commentarium</i>
AELIUS DONATUS	180.33-36 289
<i>Vita Vergilii</i>	
25 149	<i>In Aristotelis Meteorologicorum Libros</i>
32 74	<i>Commentaria</i>
	62 282
AELIUS THEON	67.3-12 285
<i>Progymnasmata (Rhetores Graeci, ed.</i>	
Spengel)	<i>Mantissa (De Anima)</i>
2.115.11-28 176	185.1-5 52
AESCHINES	
<i>In Ctesiphontem</i>	AMBROSIUS
167 237	<i>De Excessu Fratris Sui Satyri</i>
	1.71 192
AESCHYLUS	
<i>Prometheus Victus</i>	<i>De Poenitentia</i>
377-385 48	1.90-91 120
378-380 62	
	AMMIANUS MARCELLINUS
<i>Fragmenta</i> (ed. Radt)	<i>Res Gestae</i>
402 169	14.5.6 237
AËTIUS	
<i>Placita</i>	ANAXAGORAS
	DK 59 A 42.5 183

ANAXIMANDER
DK 2 A 27 285
DK 12 A 5 285

ANAXIMENES
DK 13 A 14 181

[ANDRONICUS OF RHODES]
De Passionibus
6 80, 255

ANONYMI COMMENTARIUS IN PLATONIS
THEAETETUM (ed. Bastianini/Long)
col. 7.26-8.1 207

ANTHOLOGIA GRAECA
337.4 113
654.7 113
664.8 113

APOLLONIUS RHODIUS
Argonautica
4.933-934 187

APPIAN
Bella Civilia
1.2.16-17 160
1.3.23 161
1.3.26 161
1.5.36-37 162
1.11.95 215
1.11.97 134
2.1.7 214
2.2.9-12 142
2.4.28 210
2.11.82 211
2.12.84-86 210
2.13.90 212
2.19 146
5.15 236
5.64 69
5.93-95 69

APULEIUS
Apologia
87 109

ARCHIMEDES
Arenarius
11 265

ARCHYTAS OF TARENTUM
Fragmenta (ed. Huffman)
A7a 219

ARISTIPPUS OF CYRENE
Fragmenta (ed. Mannebach)
85 206

ARISTOPHANES
Ranae
186 199

ARISTOTLE
De Respiratione
489B23-30 48

De Sensu
436A-B 48

Ethica Nicomachea
1095B19-22 228
1097A8-14 48
1098A18-20 249
1177A24-26 249

Fragmenta (ed. Rose)
10 278
44 234

Historia Animalium
552B17-23 222
574B29-34 222
631A20-23 186

Meteorologica
351A19-353A28 283
354A 185
365B; 98 183

Physica
227B 220

- ARRIAN 38.4-6 142
Anabasis Alexandri 38.6.5 142
7.16.1-3 185 39.22.4 217
39.38.1 236
39.50-53 145
- AUGUSTINE 39.64 146
De Civitate Dei 42.3-5 210
7.6 272 42.5.7 212
48.34.2 71
Sermones 48.44.1 75
109.1 126 48.44.5 75
48.54.1-5 69
- AULUS GELLIUS 49.38.1-2 70
Noctes Atticae 49.43.8 70
5.13.1-5 250 51.16.3 86
12.13.30 185 52.36.4 86
15.4.3 273 53.30.4 72
18.7.4 189 53.30.5 73, 78
53.31-32 72
- BION OF BORYSTHENES 53.33.4 74
fr. 39A-D Kinderstrand 112 54.3.7 208
54.18.1 148
- CAELIUS AURELIANUS 54.26.1 70
De tardis passionibus 54.28.3-4 151
5.95 121 54.28.5 78
54.32-33 76
- CAESAR 54.33.3 77
De Bello Civili 55.1.3-5 76
1.4.4 146 55.1.4 76
3.5, 7 142 55.1-2 76
3.15.5 150 55.2.1-5 77
3.18 143 55.2.2-3 78
3.104 210–211 55.2.5 87
3.110 143–144 55.10.12-15 148
55.10a.6-10 149
- De Bello Gallico* 55.10a.10 74
4.20-36 145 55.13.1a-2 150
5.1-22 145 55.14-22 71
56.30.1-2 74
- CALCIDIUS 56.42 78
In Platonis Timaeum Commentarius 57.3.6 74
165-168 105 57.18.6 151
57.18.9-11 150
- CASSIUS DIO 57.22.1-4 150
Historia Romana 57.21.3 237
37.8 142 57.22.3 150
37.21.3 146 57.24.2-4 54, 236, 272

- 57.24.3 209
 57.24.4 54, 57
 58.2.3 78
 58.9-11 152
 59.2.4 72
 59.3.4 72
 59.9.4-7 5, 56
 59.16.1 6
 59.16.1-7 152
 59.16.4-7 6
 59.19.7-8 9
 60.13.3 152
 61.10.3 9
 63.8 188
 69.23.1 78
- CATO THE ELDER
Dicta (ed. Jordan)
 fr. 1 230
- CATULLUS
Carmina
 2-3 131
 5 116
 5.5-6 116
 11.11-12 145
 29.4 145
 38.5 10
 38.5-7 59
 39.5 191
 64.156 268
 64.240 185
 96 10
- CELSUS
De medicina
 3.3.1 121
 7.28-29 230
- CENSORINUS
De Die Natali
 18.11 283
- CHARISIUS
Ars Grammatica (ed. Barwick)
 135.19-23 248
- CICERO
Academica
 1.38-39 103
 1.39 191, 274
 2.135 81
- Brutus*
 4 226
 103-104 161
 109 161
 114-116 231
 211 158
 309 85
- De Amicitia*
 9 69
 40-41 161
 88 219
 91 150
- De Divinatione*
 1.56-57 278
 1.63 278-279
 1.64 264, 278
 1.110 257
 1.111 284
 1.112 285
 1.125 52, 98
 2.22 209-211, 274
 2.144 278
 2.150 80
- De Domo Sua*
 23 216
 41 162
 69.7 142
 120 136
 139 136-137
- De Fato*
 7-8 128
 9 128
 20 98
 20-21 52
 31-32 280

De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum

1.49 201
 1.63 221, 250
 2.31-32 102
 2.87-88 221, 250
 3.16 127
 3.20 82
 3.24 95
 3.35 273
 3.43-45 125
 3.45 250
 3.46 221, 250, 276
 3.73 124
 3.76 221
 4.6 10
 4.50 276
 4.79 245
 5.44 124
 5.83 280

De Haruspicum Responsis

48.9 142

De Inventione

1.22-23 47
 2.160 247

De Lege Agraria

2.41-44 216

De Legibus

1.24-26 264
 1.33 62
 1.58-62 124
 2.31 162
 2.58 108

De Natura Deorum

1.9 214
 1.39-41 243
 2.16, 36, 43, 51 256
 2.39 259
 2.39-44 243
 2.84 282
 2.84-85 290
 2.89 187

