Seneca and the History of Roman Eating

by

Robert Santucci

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Classical Studies)
in the University of Michigan
2022

Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Ruth Caston, Co-Chair
Professor Basil Dufallo, Co-Chair
Professor Sara Ahbel-Rappe
Associate Professor Ian Fielding
Professor Peggy McCracken

Robert Samuel Santucci

santucci@umich.edu

ORCID: 0000-0001-7141-1403

Dedication

SHIRAE REGIQVE DOMINOQVE PROFVNDI

Acknowledgements

I will thank as many people as I can with as few words as possible.

First, Ann Holt, my high school Latin teacher.

The Rutgers Classics faculty during my undergraduate career (2005-09), especially T. Corey Brennan, Serena Connolly, and Thomas Figueira, with whom I first read Seneca.

The Maryland Classics faculty during my M.A. career (2014-16): Eric Adler, Francisco Barrenechea, Jorge Bravo, Judith Hallett, Lillian Doherty, and Gregory Staley. Special thanks are due to Hallett and Doherty for their wonderful mentorship and constant encouragement.

My dissertation committee. Ruth Caston and Basil Dufallo were ideal co-chairs who offered me a rare mix of guidance and latitude. I am very fortunate to have benefited from the breadth and depth of their knowledge. I must also thank Ruth in her capacity as my faculty mentor, since she helped me weather many a storm (and bought me many a coffee). The committee members, Sara Ahbel-Rappe, Ian Fielding, and Peggy McCracken, have all contributed thoughtfully, encouraged me every step of the way, and occasionally reined in my wilder scholarly and stylistic impulses.

The Classical Studies staff at Michigan, particularly Michelle Biggs, Sarah Kandell, and Jeff Craft.

My colleagues, both at the University of Maryland, College Park, and the University of Michigan. At Maryland: Talia Chicherio, Noah Cogan, and Emily Mohr were the best people with whom to share a small office and foster a great sense of solidarity. My colleagues at

Michigan, who have been warm and supportive to a degree nearly unimaginable, are too many to name, though I will attempt to do so regardless. My cohort: Brittany Hardy, Ryan Migliore, Henry Upton, Michael Woo, Catherine Schenck, William Soergel. Other friends and colleagues who have offered advice, encouragement, or generally helpful conversation: Christian Axelgard, Justin Barney, Leah Bernardo-Ciddio, Marshall Buchanan, Derek Cebrian, Anna Cornell, Joseph Droegemueller, Amelia Eichengreen, Laurel Fricker, Alanna Heatherly, Nadhira Hill, Sierra Jones, Kaitlin Karmen, Sarah Keith, Allen Kendall, Emily Lamond, Antonello Mastronardi, Andrew Mayo, Katelin Mikos, Matteo Milesi, Alex Moskowitz, Theo Nash, Lauren Oberlin, Brittany Pendergraft, Malia Piper, Andrew Tao, Alex Tarbet, and SN Yeager. I am especially indebted to Talia Chicherio, Brittany Hardy, and Alex Tarbet, who all read and commented on drafts of individual chapters.

My parents Rob and Deb and my sister Isabel.

Lastly, my partner Shira.

Table of Contents

Abstract

This dissertation argues that the younger Seneca uses food and eating throughout his corpus as a way of teaching Stoicism in the Latin language within his first-century Imperial Roman environment. Eating, a popular theme in much Latin literature of the Republic and early Empire, is a way of bridging philosophy and literature; since Seneca authors the first Stoic pedagogical project written in the Latin language, he needs to find ways to relate to his Roman readership. Writing about eating thus helps makes Stoicism attractive and accessible to a Roman literary audience. In order to incorporate eating within his own brand of Stoicism, I argue that Seneca must provide a gloss on Republican moralists, especially Cato and Sallust, who view the human belly as a wholly negative thing, since in Seneca's revamped version of Roman eating the belly is a digesting organ with a job to do. I build on Seneca's rehabilitation of the Republican belly by arguing that he revises the Roman cultural institution of the exemplum, a concept of great importance to Roman norm-setting, in order to emphasize its appropriateness to eating. There are limitations in highlighting exemplary eaters in order to teach proper eating habits, however, since the exempla that Seneca details all eat either extremely excessively or only very simple foods. So that he can address foods that are popular in contemporary literature, Seneca turns to the genre of satire, which has an intrinsic connection to food and eating, in order to revisit the concept of eating in Roman literature and make it aid his Stoic philosophical message. Lastly, since Seneca emphasizes the need of his reader, the aspiring Stoic, not only to read his text but also to be literarily and philosophically productive themselves, I argue that Seneca uses the Latin literary

trope of "literary consumption" (that is, the theme of eating literature) in order to inculcate proper habits in his readers, who consume Seneca's text (including the subject matter detailed throughout this dissertation) and must productively reproduce the Stoic life lessons that he encourages. Seneca's relationship with eating in Roman literature is thus one of reception and revision, as his goal in writing is to reconcile Stoicism with Roman literature and Roman literature with Stoicism.

Introduction

"Of all corporeal operations, digestion is the one which has the closest connection with the moral condition of man." - Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste* (82)

The main question driving this dissertation: why does the Roman Stoic philosopher and writer Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BCE-65 CE) discuss eating as much as he does? Despite the fact that Seneca's extant corpus, which encompasses a wide array of literary genres in both prose and poetry including letters, essays, a scientific text, satire, and tragedies, is the most diverse in all of Classical Latin literature, he returns again and again throughout his text to the subject of eating. Virtuous Republican Roman heroes eat moderately, while those who abuse their power eat their subordinates; oysters, mullets, and formless hodge-podge dishes are symbols of not only gustatory excess but also Stoic cosmology; overstuffed, distended bellies populate the pages of the *Epistulae Morales*; and Thyestes's infamous dinner stands out as a moment of abject horror in Senecan tragedy.[1] As Christine Richardson-Hay writes, for Seneca food is "a separate 'language' with its own resonance, insight, judgment, and resolution."[2] But the grammar and phonology of this "language" is complex enough that it warrants a closer look.

Scholars have occasionally tackled this theme in Seneca, but usually in hyper-focused, underdeveloped, or offhand ways. The relatively small amount of scholarship that exists on Seneca's passages on eating tends to focus on the Thyestean feast for its perverse exposition of

[1] Except where noted, all quotations of ancient authors come from the most recent *OCT*. References to the text of the *NQ* are to Hine's Teubner. All translations are my own unless otherwise specified.
[2] Richardson-Hay 2009: 74.

the Stoic problem of a lack of self-control or dark humor.[3] An early look at the role of food and eating in Senecan philosophy is Danielle Gourévitch's 1974 article, which argues that Seneca's promotion of healthy eating is crucial to the Stoic concept of the free person. This article represents an important development, as the link between Stoics and eating is an ambiguous one (more on this below), but other than vis-à-vis Celsus and some other medical writers Gourévitch does not consider what it means for Seneca to write about eating in a Roman literary context. Seneca is a philosopher, of course, but his decision to author the first large-scale Stoic pedagogical work in the Latin language entails a need to interact, interrelate, and appropriate Roman literature in his text.

Eating in a literary context receives more attention in A.L. Motto's 2001 chapter on Seneca's "culinary satire." Motto catalogs passages in Senecan prose that suggest his interest in cooks, kitchens, and stuffed faces, which she points out are hallmarks of satire. Motto's most interesting intervention is to apply to Seneca's philosophy what others have done to illuminate his tragedies; that is, she reads him forward into 17th-century British satire, much as scholars of Senecan tragedy argue that he is something of a proto-Elizabethan by exploring his reception in early modern tragedy.[4] But Seneca's own contemporary literary context is not an object of concern for Motto, who takes for granted that the satiric images employed by Seneca *are* satiric, without considering *what makes them* satiric. The most relevant (and recent) work on Senecan eating is Christine Richardson-Hay's 2009 article. Richardson-Hay provides a starting point for my exploration of Senecan eating, as she understands Seneca's gustatory writing as a serious part of his moral program. One of the most persistent prejudices against eating in Roman literature is

[3] Mader 2003; Meltzer 1988.
[4] The scholarship on Senecan drama in early modern tragedy is legion: for general studies see, e.g., Charlton 1946, Braden 1985, Miola 1992, Boyle 1997.

that it is somehow unserious or "dirty," as I will discuss later in this introduction, and Richardson-Hay admirably shows that eating within Senecan philosophy is serious business. But the greatest problem in Richardson-Hay's useful survey of eating in Seneca is its restricted perspective: she reads Senecan gustatory philosophy as limited to the sphere of individual moral choice. Seneca's place within the Roman literary and socio-cultural discourse on eating is ignored. Seneca does not write in a bubble, of course, but within a vibrant global culture with an ambivalent, complex attitude toward eating. Eating is not just, as Richardson-Hay argues, "a moral action of the Self" but a way of relating to one's community, a way of associating with the world as a whole, a mark of identity.[5] This is precisely why a study of Senecan eating from a perspective that accounts for a philosophical *and* literary context is needed, a perspective to be advanced by this dissertation.

Indeed, as one of our main sources for Stoicism in early Imperial Rome, as well as the first writer to impart Stoic pedagogy in the Latin language, Seneca is caught between two worlds, that of Stoic philosophy and Roman literature. Since eating is not well represented in the extant fragments of the earlier Greek Stoics, it is quite possible that Seneca's interest in gustatory matters is born from his interest in Roman literature, which is often concerned with food and eating. But at the same time, Seneca's main concern in his literary project is to convince his reader of the personal benefits conferred by living in accordance with a Stoic lifestyle. Seneca styles himself as a teacher, and his texts take strong positions on how best to live one's life.[6]

[5] Richardson-Hay 2009: 83.

[6] For scholarship on Seneca as a teacher, see Ilsetrout Hadot's landmark 1969 study (revised and expanded in 2014), which identifies *Seelenleitung* ("soul guidance") as one of Seneca's main purposes. More recent scholarship takes up this mantle: see Schafer 2009's argument for a "dramatized education" in the *Moral Epistles* and Griffin 2007's reading of the sequence of Seneca's letters to show that their "arrangement reflects a dynamic teaching experiment." (90)

So what can a focus on eating in a Stoic didactic context offer the Latin literary reader? I argue that for Seneca eating helps reconcile Stoicism with Roman literature. Seneca, through writing about eating, reacts to a Roman literary tradition that is often interested in matters of the belly. What is interesting about his project, however, is that he manages to give eating a prominent place in the Stoic moral and cosmological platform. Eating, for Seneca, is something of a missing link, a way to reflavor the decadent taste of Roman literature so as to make it a sensible venue for Stoic philosophical lessons. The connection between digestion, the desired goal of eating, and the moral lessons offered by Stoicism should be uncontroversial, as the quotation by the influential French gastronomer and food theorist Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in the epigraph suggests. Even within Latin etymology there is a clear correspondence between gustatory activity and learning, as the verb *sapio*, the root of the Stoic term *sapiens*, means both "understand" and "taste." Yet Seneca's idiosyncratic brand of gastro-pedagogy nonetheless remains underexplored.

This introduction sets out to achieve four aims: (1) to establish that, as far as we can tell, the earlier Greek Stoics do not tend to incorporate detailed discussions of eating into their philosophy; (2) to argue that Seneca's gustatory interest is then likely to be a product of his Roman literary environment; (3) to explore what I will term a "crisis in philosophy" in the mid-first century CE, which will provide an initial explanation for Seneca's incorporation of gustatory matters into Stoic philosophy; (4) to outline the chapters with which I will bolster my argument about how Seneca uses eating as a way to mediate Roman literature and Stoicism.

A note on methodology and terminology: the English language does not, unfortunately, have a handy adjective that means "related to eating." The words "gustatory" (relating to taste) and "alimentary" (relating to sustenance or nourishment) come close, however, so I will use

these words interchangeably as makeshift terms for "eating-related." *Edo* (along with its compound forms) is the basic Latin verb "to eat" and the related adjective *escarius* means "eating-related," but this dissertation will not analyze eating in Seneca's text by way of a philological analysis of these terms. My study instead proceeds from narrative eating: that is, moments in Seneca's text in which people eat, or where he reflects on the act of eating, regardless of the verb used. In Chapter 1 I will, however, analyze some of Seneca's uses of the common nouns that mean "belly," *venter* and *gula*, in order to examine how Seneca reacts to the Roman literary tradition (and imperial project) with his deployment of these words.

Eating and Stoicism

Stoicism is a materialist philosophy that posits that all matter is physical and the product of the divine creator, "god" or "nature" (*deus* or *natura*). In this way Stoicism (as well as its contemporary Hellenistic philosophy Epicureanism) is set apart from Platonism, a decidedly non-materialist philosophy that emphasizes the inadequacy of physical objects to accurately represent the ideas of which they are inferior versions. The proper moral life is key to Stoicism: a person who lives their life in accordance with *natura* is one who uses their higher faculties of reason (*ratio*) toward the goal of achieving virtue (*virtus*) and perfect wisdom (*sapientia*). The Stoic ideal is the perfect sage, the wise person (*sapiens*), who may or may not exist in reality. Most Stoics are *proficientes*, those in the process of achieving wisdom but falling short for various reasons, not least of which is the extreme remoteness of the *sapiens*, who is something of a superhuman being.

Although the entire universe is made of physical matter, Stoicism teaches the cultivation of intellectual faculties over bodily ones. The words of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus (died 135

CE) may represent a well-established perspective, then, when he extols care for mental pursuits over quotidian bodily ones:

> Ἀφυΐας σημεῖον τὸ ἐνδιατρίβειν τοῖς περὶ τὸ σῶμα, οἷον ἐπὶ πολὺ γυμνάζεσθαι, ἐπὶ πολὺ ἐσθίειν, ἐπὶ πολὺ πίνειν, ἐπὶ πολὺ ἀποπατεῖν, ὀχεύειν. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ἐν παρέργῳ ποιητέον: περὶ δὲ τὴν γνώμην ἡ πᾶσα ἔστω ἐπιστροφή. (*Ench*. 41)
>
> It is the sign of a dullard to waste time on things concerning the body, like exercising a lot, eating a lot, drinking a lot, defecating a lot, having sex. One should do these things in a subordinate capacity: let all the attention be given to the mind.

Because bodily activity—exercising, eating, drinking, defecating, and copulating—is a *parergon*, a Greek philosophical term that refers to matter less important than the *ergon*, the important philosophical work at hand, it is not worth Stoic consideration, as it has nothing to do with virtue. From the Stoic perspective virtue is the goal; anything else is an "indifferent" (Greek *adiaphora*), a circumstance either good ("preferred") or bad ("not preferred") that may be nice (or unpleasant) but does not actually pertain to virtue. Seneca himself mentions food in a list of indifferents: "Since one cannot arrive at virtue without food, but food nevertheless has nothing to do with virtue" (*quia nec sine cibo ad virtutem pervenitur, cibus tamen ad virtutem non pertinet*, *Ep*. 88.31).[7] *Virtus* itself can only be achieved through the application of reason.