2.118 271
 2.121-161 101
 2.133-153 125
 2.158 131

De Officiis

1.8 80
 1.11-12 92
 1.41 206
 1.57 263
 1.62 53
 1.93-98 53
 1.105 228
 1.107-111 53
 1.107-120 50
 1.107-121 90
 1.107-125 53
 1.108-110 91
 1.110 91
 1.112 91
 1.119-120
 1.153 247
 2.5-6 103
 2.27-29 215
 2.53 83
 2.55 113
 2.69 115
 2.71 115
 3.60 240

De Oratore

1.229-231 232
 1.259 119
 2.50, 64 10
 2.285 194
 3.12 226
 3.118 10
 3.163 268
 3.205 176

De Re Publica

1.26 256
 1.62 53, 118
 3.3, 34b 256
 6.14 257
 6.15 264

6.16 263, 265, 272
 6.16-17 265
 6.17, 25-28 256
 6.20 219
 6.20-22 279
 6.20-24 281
 6.20-25 266, 276
 6.21-22 185
 6.23 201, 270
 6.24 283
 6.25 245
 6.27 271
 6.29 242, 244, 246, 261, 263, 271

De Senectute

1 11
 4 11, 225, 227
 5 221
 32 221
 84 53

Epistulae ad Atticum

2.20.6 85
 3.15.2 60
 4.1.6 236
 6.5.3 143
 12.14.3 214
 12.15, 20, 23 214
 13.19.4 99

Epistulae ad Familiares

4.5.3 227
 4.5.4 219
 4.5.6 60, 107
 4.6 214
 5.16 10
 5.16.3 227
 5.16.6 61, 107
 5.17.3 112
 6.3.4 10
 6.10b.1 10
 7.1.2-4 236
 7.10.2 116
 7.11.1 116
 8.1.4 235
 8.8.9 218

8.15.2 147
 9.11.1 100
 9.16.6 172
 12.18.2 111
 12.25.4 254
 13.8.1-3 215
 15.1.5 142

Hortensius (ed. Müller)

fr. 35 283

In Catilinam

1.9 213

In Pisonem

6 214

In Verrem

1.1.34 232
 2.1.129 116
 2.1.153 250
 2.2.129 273
 2.3.21 232
 2.3.81 215
 2.3.137 194
 2.3.217 232
 2.4.117 172
 2.4.118 170, 173
 2.5.26 173
 2.5.68 172, 173
 2.5.96 172
 2.5.143 173

Lucullus

107 182
 115 85
 135 120, 129

Paradoxa Stoicorum

5.39 193
 6.43 193

Philippicae

2.12 214
 2.23 142
 2.103 215

2.103-104 215
 4.3.1 254
 5.24 118
 5.31 62
 8.9 215
 8.30 102
 11.7 150
 11.35 142
 12.18 194
 14.34 10

Pro Archia
 16 60

Pro Balbo
 58 10

Pro Flacco
 93.7 116

Pro Milone
 57 207

Pro Murena
 27 250
 66 56, 266

Pro Rabirio Postumo
 28 217

Pro Roscio Amerino
 23 251
 56-57 237
 126 215

Pro Roscio Comoedo
 12-13 84
 30 119

Pro Sestio
 62-63 216
 103 161
 121 214

Pro Sulla
 33 102
 81 116

Tusculanae Disputationes

1.10-11 198
 1.11 200
 1.40 219
 1.42-47 244
 1.43 261, 271
 1.44 245
 1.44-47 265
 1.52 124, 126
 1.65, 76, 115
 1.74 209, 233, 246
 1.74-75 3
 1.75 242, 261
 1.79 255
 1.84 213
 1.86 209, 211
 1.91 201
 1.93 113
 1.94 222
 1.104 206
 1.109 209, 213, 250
 1.111 129
 1.114-115 234
 1.118 257
 3.12 81
 3.16 232
 3.23-27 273
 3.25 274
 3.27 174
 3.28-29 108
 3.28-34 107
 3.30 108
 3.33 93
 3.55 10
 3.58 108
 3.59 111
 3.60 132-133
 3.61-62 101
 3.65 100
 3.70 138, 209
 3.71-75 103
 3.72 101
 3.74 61, 105
 3.75 61
 3.75-76 58, 191
 3.76 62, 130
 3.83-84 100

4.12-14 100
 4.13 92
 4.14 100
 4.21 59, 191
 4.23-26 48
 4.32 66
 4.63 62
 5.70 124
 5.74 101

[CICERO]

RHETORICA AD HERENNIUM

3.10 227, 251-252
 4.65 179, 273
 4.65-66 270
 4.66 176

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Excerpta ex Theodoto

3.61.8, 63.1 260

CLEOMEDES

Caelestia

2.4.21, 33-79 181

COLUMELLA

De Re Rustica

7.12.5 237

COMMENTA BERNENSIA IN LUCANUM

7.813 282
 7.816 269, 276
 9.6 269, 244

CORNUTUS

De Natura Deorum

5 262
 35 262

CORPUS INSCRIPTIONUM LATINARUM (CIL)

6.10043 159
 6.25617 113
 6.41182 109
 6.4349 161
 8.4193 161
 9.5407 53

10.484 53
 10.688 109

CURTIUS RUFUS

Historiae Alexandri Magni

6.11.31 208

CYPRIAN

De Mortalitate

20 192

DEMOCRITUS

DK 68 A 97 183

DEMOSTHENES

De Corona

127 200

DIGESTA SEU PANDECTAE

1.22 97
 2.9.1 97
 4.1.1-8 234
 5.2.1-2 194
 7.1.1 114
 21.2.4 116
 44.7.1.1-3 113
 48.4.11 241

DIOGENES LAERTIUS

Vitae Philosophorum

1.40 123
 2.35 120
 2.54-55 108, 135
 2.114 164
 3.18-21 174
 4.26-27
 4.50 198
 4.321 206
 6.71 107
 7.17 48
 7.55-56 222
 7.63 83
 7.85 127
 7.98 14, 64
 7.102 104-105, 112, 178
 7.103-105 111
 7.104 94

7.106 112
 7.111 191
 7.121 207
 7.142 249
 7.143 244
 7.145 181
 7.148 259
 7.149 52, 80, 98, 182, 221
 7.151 243
 7.157 255, 289
 7.160 114
 7.175 50
 10.117 193
 10.118 260
 10.131-132 116

DIOGENES OF OENOANDA

Fragmenta (ed. Smith)
 2.3.7-14, 44, 49 116
 73 260

DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS

Antiquitates Romanae
 2.10.4 213
 4.64 154
 5.33.1-4 155
 5.34.3 156
 5.35.2 157
 5.35.3 136