As a result, it might not be surprising that the earlier Greek Stoics do not seem to have written much about eating—at least as far as we can tell. The works of the Greek Stoics survive only in fragments culled from a handful of later authors, including Seneca, which are collected in

[7] I use Reynolds's *OCT* for the texts of the *Epistulae Morales* and the *Dialogi*.

the *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (ed. Von Armin). The heading *de victu simplici* (iii.X.5.705-15) does contain a few quotations of Chrysippus encouraging moderation in food and drink but compared to more abstract topics the section is quite brief. Likewise Zeno, the founder of the school, rails against gluttons in some humorous passages in Athenaeus (VIII 345d; V 186d)—but Athenaeus's text is, of course, a compendium of food-talk, intellectual exercises in eating, drinking, and philosophizing, and so it is difficult to draw conclusions about Stoic interest in eating based on a few quotations here as well.

One might think that the earlier Stoics could have taken more of an interest.[8] Food is part of the same material world as are our bodies, *natura*, and even the immortal soul.[9] Stoic moral concepts such as self-control (Greek *sōphrosynē*, Latin *moderatio*) seem easily portable to individual behavior, including one's diet.[10] The issue may be that bodily urges like hunger, being *pulsus* ("impulses"), do not for Seneca qualify as passions (*affectus*), which are mental phenomena given very much attention by the earlier Greek Stoics, as well as by Seneca himself.[11] Whatever the reason, eating as a topic for description and philosophical incorporation does not seem to have had a strong toehold in Stoicism before Seneca.

Seneca does not quote any of the early Greek Stoics on eating, but he does quote Posidonius (135-51 BCE), an important advocate for Stoicism in a Romanized world. In *Ep*. 92, wherein Seneca makes distinctions between the soul and body, he quotes Posidonius on the

[8] An exception regards cannibalism, which is used in a sort of *reductio ad absurdum* exercise in theorizing the hardships experienced by the wise man: see Bartsch 2015: 203-8 for discussion.
[9] For the inner workings of the Stoic theory of the corporeality of the soul, see Long 1996: 224-49, esp. 235-39.
[10] On the subtleties in distinction between the Greek and Latin term, see Cic. *Tusc*. 3.8.
[11] *De Ira* 2.3.2 is the go-to passage for this distinction: *nam si quis pallorem et lacrimas procidentis et irritationem umoris obsceni altumve suspirium et oculos subito acriores aut quid his simile indicium adfectus animique signum putat, fallitur nec intellegit corporis hos esse pulsus* ("for if anyone thinks pallor and falling tears and the excitement of sexual moisture or deep sighing and pupils suddenly dilated or anything like these things is proof of passion and a sign of the mind, he is deceived and he does not understand that these are impulses of the body"). The body of scholarship on *affectus* in Stoicism is enormous, but some particularly good analyses are those of Graver 2007 and Nussbaum 1994: 359-401.

limited nature of the body: "The first part of a human being is virtue itself; to this part useless flesh and liquid is entrusted, capable only of the reception of food, as Posidonius says" (*prima pars hominis est ipsa virtus; huic committitur inutilis caro et fluida, receptandis tantum cibis habilis, ut ait Posidonius*, 92.10). This conception of the body as a mere vessel for food might have appealed to Seneca as one of many gustatory images to insert into his text, but it is telling that the act of eating is the only bodily activity discussed (as opposed to, for example, sleep).[12] Seneca, through Posidonius, is using a very old trope in the delineation of the mortal body, one that goes at least as far back as Archaic Greek epic, as I will discuss in my first chapter. This quotation may provide evidence for Stoicism within a Romanized world finding more interest in the workings of the body, perhaps a signifier in the transition from "ethereal" Greece to "bodily" Rome.[13]

But perhaps more interesting in the connections Seneca makes between the earlier Stoics and eating is his tendency to insert discussions of eating into those of his Stoic forebears. In so doing Seneca qualifies the positions of some of these Stoics with Roman Imperial cultural concerns, for which food and belly-imagery stand. For example, in *Ep*. 90, Seneca's critique of Posidonius's exaggeration of the role of philosophy in the development of human civilization, he points to Posidonius's claim that *philosophia* taught people how to build houses, then invokes the belly in his counter-example:

> Ego vero philosophiam iudico non magis excogitasse has machinationes tectorum supra tecta surgentium et urbium urbes prementium quam vivaria piscium in hoc clausa ut

[12] See Richardson-Hay 2009: 76 for further discussion.
[13] For the terminology, see Gowers 2021: 241.

> tempestatum periculum non adiret gula et quamvis acerrime pelago saeviente haberet luxuria portus suos in quibus distinctos piscium greges saginaret. (90.7)
>
> But I do not think that philosophy thought up these machinations of roofs rising above roofs and of cities squeezing cities, any more so than the fish-enclosures, constructed so that the belly does not need to deal with the danger of storms, and, even with the sea raging most violently, luxury might have its own harbors in which it can fatten different kinds of fish.

Posidonius's conception of the ingenious role played by philosophy is not sufficient in contemporary Rome, where *luxuria*, fueled by perverse appetites, must have some other source than *philosophia*, which could never be implicated in such depravity. After all, as Seneca writes in the first sentence of the letter, philosophy's gift to humankind is the ability to live well.[14] *Philosophia* cannot be a pure enabler, as Posidonius would have it, in the face of *luxuria*, which in this context is a conduit for the desires of the *gula*, "belly." This cultural framework might give us a clue as to why Seneca turns to Roman literary texts for their gustatory matter rather than the Greek Stoics: although Posidonius (unlike Zeno, Cleanthes, or Chrysippus) had inhabited a Romanized world, he lacked the gastro-literary perspective, so appealing to Seneca, of the earlier Roman writers he engages in his text, particularly Cato, Sallust, and Horace.

The lessons of Seneca's own teachers, moreover, especially the Stoic Attalus (fl. early 1st century CE), would help set the stage for Seneca's more developed focus on alimentary matters

[14] 90.1: *quis dubitare, mi Lucili, potest quin deorum inmortalium munus sit quod vivamus, philosophiae quod bene vivimus?* ("Who can doubt, my Lucilius, that the gift of the immortal gods is that we live, but that the gift of philosophy is that we live well?")

as part of Stoic pedagogy. Seneca's earliest critical thinking about food comes from Attalus's lessons, as he tells the reader of *Ep*. 108: "When he had begun to put our pleasures on display, to praise a chaste body, a sober table, a mind pure not just of illegal pleasures but also unnecessary ones, it pleased me to moderate my throat and belly" (*cum coeperat voluptates nostras traducere, laudare castum corpus, sobriam mensam, puram mentem non tantum ab inlicitis voluptatibus sed etiam supervacuis, libebat circumscribere gulam ac ventrem*, 108.14).

Seneca goes on to apply these lessons directly to the present time of his writing, in the early 60s:

> Inde mihi quaedam permansere, Lucili; magno enim in omnia impetu veneram, deinde ad civitatis vitam reductus ex bene coeptis pauca servavi. Inde ostreis boletisque in omnem vitam renuntiatum est; nec enim cibi sed oblectamenta sunt ad edendum saturos cogentia (quod gratissimum est edacibus et se ultra quam capiunt farcientibus), facile descensura, facile reditura. (108.15)

> Certain things from then [sc. his adolescent training in philosophy] have stuck with me, Lucilius, since I had approached all my schooling with a great fervor, then, led back to civic life, I kept a few things from those early lessons. From that point oysters and mushrooms were sworn off for my entire life, since they aren't foods, only enticements that compel full people to continue eating—a thing most agreeable for gluttons and those who stuff themselves past their capacity!—easy to get down, easy to bring back up.

The eating-lessons from Seneca's own youth are still relevant to the reader of the *EM* years later. By incorporating them into his Stoic textual project Seneca draws on the reader's experience with eating in order to make Stoicism make sense in a Roman Imperial context filled with gustatory sensations. As with Posidonius, Seneca here interprets conventional Stoic precepts through the lens of his own Roman cultural concern. Notably he does not refute Attalus, as he seeks to do with Posidonius, but he recontextualizes his Stoic moral lessons for a Roman readership that will want to see its ubiquitous societal overconsumption incorporated into an intelligible philosophical frame.

A (brief) history of Roman eating

The received wisdom on food and eating in Greek and Roman literature emphasizes its marginality. The "high" genres, e.g. epic, tragedy, and historiography, supposedly have nothing to do with eating, a dirty, messy, quotidian activity not suited for serious literature.[15] Emily Gowers's influential 1993 book *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature* makes this claim. Food is "matter out of place," a term Gowers borrows from anthropological studies of eating.[16] Therefore it is shunted off into "low" genres such as comedy, satire, epigram, and the epistle, which Gowers analyzes brilliantly in her book. A number of scholars of ancient eating have followed Gowers in this claim, including Richardson-Hay, for whom Seneca's epistolary genre excuses his many references to eating.[17] (Never mind the fact that, as I have mentioned, Seneca writes about eating throughout his diverse corpus.) This claim

[15] For criticism in (and of) registers in genres in the early Empire, see Hutchinson 1993: 4-76.
[16] Gowers 1993: 40. For "matter out of place," see especially Douglas 1966: 40, 160 and passim.
[17] Richardson-Hay 2009: 71-2. For the marginalized place of eating-scenes and descriptions of foods in "high" genres in general, see also Gowers 1993: 3-6, 22-4 and passim, Davidson 1997: 11-20, König 2012: 231-36, and Leigh 2015.

is borne out, to an extent, in earlier Greek literature: Iliadic heroes frequently eat meat, but these descriptions usually take place only within the context of epic formulae;[18] the fifth-century historians generally avoid dwelling on eating;[19] and even moral philosophers have less to say about eating than one might expect.[20]

But a closer look at the Roman literary tradition forces us to reevaluate any claim about its marginality. Vergil's *Aeneid*, the shining beacon of Latin epic and an instant classic in the Roman world, sees one of its most important plot developments, Aeneas's realization that he and his people have found their home, in a feast scene. They fulfill the curse of the Harpies by eating their tables (which are made of spelt), a scene described in some detail:

> Aeneas primique duces et pulcher Iulus
> corpora sub ramis deponunt arboris altae,
> instituuntque dapes et adorea liba per herbam
> subiciunt epulis (sic Iuppiter ipse monebat)
> et Cereale solum pomis agrestibus augent.

[18] As in the common Homeric feasting-beginning formula, οἱ δ' ἐπ' ὀνείαθ' ἑτοῖμα προκείμενα χεῖρας ἴαλλον ("they put their hands on the food prepared in front of them") in *Il.* 9.91, 9.221, 24.627, and *Od.* 1.149, 4.67, 4.218, 5.200, 8.71, 8.484, 14.453, 15.142, 16.54, 17.98, and 20.256, and feasting-end formula, αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο ("but after they satisfied their desire for food and drink") in, e.g., *Il.* 1.469, 2.432, 7.323, 9.92, 9.222, 24.628, and *Od.* 1.150, 3.67, 3.473, 4.68, 5.201, 8.72, 8.485, 12.308, 14.454, 15.143, 15.303, 16.55, 17.99, as well as in several other places. The lack of sumptuous food, and especially fish, in the Homeric epics (and the *Iliad* in particular) is a very old problem, taken up briefly by Plato (*Rep.* 3.404bc) and a character in Eubulus (fr. 118.1-3), occasionally by various scholiasts on Homer, and extensively by Athenaeus (I 9d-10e, 1 25c-f, in which he quotes Eubulus, and passim). On this conspicuous absence see also, e.g., Davidson 1997: 11-20 and Heath 2000. For meat consumption as a central theme in the *Odyssey*, however, see Bakker 2013.

[19] Herodotus tends to give detailed accounts of meals only when they are somehow perverse or unnatural, such as Harpagus' feast of his son (1.119) or Alcmaeon stuffing his mouth full of Croesus' gold (6.125). This theme is prevalent also in Herodotean ethnography: for Herodotus on the consumption habits of non-Greek peoples, which, in their often-perverse otherness, always serve to contrast them with the Greeks, see, e.g., Hartog 1988, Shaw 1983, and Faber 2020: 227-28. See Bowie 2003 for banquets in Herodotus. Thucydides is famously reluctant to include passages of quotidien bodily activity.

[20] On the curious lack of foods mentioned in the *Symposia* of Plato and Xenophon, see Plutarch *Mor.* 1094c, 686c-d; Gowers 1993: 3ff addresses this problem.

consumptis hic forte aliis, ut vertere morsus
exiguam in Cererem penuria adegit edendi,
et violare manu malisque audacibus orbem
fatalis crusti patulis nec parcere quadris: 115
'heus, etiam mensas consumimus?' inquit Iulus,
nec plura, adludens. (7.107-17)

Aeneas, the foremost leaders, and handsome Iulus lay their bodies under the branches of a tall tree, they begin their feasts and place their spelt cakes over the grass for their banquet (Jupiter himself told them to do so) and top their plain bread with woodsy fruits. With the rest of the food eaten up here, it happened by chance that their poverty of eating led them to turn their bites to the scanty bread, and to violate with their hands and daring jaws the circle of fateful crust, nor to spare the broad tables. "Hey, are we even eating up our tables?" Iulus said, joking, and said no more.

With this utterance the Trojans' years-long wandering ends.[21]

Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, another classic epic poem, features eating throughout. To give a few examples: in book 1, near the beginning of the poem, an incentive for Jupiter's destruction of the human race is the behavior of Lycaon, who tries to test his immortality by serving him human flesh (1.221-29); Proserpina willingly eats the famous pomegranate seed and as a result must stay in the underworld (5.534-38); Baucis and Philemon's rustic feast is described in incredibly fine detail (8.646-78); Ovid's version of Erysichthon cannot stop eating to the point

[21] For the complex series of eating-puns in this passage, see Gowers 2021: 247-50.

that he eats his own body (8.823-78); in the final book his Pythagoras expounds, again in great detail, on the doctrine of vegetarianism (15.75-142).[22] Ovid's epic poem does, of course, turn many of the conventions of epic on their head, but its idiosyncrasies have not prevented it from being classed and studied as an epic poem regardless. But the Vergilian and Ovidian epics are not the only examples of "high" poetry that discuss eating: even tragedy can take on a gustatory flavor, as the popularity of the Thyestes theme in Roman tragedy attests.[23]

On the prose side, Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*, the earliest surviving Roman historical monograph, takes the duality of body and mind, with special attention to the belly as a stand-in for the body, as one of its central themes. I will hold off on a detailed analysis of this aspect of Sallust's text for now, since I will examine the theme in light of Seneca's reception of it in my first chapter, but suffice it to say that historiography, a literary genre that foregrounds the inquiry into and careful study of a variety of contemporary and later sources with a view to establishing as accurate an account as possible of a historical event, still can take eating as one of its themes—and not suffer the critical relegation of comedy and satire.