DIODORUS SICULUS

Bibliotheca Historica
 13.14-16 172
 14.7.3 172
 15.7.1 174
 15.73.5-74.5 173
 16.9-13 173
 16.16-20 173
 16.70.2-3 174
 31.9.1 141
 37.10 162

EMPEDOCLES

Fragmenta (ed. Diels, *Poetarum
 Philosophorum Fragmenta*)
 126 260

EPICETETUS

Dissertationes
 1.3.3-7 265
 1.4 82
 1.16 125
 1.27.3-6 59
 1.27.3-14 105
 1.29 137
 2.8.11 244
 2.18.5-11 62
 2.18.8-11 68
 2.18.11 106
 3.1.18-19 124
 3.13.14-17 196
 3.22.7-8 114
 3.24.94 196
 4.1.165 204
 4.2.9-10 114
 4.3.5-6 94
Diss. fr. 1 124

Enchiridion

1.1-2 148, 240
 1.1-3 192
 3 125
 3.1 165
 46.2 165
 53 224

EPICURUS

Epistula ad Herodotum
 63 126
 81 198

Epistula ad Menoeceum

122 93
 124 200
 125 260

Fragmenta (ed. Usener)

210-211 266
 213 93
 384 198
 340 198
 436 93
 437 93

536 193

578 260

Ratae Sententiae

2 200

18 258

Sententiae Vaticanae

33 258

35, 55, 75 93

EURIPIDES

Alcestis

418-419 113

634-672 53

782-784 113

Andromaca

1271-1272 113

Fragmenta (ed. Nauck)

449 234

964 108

Heraclidae

322-325 53

Hercules Furens

1269 261

Troades

636 201

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA

Praeparatio Evangelica

15.19.1 283

FAVORINUS

De Exilio (ed. Barigazzi)

fr. 9 206

fr. 109 219

FESTUS

De Verborum Significatu

195 110

FLORUS

Epitome Bellorum Omnium Annorum DCC

1.4 155

10.7 156

GAIUS (JURIST)

Institutiones

1.17 205

1.55 190

1.104-107 148

1.108-109 194

1.144-145 250

1.150-154 251

1.190-192 251

2.7 68

2.123-127 194

GALEN

De Methodo Medendi

1.16 189

De Placitis Hippocratis et Platonis

4.3.2 99

4.7.7-11 108

4.7.8 107

4.7.9 108

4.7.12-18 100

4-5 18

5.1.4 191, 274

5.2.22-27 48

5.6.4-5 265

HECATAEUS OF MILETUS

Schol. ad Apollon. Rhod. Argon. 4.259 = BNJ I

F18a 185

HERACLITUS

DK B 101 123

HERMIAS OF ALEXANDRIA

In Platonis Phaedrum Scholia

161.3-9 262

HERODOTUS

Historiae

1.203-204 185

2.32, 150 268
3.80 175

HESIOD

Opera et Dies
109-119 276
170-173 290

Theogonia
96-97 290

HYPERIDES
Epitaphios
43

HIPPOCRATES (CORPUS HIPPOCRATICUM)

Aphorismata
7.87 = 4.608.1-3 L. 118

De Morbis Popularibus (Epidemiae)
5.1.15 230
7.1.35 230

De Mulierum Affectibus I
70 230

De Mulierum Affectibus III
37 230

HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME

Refutatio Omnium Haeresium
1.8 183
1.14.5 285
1.22.5 198

HOMER

Ilias
6.146-149 116
15.390-394 48
18.117-119 132
24.468-551 11
24.523-526 119
24.551 119

Odyssea
1.353-355 11

6.153-161 290
10.513 199
12.101-126 170
12.234-236 170
12.426-446 119
15.245-246 247

HOMERIC HYMNS

Hymn to Demetra (2)
480 290

Hymn to Venus (5)
218-238 227

HORACE

Carmina
1.3.9-40 277
1.3.21-37 188
1.4.5 181
1.4.14-17 128
1.11 116
1.20.3 236
1.22.5 268
1.35.29-30 145
2.3.17-28 123
2.3.25 122
2.6.3 268
2.9.15-17 191
2.14 123
2.14.5-12 132
2.20.15 268
3.1.9-16 123
3.3.10 272
3.7.1-5 191
3.14.5 71
3.21.13 208
3.30.1 56
4.4 76
4.5.13 110
4.7.1-4 183
4.7.7-8 128
4.7.13 181
4.7.14-16 132
4.14 76

Epodi
9.31 268

Sermones
1.1.69-70 97
1.10.77 119
2.5 193

IAMBlichus
De Anima
36.21-26 126

De Vita Pythagorica
31.196 108

IBYcus
PMG 323 = *Schol. Theoc.* 1.117a 170

ILIAS LATINA
45-46 268

INSCRIPTIONES LATINAE LIBERAE REI
PUBLICAE (ILLRP)
316 252
336 159

ISOCRATES
Panathenaicus
205 200

JULIAN (THE APOSTATE)
Caesares
27.326B 85-86, 90

Epistula ad Philosophum Themistium
11.265C 86

Epistulae
111 Bidez = 47 Wright 90

Orationes
6.6.185D-186A 124

JUSTIN
*Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum Pompei
Trogi*
42.1.1 226

JUVENAL
Saturae
1.15-17 135
1.37-44 193
3.126-130 193
3.193-202 229
6.167-168 158
6.168 158
10.283-286 211
12.98-130 193

LACTANTIUS
Divinae Institutiones
2.12.10 126
7.7 198, 262
7.20 263

LIVY
Ab Urbe Condita
1.54.6 190
1.57-60 154
1.58.10 154
2.8.6-9 136
2.8.7 137
2.13.4-11 155
5.21.15 132
8.18.1-2 189
10.23.7-8 155
22.57.12 143
27.6.19 113
28.18.2 251
39.6.6-9 228
45.40 138
45.40.4-42.1 138
45.40.7 139
45.40.9 140
45.41.7-8 140
45.41.10 140
45.42.4 141

Periochae
70 231
70-71 162
71 162
88 134
103 143, 146
106 146

112 210
 140.2 70
 142 76

LUCAN

Pharsalia

1.111-120 146
 1.125-126 146
 1.325-335 134
 1.663-664 265
 2.319-323 217
 3.154-164 217
 6.266 172
 7.84-85 211
 8.472-711 211
 8.597 212
 8.675 212
 9.1-14 197
 9.19-30 217
 9.979 266
 9.1006-1108 212

LUCIAN OF SAMOSATA

De Luctu

15 129

Vera Historia

1.30-2.1 119

LUCRETIUS

De Rerum Natura

1.10-20 102, 184
 1.17-20, 271-289 183
 1.41 51
 1.72-77 145
 1.76-77 223
 1.128 265
 1.102-135 200
 1.595-596 223
 2.77-79 122
 2.144-149 184
 2.355-366 102
 2.589-597 183
 2.1174 281
 3.31-40 259
 3.59-78 193

3.417-1094 200
 3.440, 554 126
 3.832-842 201
 3.870-893 260
 3.931-965 177
 3.935-943 177
 3.950-951 177
 3.964-975 280
 3.971 113
 3.972-977 201
 3.1024-1045 132
 3.1087-1094 221
 4.710 119
 4.991-1004 131
 4.998-1010 131
 4.1197-1200 102
 5.89-90 223
 5.156-234 281
 5.200-203, 943-957 183
 5.222-227 126
 5.990-993 127
 5.1067-1086 131
 5.1125-1126 193
 5.1379-1398 184
 6.65-66 223
 6.192-193 183
 6.695 172
 6.1090-1137 288-289

MACROBIUS

Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis

2.9.7 185

Saturnalia

2.7.1-11 110

MANILIUS

Astronomica

1.255-262 182
 1.780 156

MARCUS AURELIUS

3.3.1 196
 4.32-33, 48, 50 123
 4.41.1 126
 4.48.1 219

5.16 165
 5.27 244
 5.33.1 196
 6.4 196
 6.24 123, 196
 6.36.1 220
 8.31 86
 11.26 267
 12.24.1 220

MARTIAL
Epigrammata

1.18.5 160
 1.47 230
 5.9 230
 5.39 193
 6.53 230
 6.63 193
 8.27 193
 8.58 196
 8.74 230
 9.86 133
 9.100 193
 10.63.6 240
 10.97 193
 11.67 193
 14.73-77 131

MENANDER (DRAMATIST)

fr. 125 Kock 247
 fr. 650 Körte 119
 fr. 677 Kock 60

MENANDER (RHETOR)

413.23-29 127
 414.1-6 132
 414.2-6 119, 228
 414.6-8 219
 414.8-12 202, 204
 414.16-27 196, 267
 414.21-23 242
 421.14-17 196

METRODORUS OF LAMPSACUS

fr. 53 Körte 120

MIMNERMUS

Fragmenta (ed. West)
 1-2 116
 2.13-14 116
 3-5 227

MONUMENTUM ANCYRANUM

14.1 148
 15.1 235

MUSONIUS RUFUS

Dissertationes
 9 206

Fragmenta (ed. Hense)

5.6-7 66

NEMESIANUS

Cynegetica
 223 131

NONIUS MARCELLUS

De Compendiosa Doctrina
 1.24 Gatti 131

OLYMPIODORUS OF ALEXANDRIA

In Platonis Gorgiam Commentaria
 237.10-13 262

OPPIAN

Halieutica
 2.533-552 186

ORIBASIIUS

Collectiones Medicae
 44.14.2 288

ORIGEN

Contra Celsum
 1.64 14, 82
 4.64 282
 8.51 14, 82
 8.72 281

OVID

Amores

2.5.36 253

2.6 131

3.10.21 272

Fasti

2.707 190

2.847 155

4.282 172

4.455-466 102

4.460 102

4.463 102

Metamorphoses

1.94-96 277

1.163 272

1.293-300 286

1.313-367 287

2.226 185

1.276-287 286

1.291-312 286

1.304-306 288

2.204-213 289

2.306 272

2.241-259 286

2.262-271 286

5.572-641 170

7.62-65 170

8.121 170

12.395-396 203

13.730-734 170

Remedia Amoris

91-92 62

123-134 62

Tristia

1.2.40 226

2.161-164 71

5.3.19 272

[OVID]

Consolatio ad Liviam

25-30 77

169-178 77

359 122

PANAETIUS OF RHODES

Fragmenta (ed. van Straaten)

55 245

56 255

83 255

115 108

PARMENIDES

DK 28 A 42 181

DK 28 B 14-15 181

PAUL OF TARSUS

Corinthians

1 Cor. 4.5 278

PAULUS (JURIST)

Sententiae

1.21.2-5, 8-14 61

PAULUS OF AEGINA

Epitomae Medicae Libri Septem

6.72-75 230

PAUSANIAS

Graeciae Descriptio

5.7.2-3 171

10.24.1 123

PETRONIUS

Satyricon

28.9 131

46.3-4 131

124.2-4 193

141 193

PHAEDRUS

Fabulae Aesopiae

3.5.1-7 218

PHILODEMUS

De electionibus et fugis (ed. Indelli/Tsouana-

McKirahan)

2.5-3.18 116

17.1-3 116

- De Libertate Dicendi* (ed. Olivieri)
 cols. 23a-24b
 fr. 7 91
 fr. 10 91
 fr. 57 66
 frs. 63-65 66
- De Pietate* (ed. Obbink)
PHerc. 1428, col. 5.8-14 50
 col. 6.2-4 262
 col. 6.9-16 243
- De Stoicis* (ed. Dorandi)
PHerc. 339, col. 13.3-4 232
- PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA
De Aeternitate Mundi
 76 255
 76-84 271
 131 288
- De Migratione Abrahami*
 193 126
- De Opificio Mundi*
 47 204
- Legum Allegoriarum Libri*
 3.128-134 83
- PHILOLAUS OF CROTON
 DK 44 A 18 283
- PINDAR
Isthmia
 9.6-7 186
- Nemea*
 1.1-4 170
 6.64-65 186
- Pythia*
 4.17 186
- PISO FRUGI
Annales
 fr. 27 Forsythe = fr. 24 Cornell 157
- PLATO
Apologia Socratis
 40B-41D 196
 40C-E 200
 41A 199
- Charmides*
 158C 253
 164C-165A 123
- Cratylus*
 400C 257
 409B 181
- Critias*
 109D-111D 283
- Epistulae*
 7.327A-329B 175
 7.338B-340A 176
- Gorgias*
 493A 257
 518C 258
 523A-524B 261
 523C-525A 260
 523E 200
- Leges*
 677A 282
 959A-B 256
- Phaedo*
 61C 264
 62B 257, 264
 64A 246
 64A-67D 3
 64A-67E 241
 67D 246, 257
 67E 245
 80A-83D 241
 81C 243, 257
 82E-83A 127
 87B-E 260
 96D 258
 109B 219

111D-E 199
 111E-112A 183
 113A-114C 261
 113B 199
 114B 257
 115C-E 260

Phaedrus

230B 184
 250C 257

Politicus

270B-272B 283

Protagoras

320C-323A 124
 342A-B 123

Res Publica

386A-388D 200
 473D 174
 488A-E 94
 556D 258
 586A-B 228
 611A-621D 261
 617A 182
 621 199

Sophista

218D 107

Symposium

211E 258

Timaeus

22C-22D 283
 22C-23C 271
 36B-D 182
 39D 283
 41D-42B 243
 42E-43A 113
 45A 126
 86-87 48
 90A-D 243

[PLATO]