Eating is an important theme not just in "high" and "low" genres alike but in Latin literature from its very beginning. The earliest Latin texts that survive in their entirety, the agricultural manual of Cato (entitled *de Agricultura*, ca. 160 BCE) and the comedies of Plautus (whose earliest extant plays date to the 200s BCE), share gustatory concerns. The food-filled satires of Lucilius (born ca. 180 BCE) also rank among these early influential texts. The Roman

[22] For the thematic and structural significance of eating in the *Met*., see Leiverkus 2021. For the (literal, since his episode occurs at the end of Book 8) centrality of Erysichthon in the text, see Santucci 2020; for some interplay between Baucis and Philemon and Erysichthon (as well as their reception), see Santucci 2021.
[23] Not only Seneca's *Thyestes*, but Accius's *Atreus*, Varius's *Thyestes*, and the *Thyestes* of Curiatius Maternus. For a history of this tragic topic at Rome, see Tarrant 1978, esp. 260-1, Tarrant 1985: 40-3, Boyle 2017: lxxii-lxxviii.

literary world is clearly gustatorily-inspired both from a "top to bottom" perspective, from epic to satire, as well as a chronological one.

An important—and incredibly difficult—question comes to mind. Why? What is it about Roman literature in particular that encourages a gustatory perspective? There is, of course, the problem of transmission: the texts as they survive to us tend to show great interest in eating, but many more existed in the past that are now lost, and the sum total output of Ancient Roman literature may be much less (or more, for that matter) food-stuffed than what exists today. But if we leave this problem aside and remain content to work with what survives, an exercise to which we must be resigned, some possible explanations emerge. First, the basic popularity of eating: everyone eats, and everyone understands the wide application of using eating in metaphorical discussions of other topics, or else to make points about human life in general. "You are what you eat" is a cliché for us today, but to the Romans there is a clear correspondence between existing and eating, as the infinitive of both verbs is spelled *esse*. Moreover, Cicero remarks that for the Romans banquets are not *symposia* or *syndeipna*, "drinkings together" or "eatings together" as they are for the Greeks, but *convivia*, "livings together."[24] Opportunities to eat together at Rome are opportunities to experience life together.

These *convivia* underscore that eating is closely connected not only with existing but with interacting with the world around us, with making ourselves part of it by putting part of it into ourselves. As Maggie Kilgour writes, "The most basic model for all forms of incorporation is the physical act of eating, and food is the most important symbol for other external substances that are absorbed."[25] But this truism still does not do much to distinguish Roman literature from

[24] *Fam.* 9.24.3.
[25] Kilgour 1990: 6.

literature in general, as a variety of genres in a variety of cultures and time periods engage productively with food.[26]

The reason for Latin literature's interest in eating becomes clearer, however, when we consider that Rome was a global superpower with a huge trading network throughout the Ancient Mediterranean world. As Roman dominion grows, the foodscape at home changes. Exotic delicacies are imported and become symbols of status, wealth, class, and of course taste. For those uncomfortable with the symptoms of this new world order, literature is an outlet; indeed, as Gowers writes, writing against luxurious foods is "the most immediate and universally intelligible image of Rome's expansion."[27] Writing about eating becomes, then, a way that Romans make sense of their global empire, since "by taking food into the body, we take in the world," in M.M. Bakhtin's words.[28]

This is, of course, only one hypothesis, but it is one that holds up to scrutiny. A variety of Roman authors of different genres and eras betray their feelings about empire through food. As far back as the early second century BCE, homegrown Italian foods are contrasted with foreign ones. The elder Cato, in the fragments of his oratory, decries Roman spending on jars of pickled fish from the Black Sea.[29] From a moralistic perspective this is a relatively familiar conservative posture, but matters get more complicated in the same author's agricultural manual, where Cato touts homegrown cabbage as a miraculous vegetable, but at the same time also gives his reader the recipe for homemade "Coan" wine, which is of course not really from the Greek island of

[26] There are too many time periods and genres to give anything resembling an exhaustive survey here, but a few examples will suffice. For food in, e.g., Byzantium, see Mayer and Trzcionka 2017; in Middle English literature, see Hostetter 2017, Farrier 1995, Hanna 2000, Bartlett 2016; in medieval literature and history more widely, Carlin and Rosenthal 1998; for a gendered approach, see Bynum 1988; in early modern opera, see Polzonetti 2021; in the early modern poet George Herbert, see Schoenfeldt 2000: 96-130.
[27] Gowers 1993: 18.
[28] Bakhtin 1984: 281.
[29] Polybius 31.25.5; see below, 42.

Cos at all—clearly we see a simultaneous demand for the production of "virtuous" local and "luxurious" foreign goods.[30] This trend continues: in the *Satyrica* a freedman claims that Trimalchio can produce everything he needs, from Tarantine wool to Attic honey to Indian mushrooms, on his own gigantic estate.[31] Later on in this same text, a soldier of fortune "hungers for all the prizes of the world," a symptom of Roman imperial domination.[32] In the words of Emily Gowers, "*imperium* had turned Rome into the world's emporium,"[33] and we can see various anxieties about the imperial emporium expressed in not only the aforementioned texts but also in Seneca's contrasting of the eating habits of virtuous Republican heroes with those of contemporary gourmands.[34]

A consequence of global expansion is what Gowers terms the horizontal and vertical expansion of the Roman meal: horizontal because of the variety of different foods available, vertical because of the quantity piled onto the table.[35] The literary reaction to this horizontal and vertical expansion is especially clear in the banquet scenes of Roman satire and fiction, which tend to emphasize the sheer overabundance of food, if not the impossibility of actually eating one's way through the dinner.[36] The dazzling variety of exotic foods made possible by globalization directly impacts the Roman literary landscape, which takes on a global flavor. Seneca's own literature addresses this expansion, as I will argue throughout this dissertation.

---

[30] *De Ag*. 156, 112. See Wilkins 2005: 34-5 for further discussion of the paradoxes of homegrown and foreign foods in the *de Ag*.
[31] Petr. 37-8.
[32] Petr. 119.31-2.
[33] Gowers 1993: 10.
[34] See below, ch. 2.
[35] Gowers 1993: 16 and passim.
[36] See, e.g., the entirety of the *cena Trimalchionis*, Horace *S.* 2.8, and the giant turbot in Juvenal 4. Juvenal 5 reacts to the meal's horizontal expansion through a consistent contrast between the foods fed to the host and his clients.

So far from being "matter out of place," the description and consumption of food is embedded deeply into the Roman literary apparatus.

Perhaps this fact is not surprising after all, considering the vivid taste of rich foods with which the reception of the Roman world has been flavored. Roman eating has always weighed heavily on how Rome is understood, and we have the literary record to thank for this impression. In addition to the lavish *cena* featuring huge quantities of exotic foods and dissolute banqueters, the idea of Rome has become synonymous with the image of the overweight emperor stuffing himself from an ever-present grape-bowl. The emperor, naturally the most visible representative of Roman global empire, is a consumer within this enduring picture of Rome. But the image is an ancient one as well, as Seneca makes the emperors Tiberius, Gaius (Caligula), and Claudius into eaters as well. (Nero would not have appreciated the characterization during his own lifetime, no doubt.) The link is not hard to see: since the global Roman trading network brings exotic delicacies from parts unknown back home, the idea of "eating the world" becomes prevalent in literature of the mid-first century CE, as will be discussed throughout this dissertation. The emperor conquers and consumes.

The essential role of eating in Latin literature, bolstered by the continued influx of fancy foods into Rome, helps explain the prevalence of the theme throughout Seneca's text. In order to write Stoic literature in first-century CE Rome, the imperial emporium, this cultural current of eating has to be addressed. But the ways in which Seneca takes in this aspect of Roman literature are innovative: his interest in eating seems to be a product both of its clear pedagogical virtues and the Roman literary tradition in which he writes. This focus on eating is not only an avenue of philosophical teaching, then, but also a way to teach his readers about the proper way to understand the Roman literary tradition: Seneca uses the gustatory texts of earlier authors in a

meta-commentary on how to read (and write) Latin literature. In so doing he takes his own advice from *Ep*. 84, wherein he advocates for the proper digestion and combination of literary influences into a new product, innovative but redolent of its sources, and even reminds his reader of his own prominent place in the Latin literary canon, as will be discussed in the fourth chapter. Seneca's main goal may be to inculcate Stoic life lessons in his readership, but, as Brad Inwood writes, he is "a literary animal if there ever was one," and the extent of his engagement with his contemporary and earlier Roman writers goes far beyond just didactic proselytizing.[37] Writing about eating is a way to situate himself as a *Roman* writer, writing in Latin, not just a Stoic one.

So the Roman literary tradition, so steeped in eating, provides *farrago* for Seneca to work out philosophy in the many different genres in which he writes: Seneca *escarius* subsumes Seneca *philosophus* and *tragicus*. But just as scholarship on Seneca has not tended to emphasize eating, it is equally true that scholarship on food and eating has not had much to say about Seneca. Emily Gowers and Werner Tietz have written the most extensive recent accounts of food and eating in Roman literature, but neither book devotes much time to Seneca.[38] Likewise is true for scholarship on banquets and dining, the positivistic brother of literary eating.[39] Seneca's keen interest in eating, however, and the novel ways in which he twists the Roman gustatory tradition in his Stoic pedagogy, constitute a much-needed addendum to scholarship on the literary implications of the edible, as well as the edible implications of literature.

[37] Inwood 2005: 18.

[38] See also the wider (literary, epigraphic, archaeological) approach of Donahue 2017, who also does not mention Seneca much but quotes Richardson-Hay's thesis in his introduction (xvii-xviii), as well as the anthropological study of O'Connor 2015.

[39] There are a few exceptions: Seneca's youthful vegetarianism, as detailed in *Ep.* 108, is cited in accounts of ancient vegetarianism such as Beer 2012: 39-43. Roller 2017: 19-20, 123 and passim looks to *Eps.* 47 and 95 for evidence of dining behaviors. Wilkins and Hill 2006 cites Seneca a few times (206 and passim).

Indeed, Seneca's reception history is riddled with gustatory metaphors. The second-century Latin writer Marcus Cornelius Fronto, an early critic of Seneca, derides his prose with two different food metaphors: his writing is, on the one hand, "soft, feverish plums," but at the same time Seneca's writing process resembles the act of eating olives by throwing them into the air and catching them with an open mouth: both ostentatious and disorganized.[40] The 19th-century British imperialist T. B. Macaulay, himself a fan of Vergil, describes the experience of reading Seneca as eating "nothing but anchovy sauce."[41] With such vivid metaphors as these—which themselves seem to acknowledge the alimentary aspect of Seneca—it is a wonder that Seneca *escarius* is not more associated with the Roman gastro-literary tradition. Seneca has also been more influential in the conception of Roman eating advanced by 20th-century food writing than he is given credit for: M. F. K. Fisher, the godmother of American food writing, quotes his *Ep*. 95 in her essay on Roman eating.[42] In addition, contemporary Roman food writing and recipe books take cues, consciously or not, from Seneca's repeated image of the jaded palate.[43] It is not only true, then, that Seneca's interest in eating is very much a product of his Roman literary heritage, but his reception has called attention to this element of his text.

A crisis in philosophy at Rome

Even if eating is more entwined with Latin literature than with Stoicism, food metaphors still find a place for those teaching Roman philosophy before Seneca. The Republican Epicurean poet Lucretius compares his act of writing philosophy in poetry (as opposed to prose) to the

[40] *Senecae mollibus et febriculosis prunulis… Oleas suas in altum iaciat, ore aperto excipiat* (*de Orat*. 2 and 3). These are just some of Fronto's metaphors for Senecan literature: see Wilson 2008: 67-8.
[41] Letter to T. F. Ellis, May 30th, 1836; see Wilson 2008: 67.
[42] Fisher 2004: 32, quoting 95.23: "Are you astonished at the innumerable diseases?—Count the number of our cooks!" (Her translation)
[43] See Matthews n.d.: i.

physicians' practice of treating sick children by putting honey on the rim of a cup that masks the bitter medicine within—both philosophy and medicine might be hard to swallow.[44] Horace, a fellow Epicurean, makes a similar comment near the beginning of his *Sermones*: teachers give cookies to their students as an incentive to learn their ABCs.[45] The common thread between these two memorable accounts is, then, the use of food to encourage learning, which is precisely what Seneca would take up—and expand—in his own corpus.

There is the problem of condescension, however. Both Lucretius and Horace speak of teaching children—or teaching adults with incentives equivalent to those given to children. This condescension implies a lack of interest (or perhaps a short attention span) in those people learning philosophy. If such incentives are needed, we imagine that there might be a general cultural antipathy toward philosophy at Rome.

Seneca seems to think that this is the case, at any rate. At the very end of Book 7 of the *Naturales Quaestiones*, written in the early 60s CE near the end of his life, he exhorts his reader to advocate for philosophy by any means necessary:

> Philosophiae nulla cura est. Itaque adeo nihil invenitur ex his quae parum investigata antiqui reliquerunt, ut multa quae inventa erant oblitterentur. At mehercule si hoc totis membris premeremus, si in hoc iuventus sobria incumberet, hoc maiores docerent, hoc minores addiscerent, vix ad fundum veniretur in quo veritas posita est; quam nunc in summa terra et levi manu quaerimus. (*NQ* 7.32.4)

[44] *DRN* 1.936-50.
[45] *S.* 1.1.25-6.

> No one cares about philosophy. To the degree that nothing is discovered now from these things which the ancient philosophers have left insufficiently investigated, it is even the case that many things which had been discovered are now forgotten. But by god, if we were to press on this with all the strength of our limbs, if the sobered-up youth would try their hand to this, if the older people teach it and the younger ones learn it, we would barely reach the foundation at which the truth has been placed, which now we seek at the highest point of the earth and with a light hand.

Philosophy is in a crisis: no one wants to learn it and no one wants to teach it. A distrustful perspective on philosophers is nothing new in Seneca's day—elsewhere he refers to the expulsion of the philosophers in the second century BCE.[46] Some five years after Seneca's death in 65 CE, following his implication in the Pisonian conspiracy to overthrow Nero, philosophers are yet again expelled from Rome, this time by the emperor Vespasian.[47] The role of the so-called Stoic Opposition, a loose group of Stoic philosophers opposed either to monarchy in general or just individual tyrannical rulers such as Nero, in this imperial uneasiness toward philosophers is unclear, but it is nonetheless apparent that to teach philosophy in the mid-first century CE is an uphill battle.[48]

[46] *ad Hel.* 10.8; see Williams 2014 ad loc.
[47] See Dio 66.13, 67.13.3, and Suet. *Vesp.* 13 and 15. For a reading of this expulsion situated within a Flavian literary context, see Keith 2018.
[48] For the "Stoic Opposition" consisting of philosophers such as Seneca, Lucan, Thrasea Paetus, Musonius Rufus, and a number of others, see, e.g., Keith 2018, MacMullen 1966: 46-94. The term is a modern one, and the existence of such a movement is nebulous and might derive from the philosophical cult of Cato and Brutus that was popular among first-century Stoics: see MacMullen 1966: 1-45. For an argument that this opposition is rooted in Republicanism, see Wilkinson 2012: 61-77. For a chronological survey of Seneca's literature as a negotiating force between philosophy and politics, see Rudich 1997: 17-106.

What are Romans of this era interested in, then, if not philosophy? Food and eating, of course. Regardless of the extent to which this interest represents a verifiable fact—the literary record as discussed in the previous section certainly suggests it—Seneca himself believes that this is the case. In *Ep*. 95 he decries the fact that although the philosophical schools are empty, the kitchens are stuffed (95.23). This is not just a one-off comparison, however. In his *consolatio* to his mother Helvia, wherein he contrasts the virtuous consumption of Manius Curius Dentatus with the gourmandizing of Apicius, Seneca issues an *apologia* for the philosophers expelled from the city "on the grounds that they were corrupters of the youth" (*velut corruptores iuventutis*, 10.8). Apicius, who teaches what Seneca terms the *scientia popinae*, the "science of the kitchen," is in Seneca's eyes a contemporary rejoinder to these old philosophers—and a much more pernicious influence on the youth.[49]

Since Rome in the mid-first century was, by these accounts, a gourmand's paradise, a philosophical program that acknowledges the contemporary obsession with eating might have been appealing to Seneca's readership. The Epicureans Lucretius and Horace, themselves followers of Stoicism's rival materialist philosophy, had set something of a precedent with their didactic foods. The presence of these literary and philosophical forebears, coupled with the contemporary fascination with food (to the detriment of philosophical interest), suggests a greater exigency for Seneca's brand of gustatorily-informed Stoicism.

Seneca is, in general, not averse to establishing a form of Stoicism suited to his Roman Imperial audience. Brad Inwood profitably explores this facet of Senecan philosophy in his influential 1995 essay "Seneca in His Philosophical Milieu" (later reprinted in a 2005 collection of Inwood's essays), wherein he argues that the philosophical environment in which Seneca

[49] See below, 93-5.

writes is markedly different from Cicero's, since Seneca's own education is less Hellenocentric than Cicero's (as well as the other Roman philosophers who precede him). The new centers of philosophical study are in Rome and Alexandria, and as a result Latin gains currency as a legitimate language in which to learn (and teach) philosophy. After an examination of the influence of the Roman philosopher Papirius Fabianus (fl. early first century CE) on Seneca, Inwood writes:

> Seneca grew up in an environment where a philosophical life was coming to be taken for granted as a realistic option for young Roman men of wealth and standing. It is not that his was the first generation of committed Roman philosophers working in Latin—for Fabianus himself obviously qualifies for that description (in a way that Cicero and Lucretius, and perhaps even Brutus, do not). Rather, Seneca's generation was the first to grow up with such committed philosophers, working in Latin, available as role models. To choose the philosophical way of life was still a struggle, as Seneca's own life shows—but at least he had Roman role models to guide him.[50]

Because of this difference in age and education, Seneca's conception of philosophy is more intuitively Latin than that of Cicero, whose terms for Greek philosophical concepts tend to read as (sometimes clunky) translations of Greek into Latin.[51] Seneca, on the other hand, "really did think things through, philosophically, in Latin."[52] Seneca is the first writer to create a full-scale

[50] Inwood 2005: 11.
[51] E.g., *visum* for *phantasia*, *impetus* for *hormē*, *officium* for *kathēkon*. See Inwood 2005: 19-20.
[52] Inwood 2005: 21. This argument follows a discussion of Seneca's use of the term *voluntas* to mean the individual will, which the Greek term *boulēsis* does not approximate, as well as his explicit preference for non-isomorphic translations in *de Tranq*. 2.3 (*appellationis graecae vim debet habere, non faciem*, "It ought to have the force of the Greek term, not its form"). For a foundational discussion see Griffin 1976: 36-40.

Stoic pedagogical corpus in Latin—as opposed to Cicero, who had aimed for an academic explanation of Stoicism, not a normative one—which he offers up to an audience likewise steeped in the Latin literary tradition.

This basic fact has sometimes discomfited scholars who wish to downplay the cultural differences between Greek and Roman philosophers. Such a desire sometimes comes, as it does for Paul Veyne, from an attempt to exonerate Seneca. Veyne, in his 2003 monograph, strives to rehabilitate Seneca as a serious philosopher, but in so doing downplays his *Romanitas*: "His clarity reveals a firm conceptual foundation, that of Greek Stoicism in its authentic form: Seneca practiced neither a debased nor a vulgarized philosophy aimed at the supposed 'practical spirit' of the Romans."[53] There is surely something condescending about the assumption of Roman philosophy's "practical" application, but Seneca's Stoicism is a guide to living well.[54] Surely Seneca can hone his philosophical literature for an Imperial Roman audience without it being "debased" or "vulgarized." (This prejudice might also explain Veyne's tendency to look back to the earlier Greeks and forward to early modern Enlightenment and continental philosophers to the detriment of Seneca's contemporary Rome.)

Much more fitting for our understanding of Seneca is Robert Kaster's argument that Seneca incorporates rhetorical flourishes, repetition, a sarcastic tone, imagined interlocutors, exempla, and his various other literary idiosyncrasies "as his way of getting his teaching launched so that it will reach his audience and speak to it in its own language."[55] One of the languages understood by his audience is, of course, eating.

[53] Veyne 2003: ix.
[54] See above, 9.
[55] Kaster 2010: 13.

Seneca is not the only Stoic who attempts to reach a literary audience in the mid-first century CE, however. Indeed, this is a very fertile period for Stoic literary activity. But what do Seneca's younger contemporary Stoic writers, his nephew Lucan (39-65 CE), who authors the historical epic *Bellum Civile*, and the satirist Persius (34-62 CE) do to counter this perceived lack of interest in philosophy? The common feature of these writers, other than their philosophical perspective, is the fact that they both write poetry: verse satire in Persius's case and epic in Lucan's.[56]

Such a medium can be effective for communicating precepts. Seneca himself writes about the efficacy of poetry in the *EM*, where he cites no less an authority than the Greek Stoic Cleanthes (ca. 330-230 BCE), the second head of the original Stoic school, on the power of verse to aid the impact and memorability of a speaker's words.[57] But such a testament within a distinctively prose pedagogical project underscores the fact that Seneca is going about his didactic project in a self-consciously different way. He does write poetry in addition to prose, of course, but the relationship of Senecan drama to Stoic pedagogy remains unclear (as will be discussed below). Seneca's tragedies undoubtedly take up Stoic themes, but in a much subtler way than his prose, all of which attempts to establish a normative model for the individual Stoic life.

So unlike these Stoic poets, who prefer Lucretian honey for their bitter philosophical message, Seneca's answer is one of content, not form.[58] He prefers to write prose—letters, essays, and manuals, among other genres—but prose that returns to food and eating throughout.

---

[56] For the seeming incongruity of "wholly Roman" satire as a vessel for (Hellenistic) Stoic philosophy, see Bartsch 2015: 3-6 and passim.
[57] *Ep*. 108.9-11.
[58] On the other hand, for the argument that Seneca prefers to write tragedy precisely because of its vividly visual form and not necessarily its content, see Staley 2010.

Thus he responds to the supposed philosophical apathy of his age with a topic of great interest in Roman culture.

Poetry may be catchier, but prose still has the ability to influence its readers through the vividness of its images. At various points in his text Seneca states that he is placing the images he writes "before the eyes" (*ante oculos*) of his reader. The visual element of the written (and heard) text is nothing new—we all have mental "pictures" of the things we read—and is commonly discussed in ancient rhetorical and literary critical manuals.[59] For the Stoics these mental pictures are included among the psychic images they call *phantasiai*, literally "appearances," visual impressions formed within the mind.[60] Images of food and eaters make for vivid *phantasiai* in the mind of the reader, which is perhaps a reason why prose suffices for Seneca's Stoic didactic project: his words rouse his reader's imagination.[61]

Such vivid imagery would be effective at any time, but perhaps never more than during Seneca's lifetime, the era of the declamation and *recitatio*, when the public performance of literature reaches a new height of popularity.[62] Far from being evidence of a decline from the golden age of Augustan Latin literature—as the early Imperial period is often characterized[63]—we can instead see a greater concern with visuality in literature that lends itself well to a *phantasia*-filled Stoic materiality. Simply put, Seneca writes with exactly the right images in exactly the right time and place.

---

[59] See, e.g., *ad Herr*. 4.62, Quint. *Inst*. 6.2.29 and passim, Ps-Long. *Subl*. 15.1. For a modern discussion that foregrounds these theoretical texts in a comparison of the visuality of Statius's *Thebaid* and the films of Quentin Tarantino, see Gervais 2013.

[60] See, e.g., Cic. *Acad*. I. 40 on Zeno's definition of *phantasia* (which he renders *visum* in Latin), Augustine *Cont*ra *Acad*. 3.9.18. A much longer list can be found in *SVF* i.I.2.52-73 (for *phantasiai* in Zeno), i.II.5.484 (for Cleanthes), and ii.I.52-70 (for Chrysippus).

[61] For the vividness and uniqueness of Seneca's images and metaphors see, e.g., Armisen-Marchetti 1989 and 2015, Von Albrecht 2004, Gazzarri 2020.

[62] See, e.g., Conte 1994: 403-6, Tarrant 1985: 19-22, Fantham 1996: 90-4 and passim.

[63] Notably and influentially by Williams 1978; see also Hutchinson 1993, Fantham 1996: 1 and passim. But this attitude is common in contemporary writers (and, indeed, throughout the history of Roman literature).

The message is the medium as well: Stoic writers of this time period, notably Seneca and Persius, often imagine their text as a thing to be (metaphorically) eaten by their reader. But while Persius mockingly refers to spoken poetry as "snacks for other peoples' ears" (*auriculis alienis…. escas*, 1.22), Seneca offers a more developed notion of textual incorporation, the metaphor of digestion. My final chapter will analyze this metaphor and argue for its centrality in Seneca's way of thinking about the proper method of reading and reproducing his Stoic life lessons, but for now it will suffice to say that a logophagy of this sort seems to be the logical conclusion of a pedagogical program aimed at a culture that prefers eating to learning; the reader must eat the lessons themselves. Perhaps content and form are not as separate as it seems.

So food and eating not only make up their own "language" for Seneca, as Richardson-Hay puts it, but more importantly it is a language that Seneca's Roman Imperial reader will understand. Indeed, my Seneca is an astute one, attentive to the interests of his audience. He needs to be, if there will be any *cura* for his Stoic pedagogy.

Steps toward digestion

Before I provide a chapter outline, I want to make a note about my selection of texts. Seneca's extant corpus is incredibly diverse, as I mentioned earlier (and will emphasize throughout this dissertation). I read Seneca's corpus as unitary, "seeing it whole" as recent scholarship on Seneca has sought to do.[64] My reader will note, however, that despite the fact that I have something to say about the majority of Senecan texts—since the majority of Senecan texts have something to say about eating[65]—some will appear more than others. The *Epistulae*

[64] See, e.g., the title of Volk and Williams 2006, but many monographs on Seneca in the last fifteen years have sought to do so. See also Ker 2009, Gunderson 2015. Staley 2010 and Trinacty 2014, despite having Senecan tragedy as their nominal subject, consistently (and rightly) look to Seneca's prose to elucidate his drama.
[65] I found nothing of clear relevance in the *Consolatio ad Polybium* and the *de Otio*.

Morales, the crowning achievement of Senecan philosophy both chronologically and in the development of his Stoic moral thought, will unsurprisingly be a topic of discussion in every single chapter. The *Naturales Quaestiones*, a similarly late and developed text, will also receive a great deal of attention. While chapter 1 moves around Seneca's entire literary career in order to establish his relationship with Republican prose accounts of the belly, chapter 2 proceeds through Seneca's corpus chronologically, from his earliest extant texts *de Ira* and the *Consolationes* all the way to the *EM*, in order to identify a development in his thinking about the place of famous eaters in his Stoic moral pedagogy. Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted exclusively to the aforementioned later texts, the *EM* and *NQ*, with the *Thyestes*, Seneca's lone poetic text that takes consumption as a central theme, also gaining a prominent place in chapter 4.

The four chapters in this dissertation will examine, in order, Seneca's reception of the belly-rhetoric of the Republican prose authors Cato the Elder (234-149 BCE) and Sallust (86-35 BCE), his incorporation of exempla that involve eating as a tool of Stoic moral philosophy, his appropriation of satire as a vessel for teaching Stoic cosmology, and his instructions to the reader for the proper digestion and reproduction of his text. In short, the first chapter discusses the site of digestion, the second the eater, the third the food, and the fourth the product of digestion.

In chapter 1, "Only bellies?", I argue that Seneca, who shows great interest throughout his corpus in the *venter*, "belly," in his text, treats the belly within a Roman cultural framework concerned with the belly as a seat of moral decline. The Republican prose writers Cato and Sallust had worked productively within this framework and Seneca reacts to their conceptions of the belly as a negative, and even destructive, force. Moreover, Seneca's own treatment of the belly is far more nuanced than those of Cato and Sallust: I will explore the philosophical, socio-political, and literary reasons for Seneca's transformation of the Republican belly. Seneca's belly

is a Stoic one that exists in the mid-first century CE, where Roman global dominion (along with its concomitant edible imports) is well established, and Republican anti-*venter* discourse needs to be adapted within Seneca's literary and pedagogical context. Thus Seneca takes a softer tone toward the belly than the similarly moralistically minded Republican authors Cato and Sallust, since for him digestion is a healthy and necessary process; the belly is not just a source of perverse pleasure or a black hole that sucks in and destroys proper *mores*.