Axiochus
 365D-E 201
 365E 257
 365E-366B 127
 366D-368A 127
 367B 113

PLAUTUS

Amphitruo
 190 88

Asinaria

481-486 207
 595 88

Bacchides

817 247

Captivi

139 191
 531 83
 723 172
 734 218

Menaechmi

793 83
 882-888 230

Miles Gloriosus

502-511 207
 705-722 193

Trinummus

490-494 123

PLINY THE ELDER

Naturalis Historia
 2.85 259, 265
 2.167-168 185
 2.191 285
 2.191-194, 206 284
 2.193 286
 2.204 169
 2.206 285
 2.225 171
 2.238 185

3.87 170
 6.181 188
 7.2-3 127
 7.57 160
 7.84 76-77
 7.96 146
 7.117 214
 7.188 201
 7.190 204
 9.8 187
 9.20 187
 9.186 186
 11.120 222
 11.150 240
 11.165 186
 14.96 235
 21.1 247
 22.12-13 134
 28.218 121
 29.10-11 230
 29.13 118
 33.66 184
 33.143 9
 34.28-29 156
 34.31 70, 159
 35.6-7 51
 35.139 70
 36.15 70
 36.125 248

PLINY THE YOUNGER

Epistulae
 5.16.1-6 53
 7.24 193
 8.5.3 106
 8.18 193
 10.116 109

PLOTINUS

Enneades
 3.8.4 177

PLUTARCH

Consolatio ad Apollonium
 102C-D 81
 103-105 120

104C 120
 109B-D 234
 109E-F 201
 110E 209, 226
 111A 250
 111B 247
 111C-D 222
 111E 129, 195
 112D 108
 113C 192
 114B 226
 115B-E 234
 116A 113
 116C-D 124
 118F-119A 135
 119F 53
 120D-121D 261

Consolatio ad Uxorem

608D-F 130
 611D-F 242, 257

De Cohibenda Ira

463D 108

De Communibus Notitiis Adversus Stoicos

1070A 131

De Exilio

604D-F 206

De Facie in Orbe Lunae

943C 261

De Garrulitate

511B 124

De Recta Ratione Audiendi

46C-47E 66

De Stoicorum Repugnantibus

1057E 94

De Tranquillitate Animi

474D 108

De Virtute Morali

449A 99

Mulierum Virtutes

250C-F 157

*Non Posse Suaviter Vivi Secundum**Epicurum*

1092A-B 198

1101A-B 130

Praecepta Gerendae Rei Publicae

814D 86

Quaestiones Romanae

50 161

Regum et Imperatorum Apophthegmata

207B 86

Septem Sapientium Convivium

164B 124

Vita Antonii

54.1-3 69

80 86

81.5 86

87.1-3 69

Vita Caesaris

14.7 145

14.8 145

23.2-4 145

23.6 146

Vita Catonis Minoris

25 145

35-39 216

52 145

70.9 233

Vita Dionis

5.1-7 174

6-7 173

7.4-7 175

10.1-3 175

23-46 174

Vita Aemilii Pauli

5 139

33-36 138

34.6 138

34.8 140

35.2 139

36.2 140

36.3 140

36.9 140

37.1-3 141

Vita Ciceronis

23.6 214

24 213

48.6 214

Vita Galbae

3.2 254

Vita Pompeii

13.4-5 146

47.6 145

52 236

53.1-4 146

77-80 210-211

80.5 212

80.6 212

Vita Publicolae

14 136

14.6-8 137

14.8 136-137

17.8 75

18.3 157

19.1-8 155

19.2 156

19.8 156-157

Vita Sullae

31 215

34 134

35 134

37 134

Vitae Tiberii et Gaii Gracchorum

1.3 160

- 1.6 158
 1.7 158
 8.7 158
 19 160
 20.3 160
 25.4 158–159
 35–38 161
 40.1 158
 40.2 159
 40.3 158
- Vita Timoleontis*
 1.3–4 174
 14 174
- [PLUTARCH]
Placita Philosophorum
 2.12 280
 3.14 280
 874E 103
- POLYBIUS
Historiae
 6.53–54 108
 12.4d.5–8 171
 36.10.3 141
- POLYAENUS
Stratagemata
 8.31.1 156
- POMPONIIUS MELA
De Chorographia
 1.3–7 185
 1.5 185
 2.115 169–170
 2.117 171
- PORPHYRY
De Abstinentia
 1.31 260
- POSIDONIUS OF APAMEA
Fragmenta (ed. Edelstein/Kidd)
 49 279
 90 188
- 108 264, 278
 113 288
 120 265
 165 108
 187 265
 219 186
 231 287
 232 287
 249 168
 250 168
- PRISCIANUS LYDUS
Solutiones ad Chosroem
 6 186
- PROCLUS
In Platonis Rem Publicam Commentarii
 132–133 262
- PROPERTIUS
Elegiae
 2.9a.33 268
 2.27.5–10 229
 3.8 74
 3.13.27 190
 3.18 72
 3.18.15 72
 3.19.7, 24.16 268
- PUBLILIUS SYRUS
Fragmenta
 C 34 Meyer = 11 Ribbeck² 110
- QUINTILIAN
Institutio Oratoria
 2.2.1–15 66
 2.3.10 66
 2.4.8–12 66
 3.4.12–14 252
 2.8.1–14 66
 3.8.53 135
 5.10.71 135
 6.praef.4–10 132
 6.1.3 230
 6.1.25 176
 7.2.3 189

8.3.63 179
 9.2.29-31 270
 9.2.29-37 176, 270
 9.2.30 273
 9.2.31 179, 270
 9.2.36 177
 10.1.104 54, 57
 11.1.13 232

[QUINTILIAN]

Declamationes Maiores

3.11 155
 8.16 268

Declamationes Minores

371.6 160

SALLUST

Bellum Iugurthinum

4.5-6 51

De Coniuratione Catilinae

1.1 229
 26 213
 28 213

Historiae (ed. McGushin)

1.6 (= *Adnot. super Luc.* 3.164) 216–217

SENECA THE ELDER

Controversiae

1.praef.15 121
 2.praef.1-5 248
 2.praef.3 168
 2.praef.4 8
 2.1.11-12 229
 2.4.4 135
 3.praef.17.5 116
 7.3.9 111
 9.2.19 135
 9.3.13 97

Controversiarum Excerpta

6.8.1 155
 8.1 132

Suasoriae

1.3 247
 2.12 8
 6.3.3 135
 6.17 274
 6.19 209, 272–273
 6.23 209, 272–273

SENECA THE YOUNGER

Consolatio ad Helviam

1.3 60
 5.3 108
 9.6 275
 11.6 257
 11.6-7 243
 11.7 256–257
 16 120
 16.1 84
 16.3-4 253
 16.5-7 155
 16.6 159
 18.2 79
 18.3 88
 19.2 8, 144, 253
 19.4-7 229
 20.2 261

Consolatio ad Polybium

1.1 219
 4.3 127
 9.1 129
 9.2 201
 9.2-3 196
 9.3 257, 265–266
 9.6 266
 9.7 256
 9.8 257, 265
 9.9 122, 226, 192
 10.3-6 93
 11 108
 11.2-3 117
 11.2-4 122
 11.3 120
 11.6 115
 12.1 122
 13.2 145
 14-16 89

14.5 138, 140
 15.1 146
 15.3-4 148
 15-17 68
 18.5-6 106

De Beneficiis

1.1.1 115
 1.1.3 115
 1.3-4 200
 1.4.6 115
 2.7.1 233
 2.7-8 88
 2.16.2 235
 2.18.8 233
 2.20 214
 2.29.5 67
 3.4 93
 3.7.5 84, 115
 3.15-1-4 115
 3.18-28 206
 3.22.1 206
 3.26 88
 3.26.2 237
 3.29-38 233
 4.3.3 115
 4.13 92
 4.18 125, 127
 4.20.3 193
 4.21.6 208
 4.33.1 245
 4.40.4 190
 5.7.5 175, 245
 5.16.3 134
 5.17.2 232
 5.17.6 250
 5.19.6 233
 5.24.3 230
 6.3.1 241
 6.4.2 194
 6.10.1 190
 6.18.1 175, 245
 6.25-40 223
 6.30.6 211
 6.32 148
 6.33.4 112
 6.34 162

6.38.4-5 193
 7.2.4 203
 7.2.6 266
 7.4.4 190
 7.14.5 115

De Brevitate Vitae

1.1-3 125
 1.3-2.2 220
 4.1 211
 6.2 162
 7.1-2 228
 7.10 95
 8.2 235
 10.1 248
 10.2-4 93
 10.5 266
 14.3 166
 14.3-4 112
 19.1 268
 20.6 260

De Clementia

1.1.1 92
 1.12 134
 1.3.2-3 91
 1.9 56
 1.9.6-7 71
 1.23 277
 2.4.1-3 118
 2.7.3 84
 5.2-7 91

De Constantia Sapientis

1.2 268
 5.4 83
 6.3-7 89
 7.1 216, 247
 9.2 193
 10.2 193
 10.2-3 193
 12.2 229

De Ira

1.2-3 74
 1.9-17 103

1.16.5 208
 1.17.5 249
 1.18.1 116
 1.19.7 245
 2.1-4 100
 2.2.1 253
 2.11.3 111
 2.13.1 268
 2.16.7 100
 2.20.2 245
 2.21.10 175
 2.23.1 174
 2.31 107
 2.34.3 134
 3.3.6 207
 3.5.4 74
 3.10.3 121
 3.11.1 166
 3.12.5-7 175, 245
 3.15 204
 3.15.4 209
 3.17.2 174
 3.17.3 174
 3.19.1 207–208

De Otio

4.1 180
 5.5 244
 6.4 122

De Providentia

2.2 94
 2.9-12 232
 3.2 230
 3.5.1 75
 3.7-8 134
 4.5 94, 226
 5.8-9 137
 6.6 196

De Situ et Sacris Aegyptiorum (ed. Haase)

fr. VII [12] 144

De Tranquillitate Animi

1.13 120
 2.3-4 95

2.7 246
 3.4 97
 5.6 55
 10.1 218
 11.6 117
 11.7 218, 229
 11.8 107
 11.8-9 110
 12.4-6 112
 16.1 213, 232

De Vita Beata

9.3 116
 15.5 190
 18.3 232
 20.4 90
 26.2 229
 27.5 90
 27-28 89
 28.1 122

De Vita Patris (ed. Haase)

1 (= fr. 99 Haase) 214

Epistulae ad Lucilium

2.5 201
 4.9 117, 120
 4.10 112
 6.6 245
 7.2 122
 8.8 110–111
 9.7 8
 9.14-19 258
 9.17 122
 9.21-22 111
 10.4 224
 10.5 223
 11.1-5 253
 11.4 248
 11.8-10 266
 12.1-2 164
 12.6 225
 13.4 84, 249
 13.4-7 108
 14.1 127
 14.5 207

- 14.8 95, 170
 14.13 214, 217
 18.3-6 275
 18.6 109
 18.13 110
 20.7 264
 20.8 224
 21.5 266
 22.11 116
 22.6 249
 23.4 81, 92
 24.2 191
 24.4 232
 24.11 204, 264
 24.14 208
 24.17 257
 24.18 196, 198
 24.20 225
 25.5 267
 25.5-6 266
 25.6-7 267
 26.2 257
 26.4 225
 26.10 204
 30.3 95
 30.18 107
 32.1 267
 33.4 13
 34.1 164
 36.11 289
 37.2 120, 190
 40.1 191
 40.12 248
 41.5 244
 41.8 67
 42.1 247
 44.4 245
 45.2 170
 47 206
 47.12 245
 49.1 191
 49.2 9, 56
 49.3 220, 266
 49.8 237
 52.11 248
 53.11 264
 53.11-12 103
 54.4-5 201
 55.1 157
 55.9 92
 58.6 248
 58.16-17, 22, 26, 30 245
 58.23-24 189
 58.30-31 175
 59.1-4 92
 59.2 92
 60.2-4 228
 60.4 229
 61.2 204
 63.5 8
 63.5-7 94
 63.12 60, 105, 107
 63.13 74
 63.16 192
 64.8 62
 64.10 245
 65.2 121
 65.7-10 245
 65.16 257
 65.21 257
 65.22 258
 65.24 196, 201
 66.12 244
 66.16 83
 66.35 280
 66.51 75
 66.53 234
 67.15 8
 70.6 174
 70.16 218
 70.18 107
 71.13 289
 71.15 219
 71.16 196
 71.27-29 100
 71.29 138
 72.6-11 66
 72.8 8
 73.13 250
 74.11 107
 74.16 258
 74.27 250
 74.33 108, 249
 75.8-18 66