The first chapter analyzes bellies as, for the most part, disembodied organs that serve as a powerful signifier of Seneca's ambivalent reception of Republican attitudes toward Roman moral decline, but it does so in order to set the scene for the rest of the dissertation, as for Seneca some good can come from the appropriation of Roman eating for Stoicism. But chapter 2, "Exemplary eaters," looks to the people who feed these bellies, famous eaters in Roman literature whom Seneca figures as exempla. The exemplum, a story of a mythological or historical figure used to illustrate an ethical point, can go a long way toward making a complex philosophical issue tenable. In my discussion of how Seneca makes exemplary eaters a crucial part of his Stoic moral philosophical program I will build on the work of Matthew Roller, who identifies a uniquely Stoic form of exemplarity that operates beyond the usual public sites of the forum and battlefield, as well as look to the economist Thorstein Veblen's concept of conspicuous consumption, as exempla are by their nature dependent on visibility and spectatorship, appropriate for Seneca's own era of public recitation. Veblen's conspicuous consumption will be appropriate for the study of excessively eating Imperial figures like the gourmand Apicius and the self-reflexive self-consumer Hostius Quadra, as well as tyrannical figures such as Vedius Pollio and Cambyses, who eat their underlings. For the positive exempla I will detail, virtuous eaters such as Manius Curius Dentatus and Gaius Fabricius Luscinus,

Veblen's theory will need to be modified to include conspicuous nonconsumption, a purposeful moderation in eating practiced by those who could, under the circumstances, eat excessively. I will read Seneca's relevant exemplary texts chronologically in order to identify the progression of his thinking about the exemplarity of eating, and by extension about exempla in general.

This second chapter centers the eater; the third, the food eaten. Chapter 3, "Satiric courses," moves beyond Seneca's use of exempla in moral pedagogy to his appropriation of satire, that most Roman literary genre, as a vehicle for teaching Stoic cosmology. Satire had long before Seneca been connected with eating, but by reacting to the satiric foods that had found a place in the works of the earlier satirists Lucilius and Horace Seneca is able to reclaim them within his own Stoic context. Specifically, Seneca uses the *nobilis patina*, his own version of a mixed-up dish mentioned by Horace and representative of satire's generic form, to criticize what contemporary society misunderstands about the workings of the natural world. The philosophical problem with the mixed dish, more than the social problem of its decadence, is its lack of relationality: the fact that its ingredients are ambiguous and difficult to interpret violates the principles of the well-ordered Stoic cosmos. Oysters, whose formlessness Seneca emphasizes, are similarly useful tools in connecting Roman satiric literature with Stoic cosmology, since as shapeless slime-masses they lack *forma* in a Stoic context also, that is the matter that comprises the universe. But the word *forma* is connected most directly with the mullet, another fish with a long satiric pedigree, used by Seneca to contrast contemporary interest in gourmandise with philosophy. With the size of one of the mullets that Seneca describes, he also flexes his literary muscle and engages in a competition with Horace, which the later satirist Juvenal seems to recognize. Thus for Seneca literature is not completely ancillary to philosophy, as he attempts to assert his place within the Latin canon. My reading of these satiric moments in Seneca's corpus

proceeds from Dustin Griffin's conception of satire as an intergeneric form, a "body-snatcher" that can enter texts. While chapter 2 emphasizes that Seneca attempts to bring the lofty institution of the exemplum down to earth by giving eating a healthy place within exemplarity, this chapter suggests that satire, on the other hand, is freed from its "low" status in Seneca's Stoic cosmological writing.

Chapter 4, "Proper digestion," argues that the culmination of Seneca's use of these eating scenes is his own understanding of the processes of the consumption, digestion, regurgitation, and/or excretion of his own literature. Seneca famously offers a positive model for literary consumption in *Ep*. 84, the bees that gather food from different flowers and vomit up a new product that retains traces of what they ate, which Seneca encourages his readers to do with literature; he reinforces this normative model with some insights from *Epp*. 2 and 108. His play on the polyvalence of digestion (*digerere*, *concoquere*) in *Ep*. 108 suggests that he looks forward to the digestion of his own work by his reader as the "spiritual nourishment" (*geistige Nahrung*) that Michael von Albrecht has identified as a theme in the letter. But something has to happen to food after it has been digested. Discussions of food in the ancient world are often reluctant to examine its future outcome, which can take one of two forms: vomit and feces. While Seneca has negative associations with both of these bodily functions in their real (non-metaphorical) forms, he has one surprisingly positive application for vomit, that of the bees in *Ep*. 84 whose model for digestion should be followed by the Senecan reader in their own literary journey. His dramatization of the lead-up to Thyestes's excretion of his cannibalistic feast in the *Thyestes*, on the other hand, is one of unabashed horror, a perversion of the food-as-literature trope that Seneca champions in the *Moral Epistles*. I will read the play through the lens of Julia Kristeva's abject in an attempt to show how Seneca plumbs new depths in dramatizing the aftermath of

Thyestes's already disgusting meal—and in so doing offers his reader a negative model of the sort of competent reader suggested throughout the *Epistles*. This final chapter offers a meta-commentary on Seneca's pedagogical process: the lessons in the first three chapters are digested in the fourth. The Senecan reader, moreover, must be productive and mix these elements together in their own formulation of his Stoic life lessons.

A brief conclusion will summarize my arguments and offer some areas for further reflection.

This dissertation thus explains how Seneca uses eating to reconcile Stoicism with Roman literature and recognizes pedagogy as the primary factor in Seneca's literary interest in eating; he is able to use the history of Roman eating as a positive model for teaching Stoic virtue. Seneca takes elements of Roman genres and literary institutions that involve eating and reprograms them into a Stoic moral context; these "eating scenes" become both a pedagogical tool and a commentary on earlier Roman literature. He revises the history and subject matter of Roman eating for the Imperial reader interested in Stoicism who, as an aspiring *sapiens*, is not just a sage but a "taster." In other words—and to use a metaphor appropriate to a nostalgist such as Seneca—the sword of Roman eating is refashioned as the plowshare of Stoic pedagogy.

Chapter 1: Only Bellies?

omniaque orbis
praemia correptis miles vagus esurit armis.

The roving soldier, weapons taken up, hungers for all the prizes of the world. (*Satyrica* 119.31-2)

Near the beginning of the Greek literary tradition, the epic poet Hesiod reports his encounter with the Muses at Mount Helicon, who castigate humanity:

> ποιμένες ἄγραυλοι, κάκ᾽ ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἷον,
> ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
> ἴδμεν δ᾽, εὖτ᾽ ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι. (*Th*. 26-8)

> Rustic shepherds, bad things worthy of reproof, only bellies, we know how to tell many lies similar to the truth, but we also know how to speak the truth—when the mood takes us.

The fact that the Muses refer to humans as "only bellies" (*gasteres oîon*) is significant. One of the most important differences between the divine and the mortal in ancient Mediterranean thought is the reliance of people on food.[66] The act of eating thus simultaneously distinguishes

[66] Seneca himself plays with this idea at *Apoc*. 9.3, where his Janus, unwilling to make Claudius a god, quotes the Homeric formula for mortals as those who "eat the fruit of the soil" (ἀροúρης καρπὸν ἔδουσιν), as at *Il*. 6.142.

humans from gods and joins humans and non-human animals. Bellies are here used as a metonymy for bodies, since "only bodies" lacks the vividness and punch of "only bellies." We must fill our bellies in order to survive, and since this requirement is at the heart of our way of living we are necessarily liable to the charge of existing "only" as bellies, as the rumbling, hunger pain-inducing organs near the center of the body.

Indeed, the stomach is perhaps the most ambivalent organ. The same body part is implicated in both the healthy and necessary process of digestion and the harmful habit of overeating. It has a history of use in moral judgments about its owner, since one can tell just by looking at someone else how big their belly is, and belly size has long been a cultural sign not just of physical health but of moral qualities such as restraint. Stereotypes based on the appearance of the belly abound.

This is very much the case in Ancient Roman literature, where the *venter*, "belly," carries with it loaded associations of cultural excess and greed. While some recognize the pragmatism of feeding the belly—the Roman Stoic satirist Persius famously calls the *venter* the *magister artis ingenique largitor*, the "teacher of skill and bestower of talent" (pr. 10), a reference to hunger as a motivator for composing poetry—negative associations of the belly as a debased body part capable of leading its owner to moral ruin tend to dominate. Simply put, the Roman belly has a bad reputation.

This infamy is fanned by Roman Republican prose authors. For Cicero the belly is an arrow in the quiver of invective. His speeches against Antony and Piso, for example, are filled with morally focused attacks on the excess of his opponents, and unrestrained eating is just one potential target of many.[67] But these attacks, easily rebuffed as the stock complaints of invective,

[67] See, e.g, *Pis*. 6, 8, 10, 18, 27, 29, *Phil*. 2.63, 2.69, 2.76.

are not a component of the narrative of moral decline in the same way as they are for two other Republican authors, the elder Cato and Sallust.

It is a commonplace in Roman literature that Roman morals were once pristine and untouched, but through acculturation with *luxuria*, "luxury," which always has an element of foreignness to it, Rome fell from this mythical state of virtue to its present debauchery.[68] Later writers tend to situate this moment of decline in the second century BCE: the triumph of Gnaeus Manlius Vulso's army in Asia in 187, the conquest of Macedonia in 168, or the fall of Carthage in 146.[69] But the conservative rhetoric of Cato, whose political career encompasses the first half of the second century, looms in the background for later writers of Roman moral decline. For him the importation of foreign goods into Rome, especially food, is the surest symptom of decline, to the point that Cato goes so far as to designate the belly a *hostis*, a national enemy. The monographs of the historian Sallust take a similar position, but Sallust's anxiety about the belly is expressed through a different metaphor, that of a master that rules over the body of its owner, who is its slave.

Despite their different metaphors, both of these writers characterize the belly as a source of destruction and threat to the *mos maiorum*, the "customs of the ancestors," the term applied in Rome to the virtuous old Romans from whom the moderns have deviated. Throughout this chapter I will refer to this negative characterization of the belly as the "Catonian-Sallustian model." This model would prove influential on Seneca's literary and philosophical perspective

[68] The literature on this phenomenon is legion—and inseparable with our very conception of Rome. Most notably, Edwards 1993 reads Roman immorality as not just a rhetorical target but a crucial part of Roman self-image. For a geographical tour through the empire that highlights the "luxurious" elements of each imperial locale, see Dalby 2000.

[69] Livy 39.6.7, Polybius 32.11, Sallust *BC* 10 and passim. See Zanda 2011: 8 for a useful survey.

on the *venter*.[70] Indeed, as Catharine Edwards writes, "By using the traditional vocabulary of Roman moralists, by taking as examples the figures of Scipio and Cato, Seneca situated his text in a long line of Roman moralising."[71] She does not mention Sallust here, but Seneca's engagement with the historian is no less crucial than that with Cato, as I will argue.

But Seneca writes Stoic philosophical literature, and the Catonian-Sallustian model presents problems for the Stoic philosopher. If, as Stoic cosmology posits, everything in the world is interconnected and under the guidance of divine *natura*, why should the human body (and the belly it contains) be any different? Our body parts work together to ensure our bodies function as they should. The body may be a (mere) container for the soul, for which Seneca uses the Latin word *animus* and the earlier Stoics thought of as a breath (*pneuma*) that runs through and animates the world, but its proper maintenance is vital to our survival.

Scholars have argued that the Roman Stoics fall away from this orthodox Hellenistic insistence on strict cosmological unity. Shadi Bartsch, for example, discusses "the debased status of the body in Roman Stoicism" in her analysis of the bodily grotesque in the satirist Persius.[72] She adduces Seneca (*ad Marc*. 11.1ff) to illustrate her point: "Seneca dismisses the body as 'a digestive pipe for food and drink,' a thing diseased and disintegrating, putrid and perishable."[73] What Bartsch fails to mention is that the *consolatio*, the therapeutic letter that Seneca writes to Marcia to console her over her son's death, tends to downplay such unfortunate circumstances as death and exile, as well as emphasize the ephemerality of the body in general, in order to offer its

[70] Catonian and Sallustian influence on Seneca's text remains comparatively underexplored, especially when one considers the vast bibliography on Seneca's relationship with Augustan poetry, Republican tragedy, and Greek philosophy. For an account of Seneca's debt to earlier Roman moralists in his exploration of the place of *frugalitas* as a bridge between Roman cultural values and Stoicism, see Gildenhard 2020: 310-25. For a comparison between the views of Seneca and Sallust on the writing of history, see Master 2015. For the complex web of Roman intertexts in his philosophical works, see the essays in Garani, Michalopoulos, and Papaioannou 2020.
[71] Edwards 1993: 1.
[72] Bartsch 2015: 6.
[73] Ibid.

reader peace of mind. (It is also likely that Seneca here externalizes anxieties about his own body, which had been in poor health since his boyhood.[74]) Seneca's relationship with the body is far more complicated than its dismissal in the *ad Marciam*, however. One of the arguments I will make in this chapter is that for Seneca the belly has an *officium*, a job to do, and only fails to fulfill that duty if its owner misuses it by eating too much. This *officium* is the proper digestion of one's food.

Indeed, even independent of the framework of Roman Stoicism, modern scholars tend to read the Senecan belly as an altogether negative image of moral decline, a component of the tradition of Roman moralism in which Seneca writes.[75] Catharine Edwards offers a typical judgment: "In Seneca's *Epistulae Morales*, gastronomic imagery is almost always deployed to negative ends; the repellent eating habits of the luxurious feature frequently, in vividly realised detail."[76] This vividness is, of course, part of Seneca's program of inspiring *phantasiai* in his writing to guide the Stoic *proficiens* reading his text. But imagery of gustatory excess is not necessary "deployed to negative ends," since it makes up an important part of Seneca's didactic project. This is the contention of this chapter, which will emphasize that Seneca sees in the *venter* a part of the Stoic body, itself a part of the well-functioning and well-ordered cosmos, and that he also seeks to delineate the place of the belly within Roman society in the mid-first century CE.