- 75.11 49
75.11-12 68
75.15 133
76.4 110
76.21 95
76.25 196, 257
76.33-35 107
77.11 201
77.12 97, 223
77.20 114, 250
78.14 107
78.29 107
79.1 170
79.6 66
79.12 127, 244, 257
80.1 264
81.8 191
81.9-17 115
81.22 8
81.24 190
82.17-18 204
83.15 88
84 66
84.12 112
85.27 208
85.30-37 95
86.14-21 164
88.14-15 182
88.21-23 188
88.22 110, 188
88.33 103, 249
88.5-8 200
89.4-8 103
89.22 228
90 277
90.4 125
91.6 165
91.16 123
91.21 204
92.1 192
92.13 260
92.9 170
92.10 258
92.30 244
92.34-35 260
93 222, 250
93.2 220
93.4 233
93.9 219
93.9-10 196
93.12 192
94 53, 66
94.1 53
94.25 65
94.28-29 111
94.39 65
94.43 111
94.49 53
94.64-65 146
95 66
95.2 223
95.7-8 95
95.20-21 253
95.43 193
95.65-73 64
95.69 65
96.2 52
98.11 93
98.12 75, 232
99.2 68, 166
99.3-5 93
99.7 192
99.8 117
99.11, 31 220
99.15 84
99.15-21 100, 138
99.16 98, 106
99.18 94
99.22 268
100.1 249
100.9 249
101 222
101.4-9 128
101.7 223
101.9 246
101.14-15 220
102.2 256
102.25 257-258, 261
102.26 127, 257
102.26-29 256
102.28 259, 265
102.30 257
104.11 164
107.9-12 137

- 107.10-11 224
 108.2-23 8
 108.8-9 111
 108.15-22 228
 108.19-21 260
 108.22 287
 108.38 245
 110.12-13 228
 110.14-20 8
 112.2 164
 113.18 67
 114.27 107
 115.4 224
 115.5 224
 115.11-12 105
 117.30 3
 120.14 117, 120, 218
 120.18 225
 120.22 114
 121.5 226
 121.7-13 127
 121.14 209, 239
 121.18-23 127
 121.20 128
 121.21 258
 121.23 104
 122.2-6 228
 122.11 55
 124.13-15 103
 124.13-21 131
 124.21-23 125
- Hercules Furens*
- 731-734 200
 867-874 122
- Medea*
- 139-140 74
 445-446 74
- Naturales Quaestiones*
- 1.praef.4-13 243
 1.praef.8 266
 1.praef.8-11 220
 1.praef.12 244, 257
 1.3.7-8 186
 1.3.10 219
 2.1.1-2 261
 2.4 259
 2.12 186
 2.32.3-4 182
 2.32.7-8 182
 2.32-51 80
 2.35-36 223
 2.48.2 8
 2.50.1-3 8
 2.59.4 223
 2.205-206 287
 3.praef.9 211
 3.praef.11 257
 3.praef.11-18 271
 3.praef.14 110
 3.1.1 171
 3.7.1 164
 3.8 183-184
 3.15.1-5 189
 3.17-18 228
 3.26.5-6 171
 3.27.2 165
 3.27.3 248, 282
 3.27.8-10 286
 3.27.11-12 286
 3.27.13-14 288
 3.27-30 281-282
 3.29.3 221
 3.29.4-6 283
 3.29.7 170
 4a.praef.21-22 168
 5.18.16 245
 6.1.13 219
 6.4.2 9, 287
 6.8.3-4 188
 6.16.2 259
 6.16-18, 21-31 287
 6.20.1-4 183
 6.23.4 287
 6.24.5 287
 6.24.6 287
 6.27.2 287
 6.30.1-3 169
 6.30.7-8 289
 6.31.1-3 287
 6.32.8 219

6.32.9-11 220
 6.32.12 107
 7.10.1 116
 7.17.3 83

Oedipus
 980-994 223
 987-988 225

Phaedra
 1025-1030 187

Phoenissae
 47-48 220

Troades
 371-408 201

[SENECA THE YOUNGER]

Octavia
 377-380 211
 941 161

SERENUS SAMMONICUS
Liber Medicinalis
 5.58-63

SERVIUS
Commentarii in Vergilii Aeneidos Libros
 3.64 151
 6.154 9
 6.861 72, 74
 8.646 155-157
 9.30 9
 11.2 151

Commentarii in Vergilii Georgica
 1.19 200

SEXTUS EMPIRICUS
Adversus Mathematicos
 9.21 278
 9.71 198, 258
 9.73 197, 263, 267
 9.74 243
 1.255 119

11.46 125
 11.59 131

SILIUS ITALICUS

Punica
 9.244 121
 15.33 254

SIMONIDES
Epigrammata

7.25.6 199
 10.105 112

SOPHOCLES
Fragmenta (ed. Nauck)

761 209

Oedipus Coloneus
 1224-1226 234

STATIUS
Silvae
 2.4 131
 5.1.137-153 132

Thebais
 6.766 121

STOBAEUS
Eclogae
 1.1.12 244, 264

1.10.16c 281
 1.25.5 258
 2.1.31 124
 2.2.1-3 279
 2.7.5b1 247
 2.7.5b2 52
 2.7.5b4 48
 2.7.5f 49
 2.7.10 273
 2.7.10b 202
 2.7.10b-e 247
 2.7.10e 49, 59
 2.7.21 247
 2.7.5l 106
 2.31.95 94

- 2.31.126.5-8 50, 153
 3.16.21.5 120
 3.21.26 123
 3.40.9 206
 4.34.68 48
 4.41.62 219
 4.50c.94.24-25 244
 4.52b.20-55 204
 4.56.6a.2 119
 4.671.7-673.11 47, 239, 252, 272
- STOICORUM VETERUM FRAGMENTA (SVF)**
 1.19.1 90
 1.106-109 271, 288
 1.106a 288
 1.115 234, 259
 1.115-116 258
 1.120 258
 1.128 244
 1.134 248
 1.137, 147, 519-524 242
 1.147 198, 262
 1.209 99
 1.215 100
 1.286 48
 1.323 48
 1.396 94
 1.515-517 101
 1.537 244, 264
 2.35.15 90
 2.83 222
 2.282.23 91
 2.283.27 90
 2.291.1 90
 2.303 121
 2.413 282
 2.473 269
 2.585-632 271, 288
 2.591, 607 288
 2.593 271
 2.594 282
 2.598 283
 2.599 283
 2.600 281
 2.608 282
 2.624 289
 2.633 244
 2.642, 644 259
 2.650, 669-674, 677, 682, 684, 686,
 692 269
 2.684 259
 2.785, 806, 1045 248
 2.786-787 248
 2.790-800 242, 260
 2.809-822 126, 197
 2.812 197-198, 243, 258, 263, 267
 2.813 198, 262
 2.817 244, 269
 2.818 276
 2.915 52, 98, 221
 2.917 52, 98
 2.920 52, 98
 2.936 128
 2.1022 259
 2.1102 243
 2.1174 281-282
 2.1205 278
 2.1206 278
 3.6 [= Boethus].7 271
 3.11 95
 3.37 276
 3.38-40 276
 3.54 250
 3.60 125
 3.96 125
 3.104 94
 3.112 106
 3.117 104-105, 112, 178, 201
 3.117-123 101, 111, 202
 3.119 105
 3.122-123 105
 3.127 112, 201
 3.127-139 202
 3.188 82
 3.228-236 62, 94, 228
 3.229 105
 3.264 52
 3.265 52
 3.282 124
 3.333-339 180
 3.352 206
 3.370 52
 3.386 99
 3.393 100