Another reason why the Catonian-Sallustian model does not fit Seneca's conception of the belly involves Rome's changed political situation. Because of the normalization of edible

[74] See, e.g., *Ep*. 54, 65.1, 104. The most memorable account of Seneca's poor health comes from Cassius Dio, however, who records that the emperor Gaius only refrained from putting Seneca to death because he was sickly and likely to die soon anyway (59.19).
[75] Including Edwards 1993: 186-90 and passim, Motto 2001.
[76] Edwards 2017: 81.

imports from around the Roman world—Gowers's imperial emporium[77]—by Seneca's time centuries of imperial expansion have made available a wide availability of exotic foods. While Cato could rail against Rome's Hellenization in the early second century, and Sallust could draw on the bad habits of lust, drunkenness, and art-looting learned by Sulla's Eastern army, Seneca has a much different perspective. The belly, like the Roman gustatory discourse to be discussed throughout this dissertation, must be reclaimed for Stoicism in order for Stoicism to survive in the mid-first century, as well as for it to be palatable to a Roman audience for whom Republican belly rhetoric is by now anachronistic. Republican austerity remained largely popular in Roman literary self-conception, but to a city population of over one million accustomed to a steady supply of imported food such rhetoric could only go so far without needing to account for the contemporary food situation.[78]

Even by the late first century BCE, let alone Seneca's time of writing, the goalposts of what constitutes luxury in eating had been moved. The different perspectives on eating represented in Horace's gastronomic satires (2.2, 2.4, and 2.8) suggest, as Emanuela Zanda argues, two extremes, that of ancient austerity (2.2) and modern excess (2.8), moderated by a middle position (2.4). Good food is not worth obsessing over, but there is an important difference between eating dirty food (*sordidus victus*, 2.2.53) and moderate food (*tenuis victus*, 2.2.53). Horace's satiric and philosophical (Epicurean) context may provide difficulties, but Zanda focuses instead on his chronological context in her claim that "the time of the strictness of Cato is really very distant; the line that separates extravagance and moderation has moved and changed through the centuries and Horace seems to testify to this change."[79] This statement is

[77] See above, 16-7.
[78] For the size of the city population in this period see, e.g., Hopkins 1978: 96-8, Garnsey 1988: 218, Mattingly and Aldrete 2000.
[79] Zanda 2011: 21. See also La Penna 1989: 7-10.

even more fitting for Seneca's attempt to nuance the rhetoric of the Catonian-Sallustian model, however, given both his later time of writing and his goal of mediating between Roman literature and Stoicism.

I will begin by reading Cato's belly discourses, which express the distrust and hostility to be expected by an archconservative in the early second century, when foreign influences were pervading Roman culture. Next, I will conduct a gustatory analysis of a spiritual successor to the conservatism of Cato, Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*, a text written near the end of the Republic that begins with and continually returns to its author's discomfort with the belly's ability to assert control over its human owner. With Cato and Sallust's negative belly rhetoric in the background I will move on to the main portion of the chapter, Seneca's own handling of the *venter*. Seneca explicitly reads the first sentence of Sallust's *BC* in his own Stoic context, which I use as a jumping-off point for my discussion of the *officium* of the *venter*, as well as Seneca's descriptions of the *gula*, which I argue he associates explicitly with Roman global domination. I will note throughout that Seneca tends to involve the *venter* in discussions of abstract concepts like luxury and slavery, which suggest a sort of gloss on these moralistic Republican authors, whose worldview needs to be updated within Seneca's own chronological and philosophical context.

Cato and the *venter* as enemy

While Cato's list of career accomplishments is vast, his efforts at moral reform in Rome ensure that he is Cato the Censor first and foremost.[80] Indeed, he considered it his duty to make

[80] Including a distinguished political career (the minor offices led to his consulship in 195) and military career, which included a campaign in Spain, subsequent triumph (194), and lieutenantship in the Battle of Thermopylae (191) against Antiochus III. Cato's tenure as censor was in 184.

Roman private life a public matter to the extent that a statue in honor of his censorship was erected in the Temple of Hyginus, as Cato was imagined to be a sort of hygienist of the state.[81] Cato's political career (ca. 214-184 BCE) roughly coincides with the golden era of sumptuary laws, laws designed to limit public consumption and displays of wealth especially during and shortly after the Second Punic War (218-201). But his fame far outlived his historical context: Seneca himself praises Cato for "waging war on our morals."[82]

Cato's legal opposition to overconsumption is an important part not only of his political platform but also his identity, his self-fashioning as a paragon of *frugalitas*, as Passet argues.[83] Cato's speeches in favor of strengthening sumptuary laws such as the *lex Oppia* (repealed in 195) and the *lex Orchia* of 182 are well-known.[84] Although these laws forbade and limited a range of public behavior seen as excessive (and therefore demoralizing), such as extravagant public displays of luxury (especially by women), their purpose, as Zanda argues, was primarily to regulate expenses on banquets and public feasts.[85] This was done not only for moral and symbolic reasons but also for practical ones: the senatorial class wanted to protect itself from obligatory gift-giving and excessive competition by putting a check on expensive banquets, which politicians used to curry favor with the electorate.[86] It is unsurprising, then, that Cato draws a sharp parallel between sumptuary laws and eating, even to the point of thinking of them as primarily food-related. As Macrobius records regarding the *lex Orchia*, the first sumptuary

[81] Plut. *Cat. Ma.* 19.3.
[82] *alter cum moribus gessit*, in a comparison with Scipio (*Ep.* 87.9).
[83] On the role of *frugalitas* in Cato's manufacturing of his austere persona, aided in part by the variety of genres in which he writes, see Passet 2020.
[84] For the text of Cato's oratory, I use *Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta* (*ORF*), ed. Malcovati. For Cato's speech against the repeal of the *lex Oppia*, which forbade extravagant public displays of luxury by women, see Livy 34.2-4. For Cato on the *lex Orchia* see *ORF* XXXV 143 (discussed below).
[85] Zanda 2011: 52: "It was essentially the *luxus mensae* that became the object of Roman sumptuary legislation while other aspects of extravagance were untouched by legislative measures and left to the jurisdictions of the censors..."
[86] This is one of the contentions of Zanda 2011. See also Lintott 1972, Levick 1982.

law designed to limit the extravagance of banquets, Cato had been fond of referring to sumptuary laws as *leges cibariae*, "foodie laws."[87] This association suggests Cato's perspective of the *venter* as an important seat of vice.[88]

Perhaps the reason for Cato's attention to *leges cibariae* involves the supposed foreignness of much of the food being eaten, since Cato notoriously equates foreign influences on Rome with luxury. Polybius reports that during the Third Macedonian War (171-168) the Roman army acquired the habits of paying large sums for male sex workers and jars of preserved fish from the Black Sea. Cato accordingly gave a speech in which he charged that "anyone can see that the state is regressing when beautiful boys fetch more than fields and jars of pickled fish more than plowmen."[89] While there is an undeniable economic element to this problem (as I will discuss below regarding Cato's *de Agricultura*), the matter consumed, foreign pickled fish, suggests Cato's concern about the anti-Romanness of luxury foreign foods.[90]

But the enmity of these luxury foods spreads even to the body part that digests them. In a speech given in 183 in support of his own *virtus*,[91] as a response *contra* the legate L. Thermus,[92] Cato contrasts his own sterling moral qualities with the corrupt behaviors of his enemy. The belly is first in a catalog of vices: "he who does not consider his belly an enemy, who goes shopping on the republic's dime and not his own, who gives pledges foolishly, who builds

---

[87] *ORF* XXXV 143: *Cato enim sumptuarias leges cibarias appellat* (Macr. 111.17.13). See also Zanda 2011: 119-20.

[88] For other *leges cibariae*, including the *lex Fannia* of 161, *lex Aemilia* of 115, and *lex Cornelia* of 81, see Zanda 2011: 120-26.

[89] ἐφ᾽ οἷς καὶ Μάρκος εἶπέ ποτε πρὸς τὸν δῆμον ὅτι μάλιστ᾽ ἂν κατίδοιεν τὴν ἐπὶ <τὸ> χεῖρον προκοπὴν τῆς πολιτείας ἐκ τούτων, ὅταν πωλούμενοι πλεῖον εὑρίσκωσιν οἱ μὲν εὐπρεπεῖς παῖδες τῶν ἀγρῶν, τὰ δὲ κεράμια τοῦ ταρίχου τῶν ζευγηλατῶν (31.25.5). See Wilkins 2005: 34-5 for further discussion.

[90] The influence of Cato's anti-foreign rhetoric loomed even after his death in 149, as a later *cibaria*, the *lex Aemilia* (115), was more specific in the foods targeted; it banned dormice, shellfish, and imported birds from Roman banquets (Pliny *HN* 8.82.223).

[91] One of several preserved, including the remarkable *de Sumptu Suo* (XLIV), in which Cato dramatically reports his own mock-dictation to his enslaved scribe.

[92] Or possibly a Q. Thermus: see Malcovati ad loc. for the debate about the identity of Cato's assailant.

greedily" (*qui ventrem suum non pro hoste habet, qui pro re publica, non pro sua, obsonat, qui stulte spondet, qui cupide aedificat*, *ORF* XXXII.133). The eating habits of one's opponent are naturally the stuff of invective, as I mentioned earlier is the case for Ciceronian oratory, but Cato takes this negative characterization of the belly even further when he calls the *venter* a *hostis*, a national enemy, as opposed to an *inimicus*, a personal enemy. This is a strong statement that indicates that Cato, at least in his rhetoric, sees the belly not only as an entirely negative organ but also a politically loaded one. Since Cato attempts to establish that the belly is the enemy of Roman *mores*, the interests of the *res publica* then must be diametrically opposed to those of the appetite.

The visibly enlarged belly is thus for Cato a sure sign of the invasion of foreign luxury. The case of L. Veturius will help illustrate this point. In 184, as censor, Cato expelled Veturius, an equestrian, from his rank, for improper administration of his sacrificial duties.[93] In his speech against Veturius, Cato follows his statement on Veturius's dereliction with a personal attack on his weight. Plutarch renders this attack thus: "'How,' Cato said, 'could a body like this be useful for the state, whose entire middle section, between the throat and the groin, is occupied by the belly?'" ("Ποῦ δ' ἄν," ἔφη, "σῶμα τοιοῦτον τῇ πόλει γένοιτο χρήσιμον, οὗ τὸ μεταξὺ λαιμοῦ καὶ βουβώνων πᾶν ὑπὸ τῆς γαστρὸς κατέχεται;", *Cat. Ma.* 9.6; *ORF* XII.79) In an analysis of the verb *trepidare*, the grammarian Servius adduces another attack from this speech, wherein Cato questions the paradox of the obese knight: "He cannot sit on his buckling horse" (*sedere non potest in equo trepidante*, *ad Aen*. IV.121; *ORF* XII.80).[94]

[93] For a review of the evidence for this event, see *ORF* XII 72-82; for a prosopographical reconstruction see Shatzman 1973.

[94] The construction could also be impersonal: "one cannot sit on a buckling horse." This short sentence is the entirety of the fragment, so it is difficult to know, but the anti-Veturian context makes the import of the fragment clear.

This piece of Catonian invective might seem like a cheap attack on an equestrian's weight, but according to Gellius (6.22.1, *ORF* XII.78) Cato took seriously the right of the censor to deprive an equestrian of his horse; before Cato it was not considered a punishment (*poena*), but a duty that did not confer disgrace upon the knight (*munus sine ignominia*). Cato, however, charged the equestrian more severely (*obicit hanc rem criminosius*) and intended for the act to be interpreted *cum ignominia*. This is thus not just tasteless seasoning sprinkled on invective, but a Roman censor's attempt to legislate equestrian bellies.

The size of Veturius's belly is not just a moral issue but a political one: usefulness to the state rests on a certain restraint that, for Cato, is dependent on moderate eating. At the same time, the bodies of the body politic are symptomatic of the Roman world as a whole. Veturius clearly does not treat his belly as a *hostis*. This sort of laxity (if not indulgence) would, in Cato's thinking, lead to worse symptoms, such as the cultural obsession with Pontic fish mentioned above. Cato's preference for *leges cibariae* (both their name and their content) clearly does not exist in a vacuum.

Catonian oratory faults the belly for two more un-Roman qualities: its lack of intelligence and its inability to lead its owner to *virtus*.[95] Plutarch provides the opening sentence of a speech given by Cato to dissuade the Romans from an unseasonable grain ration: "It is difficult, citizens, to speak to the belly, since it does not have ears" (χαλεπὸν μέν ἐστιν, ὦ πολῖται, πρὸς γαστέρα λέγειν ὦτα οὐκ ἔχουσαν, *Cat. Ma*. 8.1; *ORF* LXXIX.254). Bellies lack the proper faculty to listen, so those led by their bellies will likewise be unable to heed the speeches of others. Cato needs an audience, of course, as does every orator, so this passage functions as sort of a metacommentary on oratory itself: there must be an audience of intelligent (or at least

[95] Its lack of intelligence has precedent in the Hippocratic corpus, in a medical context: ἀσύνετον γαστήρ, the "unintelligent stomach" (*On Regimen* 1.12); see Holmes 2010: 171-72 for discussion.

reasonable) listeners. The belly itself is literally illogical, as it understands only food and not the sort of persuasive reasoning expressed through speeches.

The sort of belly-devotion practiced by Veturius and the veterans of the Third Macedonian War is, in addition, incompatible with a life led in pursuit of the Roman ideal of *virtus*, manly courage. In praise of the emperor Julian's moderation, the fourth-century historian Ammianus Marcellinus quotes Cato's reaction to the repeal of the aforementioned *lex Orchia*: "'Great attention to food,'" Cato said, "is great inattention to virtue'" (*'magna', inquit, 'cura cibi, magna virtutis incuria,'* 16.5.2; *ORF* XXXV.146). He does not mention the *venter* here, but the political ramifications of overconsumption are nonetheless apparent as they are in the above-discussed passages of Catonian oratory.

Cato then, both explicitly and implicitly, emphasizes that the belly itself is a *hostis*. In a second-century context that saw Rome experience great military success and concomitant exposure to the spoils of war he pays special attention to the political consequences of gustatory appetites. But while the attention that Cato *orator* gives to appetites clearly fits within oratorical conventions of invective and moral posturing, it is possible to get a fuller picture of the place of the belly within Cato's worldview with a quick look at the *de Agricultura*, his treatise on farming.

The *de Ag.*, the oldest surviving Latin prose text (ca. 160s BCE[96]), is a set of instructions and best practices for the *pater familias*, the owner of a farm, to follow in order to ensure his farm's financial success. But as scholars have pointed out, there is a disconnect between Cato's rhetoric of the dangers of foreign gustatory luxury and some of the content in the *de Ag*., which shows that "even Cato had an ambiguous relationship with the Greek world," as he, for example,

[96] See Astin 1978: 190-91 for a date of composition after 164, followed by Hallett 2021.

provides recipes for "Greek" wines in the event that the farm owner cannot obtain the genuine article.[97] But on the other hand Cato's effusive praise of cabbage, "the best of the vegetables," as a miracle digestive aid shows a constructed commitment to Roman gustatory *virtus* through the recommendation of a decidedly unexciting native Italian food.[98] Although the taste for Greek wine must be acknowledged he can still promote *Romanitas* with the humble cabbage, as a preference for simple roots and vegetables is the stuff of exemplary Roman masculinity, *virtus* in its literal sense, an implicit contrast with Pontic pickled fish.[99]

But no less important is the advice Cato gives his reader for the regulation of the appetites of their *vilicus* and *vilica*, the slave overseers who are themselves enslaved. Among the prohibitions given for the behavior of the *vilicus* is the admonition that he should not go out to eat (*ad cenam nequo eat*, 5.2). Identical advice is given for the *vilica* much later in the text (*ad cenam nequo eat*, 143.1). The *vilicus* must, in addition, not have a *parasitus*, someone who mooches food from him (*parasitum nequem habeat*, 5.4).[100] These are just some of the appetites that Cato recommends must be controlled by the *pater familias*, who is always in the business of making a profit: "the *pater familias* should be a seller, not a buyer" (*patrem familias vendacem, non emacem esse oportet*, 2.7). Cato's recommendations for the treatment of enslaved workers seemed callous even to his ancient biographer Plutarch, who compares this treatment unfavorably with that of animals,[101] but such a comparison helps bridge the gap between the

[97] Wilkins 2005: 35. See *de Ag*. 105 (recipe for "Greek" wine) and 112 (recipe for Coan wine).
[98] "It is the cabbage which surpasses all the vegetables" (*brassica est quae omnibus holeribus antistat*), *de Ag*. 156. For Cato's cabbage as emblematic of Roman *virtus* see Gowers 1993: 68-9, Passet 2020: 195. For cabbage more generally as a signifier of the halcyon days of the *mos maiorum* see Tietz 2013: 58 and passim. For the irony that Cato's cabbage-praise may have been influenced by the similar treatment of the fourth-century Greek physician Chrysippus of Cnidos, see Astin 1978: 162-63.
[99] On turnips and other vegetables as exemplary meals for Roman heroes, see below, ch. 2.
[100] For an argument that these commands for the *vilicus* and *vilica* are a sort of "script" for their proper behavior bearing an intertextual relationship with Roman comedy, see Hallett 2021.
[101] *Cat. Ma*. 5.2.

enemyship of the belly and its relationship with slavery. Cato wanted to control slave-appetites just as excessive appetites were beginning to take hold of Rome. This conception of the belly as a potential master would be one of the central images used by an ideological disciple of Cato, the historian Sallust.

Sallust and the *venter* as master

Et verba antiqui multum furate Catonis
Crispe, Iugurthinae conditor historiae.

And you very much plundered the words of old Cato,
Crispus, creator of the Jugurthine history. (Quintilian 8.3.29, quoting an epigram)

Quintilian is an early observer of Sallust's Catonian leanings, which have been dissected by modern scholarship and more recently problematized.[102] Sallust certainly shares Cato's fascination with appetites in his monographs, however; he envisions the stuff of history as a struggle against the needs of the *venter*. The *Bellum Catilinae* is a gastrocentric text, a history that focuses its own moral push on appetites to a much greater degree than Sallust's chief generic (Greek) influences Polybius and Thucydides. This is not surprising considering Sallust's late Republican context: the *BC* was probably written in the second half of the 40s BCE, in the lead-up to and fallout from Caesar's assassination, the era of the Second Triumvirate and the civil war

[102] See, e.g., Levene 2000, who points out that the exact moment Sallust considers Rome's moral decline to have begun (the fall of Carthage, which meant the end of *metus hostilis* at Rome) was heavily endorsed by Cato.

between Octavian and Antonius.[103] Sallust's history is a uniquely Roman one with a uniquely Roman theme: gluttony as an anti-value, a threat to cultural *mores*.

The first sentence of the *BC* is undoubtedly programmatic for the entire text (and, as Levene points out, downright strange for an opening sentence in a work of historiography):[104] "All men who are eager to distinguish themselves from the other animals ought to strive with the highest might lest they pass their life in silence, like cattle, which nature has made prone and obedient to the belly" (*omnis homines qui sese student praestare ceteris animalibus summa ope niti decet ne vitam silentio transeant, veluti pecora quae natura prona atque ventri oboedientia finxit*, 1.1).[105] In the following sentence Sallust will go on to connect the mind with ruling and the body with serving, and to note that the *animus* is held in common with the gods, and the *corpus* with beasts: *animi imperio, corporis servitio magis utimur*; *alterum nobis cum dis, alterum cum belvis commune est.* Thus, to be *ventri oboedientia* is to be a servile animal, to abandon the higher faculties bestowed to human beings. The belly has no ears, as Cato points out, yet it has its own sort of mouth, which makes demands that can plunge its owner into servitude. Indeed, as Hock argues, Sallust uses the freedom-slavery dichotomy to contextualize and explain the very failure of the Catilinarian conspiracy—and Sallust's philosophical influences may even include Stoicism.[106] But the role of the belly in Sallust has heretofore been neglected, despite its occurrence throughout the text.[107] My intention is to read its other

[103] But there is not much evidence in favor of an exact year of composition: see, e.g., McGushin 1977 and Ramsey 2007 for summaries of the evidence.
[104] Levene 2000: 171; the sentence "contains no clear reference either to the topic of the work or even to history as a genre."
[105] For the text of the *BC* and *BJ* I use Reynolds's *OCT*.
[106] Hock 1988, which argues for a strong intertextual connection between the *BC* and Cicero's *Paradoxa Stoicorum*.
[107] Structural readings of Sallust's prologue are apparently uncomfortable with its last three words, as they tend to ignore or downplay the *venter*: see, e.g., Earl 1961: 5-17; Leeman 1954; La Penna 1970; Schmal 2001: 110-27. Büchner 1960: 94, 99, 118 gives just brief references, as does La Penna 1968: 36-7. Not one to read literary themes in Sallust charitably, McGushin 1977 ad loc. only cites a few parallel passages without any lemma for *ventri*, and

appearances in the *BC* in light of the enslaving power Sallust gives it in his prologue before analyzing Seneca's reception of the Sallustian belly.

The vivid repeating image of belly-as-master is used throughout Sallustian historiography in order to contextualize and explain the supposed degeneracy of the late Republic. Sallust soon after elaborates on his earlier association of the belly with moral decline: "But many people, devoted to the belly and sleep, have passed through their life unlearned and uncultivated, like travelers. For these people, surely against nature, the body has been for pleasure, the spirit a burden" (*sed multi mortales, dediti ventri atque somno, indocti incultique vitam sicuti peregrinantes transiere; quibus profecto contra naturam corpus voluptati, anima oneri fuit*, 2.8). Gustatory appetites (and their accompanying sloth illustrated by *dediti somno*) here stand in for a range of bodily pleasures, as they had for Cato.

Sallust's critiques of the controlling power of the *venter* are, of course, rooted in the Roman military successes of the second century, the continued acclimation of the state to, for example, Cato's hated foreign fish. This is, on its face, hardly a revelation; as Gowers puts it, "Writing against luxurious food and the superfluous desires of the body can…. be explained as the most immediate and universally intelligible image of Rome's expansion."[108] Sallust writes in a tradition that Cato had typified and many others—notably the Roman satirists—would follow this lead. What is interesting is just how far Sallust pushes this theme, which his Greek historiographical influences (especially Thucydides) had been somewhat reluctant to pursue.

The Sallustian belly lurks behind every discrete catalytic moment of moral decline. One of these moments is Sulla's exposure of his Asian army to luxurious pursuits: "there, for the first

---

Ramsey 2007 ad loc. mentions only that the image is a rhetorical topos. Tiffou 1973: 38-44 argues that Sallust develops the earlier topos within a dualistic mind/body context.

[108] Gowers 1993: 18.

time, the army of the Roman people became accustomed to sex, drink, the admiration of statues, paintings, embossed vases, to steal these things privately and publicly, to rob shrines, and to defile everything sacred and profane alike" (*ibi primum insuevit exercitus populi Romani amare potare, signa tabulas pictas vasa caelata mirari, ea privatim et publice rapere, delubra spoliare, sacra profanaque omnia polluere*, 11.6). Although the belly is not mentioned here, Sallust would develop this passage in his subsequent monograph, the *Bellum Iugurthinum*, in Marius's catalogue of the unrestrained wantonness of the *nobiles* (with whom Marius naturally contrasts himself): "let them have sex, let them drink, let them live their old age where they had their youth, at banquets, devoted to the belly and the most disgraceful body part" (*ament potent, ubi adulescentiam habuere, ibi senectutem agant, in conviviis, dediti ventri et turpissumae parti corporis*, *BJ* 85.41). Here Sallust explicitly associates the vices of Sulla's Asian army and belly-slavery; Marius even transitions to this attack with an assertion that weapons, not furniture (*arma, non supellectilem*, 85.40) confer glory, an answer to the Eastern army's precedent-setting fixation on fancy statues, paintings, and vases. The *venter* inhabits a prominent place in the intricate web of vices which Sallust implicates in Roman moral decline.

With such a precedent it should not be surprising that the needs of the *venter* are a prime motivation for the conspirators within Catiline's circle as well:

> In tanta tamque corrupta civitate Catilina, id quod factu facillumum erat, omnium flagitiorum atque facinorum circum se tamquam stipatorum cateruas habebat. Nam quicumque [inpudicus adulter ganeo] manu ventre pene bona patria lacerauerat, quique alienum aes grande conflauerat quo flagitium aut facinus redimeret, praeterea omnes undique parricidae sacrilegi convicti iudiciis aut pro factis iudicium timentes, ad hoc quos

manus atque lingua periurio aut sanguine civili alebat, postremo omnes quos flagitium egestas conscius animus exagitabat, ii Catilinae proxumi familiaresque erant. (14.1–3)

In so extreme and so corrupt a state, Catiline had, as was very easy to do, bands of all manners of disgrace and crime around him, as if they were bodyguards. Whichever shameless man, adulterer, glutton had wasted his family goods by means of his hand, belly, or penis were in his retinue, as were those who had run up a great debt with which to pay back his disgrace or crime. In addition, from all corners, every parricide, sacrilegious person, those convicted in legal judgments or fearing conviction for their deeds, moreover those whom the hand and the tongue fed with perjury or civil bloodshed, and finally everyone whom disgrace, poverty, or a guilty mind was agitating, these were Catiline's neighbors and kinsmen.

Sallust offers a tour, so to speak, of the conspirators' offending body parts, which Kevin Muse calls "the infamous anatomical trio": he begins with the hand (as implicated in sexual activity or perhaps dice-throwing), moves south to the belly, and finally further down to the genitals.[109] The *venter* is situated between the *manus* and the *penis* syntactically in an attempt to mimic the body structure in prose. *Alebat* picks up the metaphor of nourishment, though of an inverted sort, as civil war and perjury are the foods provided for Catiline's band. The connection with the *BC*'s opening sentence and the vices of the Sullan army is clear.

[109] Muse 2012: 45. *Manus* probably refers to the hand as dice-thrower. Muse 2012: 59 and Ramsey 2007: 95 conjecture that adulter is a gloss on *impudicus*, and that *alea<tor>*, "gamer," which some MSS have, should be accepted. Reynolds brackets the three nominatives as problematic, but *manu ventre pene* is never in doubt.

Sallust is insistent not to let the appetites win, however. Near the end of the monograph Catiline's co-conspirator Lentulus is hanged, with his neck broken in a noose (*laqueo gulam fregere*, 55.5). The primary meaning of *gula* is "throat," but it also connotes "the seat of the appetite" (*OLD* s.v. 2a), as it does here: the breaking of Lentulus's throat as well as the final destruction of his appetite represents a "death fitting his life's work and customs" (*dignum moribus factisque suis exitum* [*vitae*], 55.6). Catiline, conversely, does a sort of hero-turn: hemmed in by enemy legions, he is forced to engage in a final battle. In 58.21 he addresses his troops with a heartening speech, which marks a decisive turning point in Sallust's depiction of the conspirator. At the climax of his speech, Catiline encourages his soldiers and exhorts them to die nobly, "fighting in the custom of men" (*virorum more pugnantes*), not to be captured and "slaughtered like cattle" (*sicuti pecora trucidemini*). Lentulus's appetites do not get the better of him in the end, while Catiline is able to leave the herd, no longer like the *pecora* of Sallust's famous opening sentence. This image is one of several that add up to a morally ambiguous ending for the text, which not only embraces the narrative of moral decline but suggests faint glimmers of hope for the future.

Thus the belly in Sallust's triumviral context is a body part that can enslave its owner and that must be resisted (as his Catiline eventually does) in order for a person to fulfill their potential. It is this Sallustian motif that Seneca would seek to reappropriate within his own Stoic, Imperial world.

Seneca reimagines the Sallustian belly

The first sentence of the *BC* would have an impact on Seneca, since he uses it as the centerpiece of *Ep*. 60, a polyvalent musing on social obligations, political life, and

overconsumption. Seneca begins this letter with a denunciation of the social and political trappings that make up Roman public life: "I issue a complaint, I litigate, I am angry" (*queror, litigo, irascor*, 1.1) and the complicity of parents and guardians in the maintenance of a system that perpetuates *mala* (broadly defined, but supposedly the angry feelings that accompany participation in Roman society) before moving to a series of questions decrying excess:[110]

> Quousque poscemus aliquid deos? [quasi] ita nondum ipsi alere nos possumus? Quamdiu sationibus implebimus magnarum urbium campos? quamdiu nobis populus metet? quamdiu unius mensae instrumentum multa navigia et quidem non ex uno mari subvehent? Taurus paucissimorum iugerum pascuo impletur; una silva elephantis pluribus sufficit: homo et terra et mari pascitur. Quid ergo? tam insatiabilem nobis natura alvum dedit, cum tam modica corpora dedisset, ut vastissimorum edacissimorumque animalium aviditatem vinceremus? Minime; quantulum est enim quod naturae datur! Parvo illa dimittitur: non fames nobis ventris nostri magno constat sed ambitio. Hos itaque, ut ait Sallustius, 'ventri oboedientes' animalium loco numeremus, non hominum, quosdam vero ne animalium quidem, sed mortuorum. vivit is qui multis usui est, vivit is qui se utitur; qui vero latitant et torpent sic in domo sunt quomodo in conditivo. (60.2-4)
>
> To what extent can we demand anything of the gods? Can we not yet feed ourselves to this extent? How long will we fill the fields of our great cities with grain? How long will the people reap it for us? How long will many ships carry the substance of one meal—

[110] For an earlier pillory against Roman public life for its capacity to cause anger, see *de Ira* 3.9.3.