3.394 59, 99, 102
 3.398 59, 102, 191
 3.412 99
 3.413-414 102
 3.429-462 106
 3.432 80, 255
 3.474 82
 3.481-482 108
 3.524 250, 276
 3.555 207
 3.714-737 101
 3.757-763 240
 3.757-768 81, 204

STRABO

Geographica

1.3.3 283
 1.3.4 286
 1.3.3-4, 10, 16-20 284
 1.3.9-10 285
 1.3.16 284, 287
 1.3.17 284-285
 1.3.18 285
 1.3.19-20 286
 2.1.17 185
 3.3.8 128
 3.4.13 128
 5.3.8 78
 6.1.6 169
 6.2.1 168
 6.2.3 170
 6.2.4 171-173
 6.2.7 168
 8.8.4 286

SUDA LEXICON (ed. Adler)

Δ 871 87
 Θ 203 86
 s.v. Τιμωροῦντος 278

SUETONIUS

De Grammaticis et Rhetoribus

21 70

Vita Caligulae

5-6 151

10.1 72
 15 56
 15.2 85
 15-16 5
 16 4, 55, 210
 17.2 235
 21.1 236
 23.2 85
 30.2 6, 61, 152
 33 208
 53.2 8, 56

Vita Divi Augusti

4.1 69
 29.4 70
 35.1-2 272
 62.2 71
 64.1 148
 65.4 149
 66.3 72
 69.2 69
 89.1 85
 99 77
 99.1 71
 100.4 78
 101 85

Vita Divi Claudii

1.1 75
 1.2 76
 1.2-3 76
 1.3 76-77
 1.4 75
 1.5 75, 78
 21.1 236

Vita Divi Iulii

5 226
 6.1 147
 19.1 142
 19-20 142
 20.1 142
 21 145
 26.2 146
 27.1 69
 79.2 213

Vita Galbae
5.2 85, 254

Vita Neronis
35 8

Vita Othonis
1.1 85

Vita Tiberii
3.2 161–162
20 235
21.2 149
23.1 149
52.1-2 150
52.2-3 150
54.1 235
61.3 54
62 208
65 152

TACITUS
Agricola
3.1 164

Annales
1.2 143
1.3 72, 74, 148–149
1.5 74
1.6 149
1.8 78
1.8.1 85
1.10 71, 149
1.10-11 147
1.40 254
1.53 148
1.62 151
1.77 114
2.32 236
2.69-73 150
2.71 150, 191
2.73 151
3.1-6 151
3.2 151
3.5 78
3.6 151

3.25 193
3.72 236
4.8 150, 152
4.10-11 150
4.12 150–151
4.34 54, 209–210, 235
4.34-35 54, 236
4.35 54, 57
4.71 149
5.1 71, 88
5.2 88
5.1-2 72
5.2.2 254
5.3 88
6.10 191
6.45 236
6.51 228
11.4.3 236
12.8 9
13.45 8
16.33.2 236

De Origine et Situ Germanorum
21.2 266

Dialogus De Oratoribus
6.2 193
16.7 283
28.6 158

Historiae
1.1 57
2.1.1 8
2.72 208
3.56 110
3.72 136
4.11 208

TELES OF MEGARA
Reliquiae (ed. Hense)
16 260
20.13-30.1 206
29-30 205
59-60 164
61 201

TERENCE

Adelphoe

311-319 207

Andria

24 102

Heautontimorumenos

420-425 60

Phormio

241-251 108

TERTULLIAN

De Anima

54 198

54.2 87

54-2-3 263

55.4 87, 263

THEMISTIUS

Orationes

5.63d 86

10.130b 86

10.145b 86

THEOGNIS

Elegiae

1.425-428 234

1.1133-1134 62

1.1216 199

THUCYDIDES

Historiae

3.89.3 287

6.3.2 173

7.22.1-2 172

7.52.3 172

7.87.2 173

7.87.5-6 172

TIBULLUS

Elegiae

1.3.37-40 277

3.4.91 268

TIMOTHEUS OF MILETUS

Persae

fr. 15, col. 3.88 268

VALERIUS MAXIMUS

Facta et Dicta Memorabilia

1.6.10 110

2.7.12 208

2.10.5 231

3.2.2 155-156

3.8.6 160

4.1.15 142-143

4.3.2 217

4.4 158

5.1.10 209-210, 212

5.10.1 136-137

5.10.2 138-140

5.10.ext.2 135

6.1.1 155

6.4.4 231-232

6.9.ext.6 174

9.2.1 135

VARRO

De Lingua Latina

5.151 172

6.11 279

6.61 136

6.76 110

De Re Rustica

2.9.14 237

VEGETIUS

Mulomedicina

1.25.1 121

VELLEIUS PATERCULUS

Historia Romana

1.15.1 143

2.3 160

2.6 161

2.13-14 162

2.13.2 231

2.14.1-2 162

2.27.5 134

2.29.3-4 146
 2.33.3 146
 2.44.4-5 142
 2.44.5 142, 144
 2.45.4 216
 2.45.4-5 217
 2.47.2 145-146
 2.48.2 210, 236
 2.53 210-211
 2.53.3 211
 2.75.3 254
 2.93.2 72
 2.96.1 148
 2.102.2-3 149

VIRGIL

Aeneis

1.111, 146 268
 1.250 272
 2.190 110
 2.495 143
 3.414-419 169
 3.417-418 169
 3.420-425 170
 3.420-432 169
 3.680 185
 3.692-696 170
 4.14 118
 4.41 268
 5.51, 192 268
 6.60 268
 6.376 98
 6.429 88
 6.705 199
 6.714 199
 6.735-742 261
 6.849-850 265
 6.860-886 72
 6.868-871 132
 6.873 78
 7.302 268
 8.123 251

9.311 249
 9.642 147
 10.344 169
 10.467-468 224
 10.472 224
 10.678 268
 10.746 240
 11.42 254
 11.526-527 183
 11.899 241
 12.310 240
 12.628 241

Eclogae

1.58 185
 1.66 145
 4.6 276
 4.31-39 277
 10.1-5 170
 10.4-5 171

Georgica

1.24-42 149
 1.131 190
 1.420-423 184
 2.325-329 184
 2.410 241
 2.490-492 290
 3.474 185
 3.480 226
 3.496 131
 4.363-373 183

XENOPHANES

DK 11 A 33 285

XENOPHON

Memorabilia

1.4.5-18 232
 4.3.2-18 232

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