> and, in fact, not even from one sea? A bull is satiated with a pasture of very few acres; one forest is enough for many elephants: man feeds on both earth and sea. What then? Has *natura* given us a belly so insatiable (although she had given us bodies so small) so that we might outdo the greed of the hugest and hungriest animals? Not at all—after all, *natura* is satisfied by so very little! She is sent away with just a bit: not the hunger of our belly but *ambitio* costs us greatly. And so let's consider those, as Sallust says, who are 'obedient to the belly' to be among animals, not among people—and really, certain ones among them aren't even among the animals, but among the dead. He is alive who can be useful to many people, he is alive who can use himself; indeed, those who hide and grow sluggish in their homes like this might as well be in the tomb.

The common factor in all of these questions is, of course, consumption, seen here as a struggle for resources, an environmental issue: contemporary Romans are using too many natural resources, too much manpower for more food than they need. His consistent use of first-person plural forms helps implicate the reader in this overconsumption, as well as strengthen his emotional appeal. This is a problem consistent with Rome's global empire, grown to extents never imagined by Cato—or even Sallust, who writes his histories under the Second Triumvirate, when previously important political players are now public enemies of the state and the heads of people captured as bounties are displayed on the speaker's platform in the Roman Forum. Seneca's reference to the *multa navigia* carrying the menu for one meal may be hyperbolic, but only slightly. According to the calculations of Mattingly and Aldrete, in the early Imperial period around seventeen ships per day full of imports arrived at Rome's ports—and these with just the

staples of wheat, oil, and wine.[111] The sort of luxury meal Seneca here decries is difficult to quantify, but the constant arrival of ships must have had a desensitizing effect: this is simply how life was for city-dwellers, who watched as the ships came in.

Seneca's comparison of the consuming habits of animals (a bull and an elephant) to those of humans is, at least at first glance, perhaps the reason for his quotation of Sallust. His invocation of Sallust here is striking for several reasons. First, Seneca rarely mentions Sallust: in the *EM* Sallust's name only comes up here and in *Ep*. 114, where he discusses Sallust on stylistic grounds and not so much for the content of his text. In this passage Seneca takes an interest in Sallust's moral viewpoint in a way that he does not when discussing the historian elsewhere.[112]

But Seneca is not just quoting a Latin prose heavyweight as an appeal to literary precedent: he clearly seeks to appropriate Sallust's idea of nature producing beasts as *ventri oboedientia* (sc. *pecora* in Sallust's text) for his own ends. Sallust's quotation is here recontextualized: Sallust attempts to distinguish man from beast by the desire to achieve greatness and fame, since beasts are silent and care only about eating, but Seneca envisions the habits of beasts as benchmarks for what *natura* intends. That is, if a bull only needs so much, then a human should not require food from both land and sea (*homo et terra et mari pascitur*), let alone in the same meal. Hunger, *fames*, is a natural (that is, created and even felt by *natura*) feeling, unlike *ambitio*, which literally means "canvassing." In a Roman political context—the one with which Seneca begins this letter—*ambitio* is the act of "going around" to canvass for votes or favors, which often involves bribery and is the target of moral reformers such as the

[111] Mattingly and Aldrete 2000: 154.
[112] The only other reference to Sallust in the Senecan corpus is at *Ben*. 4.1.1, where he quotes the Sallustian turn of phrase *cum cura dicendum* (*Hist*. fr. 2. 72 Maurenbrecher = 2.84 McGushin) relatively colorlessly. The Sallustius referred to in *de Clem*. 1.10.1 as a familiar of Augustus is Sallust's adopted son.

elder Cato.[113] Seneca reimagines *ambitio* in light of *fames*, however, as a sort of "canvassing" of the belly, not for votes but for excessive food culled from excessively distant places.

A closer examination of this passage shows that there is more to Seneca's quotation of Sallust than just these animals, then.[114] Seneca conflates Sallust's *natura*, the original creator of man and beast, with the Stoic *natura* discussed by Seneca throughout the *EM*. For Sallust, however, *natura* is creator and not much more; she merely designs man and beast and imbues them with various properties. For Seneca, as is often the case, *natura* is anthropomorphic: here he states that she does indeed have to eat, though not very much. This is typical of his conception throughout the epistles: in *Ep*. 119.3, for example, Seneca even imagines her with a belly: "I am hungry: I have to eat. Whether this bread be cheap or made of soft wheat does not matter for *natura*: she wants her belly not to be delighted but filled" (*esurio: edendum est. utrum hic panis sit plebeius an siligineus ad naturam nihil pertinet: illa ventrem non delectari vult sed impleri*). Sallust's *natura* may have been responsible for the subjection of beasts to their bellies, but Seneca's *natura* has a belly herself, one of many aspects of the Stoic connection between humanity (and all life, as evidenced by the links Seneca makes here between animals and nature) and the cosmic *natura*.[115]

An analysis of the end of this quotation will help explain its relevance to the frustrated complaints at the beginning of the letter. Philosophical themes are entangled with political ones, as the potential to be serviceable (*usui*, "for the purpose of a use") is a reason to live. Those who are *ventri oboedientes* might as well be dead, since they are not participating in social exchange and not fulfilling their *officia*. Moreover, their large appetites have even made them into a sort of

[113] Also known as *ambitus* (*OLD* s.v. 6-7); see Cato's speech *De ambitu* (uncertain date), *ORF* XXXIII 136.
[114] As well as more than just Sallust: for this passage as an agonistic window-allusion to Horace's Epicureanism, see Berno 2017.
[115] On this connection see, e.g., Rosenmeyer 1989, Veyne 2003, esp. 41-6, Hadot 1995: 266 and passim.

food, since *conditivum*, from the adjective *conditivus*, “preserved” or “stored," is a pun that means both “tomb” and “preserving place” for food. Dead people, or those fit to be eaten themselves, cannot be useful to others.

This bit of ancient reception suggests that Seneca understands Sallust—his purpose in writing, his subject matter, and his literary legacy—*through* the concept of belly-slavery. Sallust, writer of the quintessential histories of Roman moral decline, writes of disastrous overconsumption, a theme that underlies Seneca’s own writing on Roman morality. But Seneca differs from his literary forebears in an important respect: he does not fault the *venter* itself, but the misuse of the *venter*. In Stoicism everything is in its right place by providential design. Each individual is responsible for their own use of the belly, which, as part of the body, has its own job to do. Seneca understands this function of the belly as an *officium*, a duty, which in addition to its relevance in a Stoic context also has importance within a Roman social and political context. Just as those who are *ventri oboedientes* cannot be useful to others (or themselves), the belly that does not function properly, be it swollen (*distentus*) or otherwise encumbered, cannot do its proper job of digesting the food within it. We can detect traces of Cato’s attack on Veturius—“how can such a body be useful for the state?”—in addition to Sallust’s beasts, but such rhetoric takes on new meaning within the context of the *EM*, where it is fodder for the reader to recognize not only Seneca’s engagement with the Republican past but also internalize his moral lessons through his new use of an old image.

But the connection between belly-slavery and *actual* slavery is obscure if we look only at Sallust and Seneca’s quotation of him here. Where else does Seneca explore the idea of belly-slavery, and what does this have to do with the Roman institution of slavery itself, far from just a metaphor? Belly-slavery goes hand in hand with lived Roman slavery, as it turns out, but it is

just another way that Seneca turns the notion of slavery on its head: the enslavers, not the enslaved people, are the ones in thrall to their belly in Seneca's text.

Get to work: the overstuffed *venter* and the dereliction of duty

For Seneca slavery presents a paradox: one can be enslaved but still free in the Stoic sense, that is, with a free mind (*sed fortasse liber animo*, *Ep*. 47.17). On the other hand, one can be free but enslaved to a variety of bodily vices, including the belly.[116] The body and mind are distinct in the sense that (legal) slavery only enslaves the body: "Anyone who thinks that slavery extends to the entire person is mistaken. The better part of him [sc. the mind] has been excepted" (*errat, si quis existimat servitutem in totum hominem descendere. Pars melior eius excepta est*, *Ben*. 3.20.1). But slavery to appetites is a form of "true, ethical slavery, into which even the legally free might fall."[117] Thus the *animus*, the Stoic soul and sense of self, is the true determiner of slave/free status; the freedom of the soul is up to the individual and no one else. This is an attractive perspective for a Roman, especially considering the arbitrary nature of legal slavery: even great military leaders, like the famous Regulus, could be enslaved since slaves were often prisoners of war. The character Tyndarus from Plautus's *Captivi* expresses well the tenuous balance of legal slavery and freedom: "Human fortune molds and fashions as it wishes: it has made me, who used to be free, into a slave, the lowest position from the highest. I, who had been accustomed to commanding, now obey another's command" (*fortuna humana fingit artatque ut lubet: / me, qui liber fueram, servom fecit, e summo infimum; / qui imperare insueram, nunc alterius imperio obsequor*, 304-6).

[116] *Ep*. 92.33: *nemo liber est qui corpori servit* ("No one is free who is a slave to the body").
[117] Fitzgerald 2000: 91.

A cynical reading of Stoicism would maintain that this attitude is crafted perfectly for life under imperial rule, where there is, in effect, one autocratic master and an entire citizen body of slaves under him. This reading is at least partially justified by Seneca's connection of the emperors Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius with excessive appetites (the former two to be discussed in the following section, the last in the following chapter). But Inwood's summation of the Senecan idea of freedom is perceptive:

> Human freedom, then, comes not from mere political freedom; nor does it come merely from aligning oneself with the overwhelming power of god and fate. It comes from a philosophical and moral breakthrough in one's life, a realization that things of the highest value to non-philosophers are in the end indifferent to human happiness.[118]

Concepts of freedom and slavery are thus at the very core of Seneca's mission of inculcating Stoic life lessons and are not just a depressing resignation to life under autocracy. Slavery is an external circumstance, an "indifferent" from a Stoic perspective, but one that must be grappled with in a society with a large, even ubiquitous, population of enslaved people for whom the Stoic perspective on slavery would be cold comfort.

Indeed, this anxious tension of free and enslaved is at the heart of many of the *EM*. The very beginning of the first letter uses this anxiety to make its point about the proper use of one's time: "Make it so, my Lucilius, claim yourself for yourself" (*ita fac, mi Lucili: vindica te tibi*, 1.1). The verb *vindicare* connotes the claim of a free person who has been wrongfully enslaved, and Seneca will go on to assert that the only thing that truly belongs to the individual is their

[118] Inwood 2005: 316.

time.[119] But the use of the imperative form tells the reader right as they start reading the *EM* that they have the power to free themselves, their mind and inner self, which no one else can claim from them. "Indeed, the mind is under its own law" (*mens quidem sui iuris*, *Ben*. 3.20.1), Seneca writes as he continues his distinction between physical and mental enslavement.

Still, this distinction is purely theoretical until it begins to account for actual enslaved people. Seneca will attempt to do so in *Ep*. 47, whose subject is the paradox of slavery. This text is wholly concerned with the dereliction of proper duty and the moral problems posed by the Roman institution of slavery. While not an abolitionist, Seneca here advocates for humane treatment of enslaved people and constantly uses the excessive appetites of the master as proof of the perverse (and morally unfair) nature of the system.[120]

Enslaved people are relegated to various humiliating tasks as a direct result of these appetites and even have their own mouths suppressed while their masters use their own for overconsumption:

> Est ille plus quam capit, et ingenti aviditate onerat distentum ventrem ac desuetum iam ventris officio, ut maiore opera omnia egerat quam ingessit. At infelicibus servis movere labra ne in hoc quidem ut loquantur, licet; virga murmur omne compescitur, et ne fortuita quidem verberibus excepta sunt, tussis, sternumenta, singultus; magno malo ulla voce interpellatum silentium luitur; nocte tota ieiuni mutique perstant. (47.2-3)

[119] See *OLD* 3; see Edwards 2009 for further discussion.
[120] Modern scholarship, including, influentially, Griffin 1976: 256-85 tends to celebrate Seneca's liberal attitude toward slavery. For the contrary view, that Seneca advocates for humane treatment of enslaved people out of the masters' self-interest (that is, in order to maintain the institution of slavery), see Bradley 2008.

> The master eats more than he can digest, and he loads his belly, swollen by his enormous greed and now unfit for the duty of the belly, with the result that it disgorges everything with a greater effort than it ingested it. Conversely, it is not allowed for the unfortunate slaves to move their lips, not even to speak; every murmur is punished by the rod, and not even accidents—coughs, sneezes, hiccups—have been excused from beatings. Silence interrupted by any sound is punished with great harshness; the slaves stand around all night hungry and mute.

The master's belly is *distentus*, a sign of his lack of self-control, as well as a symptom of a diseased *animus*, as often in Seneca's Stoic judgments of the physical signs of excess.[121] But the lack of self-control by those with *distenti ventres* is underscored by the reality of the slaves, who must wipe up their spit and collect their crumbs and vomit:

> Alia interim crudelia, inhumana praetereo, quod ne tamquam hominibus quidem sed tamquam iumentis abutimur. [quod] Cum ad cenandum discubuimus, alius sputa deterget, alius reliquias temulentorum <toro> subditus colligit. (47.5)

> I omit other cruel, inhuman tasks in the meantime, because we abuse them not as if they were people, in fact, but as if they were mules. After we have reclined for dining, one slave wipes up the spittle, another, stationed beneath the couch, collects the scraps of the drunken guests.[122]

[121] As in, e.g, *Ep*. 95.16-18, 122.4 and passim, 83.19-23, *de Ira* 1.1.3-7 and passim.
[122] Bradley 2008 sees these duties as realistic and grounded in the lived experience of enslaved people: "The details specified could be dismissed as rhetorical exaggeration, except that innumerable items of independent evidence confirm them as realistic" (338).

These are people, not mules; as Bradley points out, *homo*, the status of human being, is distinct from that of an enslaved person.[123] Seneca pleads for basic decency from one person to another, not for abolition. His contrast between the enslaved people and mules is reminiscent of Sallust's man/beast dichotomy, although these enslaved people are already distinct from beasts. Furthermore, the first-person plural form *abutimur* helps involve his readership in his claim (as throughout *Ep*. 60) as well as implicate himself, albeit as someone with a more enlightened attitude toward his own enslaved people—at least in his own self-presentation.

There is, of course, a further contrast here between enslaver and enslaved, one that also brings to mind Sallust. In the first sentence of the *BC* all people who want to differentiate themselves from animals need to avoid living their life *silentio*, in silence. But those enslaved to the master in this passage have no choice but to live their life in silence, since even involuntary noises like sneezes, coughs, and hiccups are cause for punishment. Thus they need to exercise a self-control unknown to the free people in this letter: the master, who continuously gorges himself, and the guests, whose mouth-products—spit, vomit, and crumbs—they need to collect. Not only do the enslaved people come closer to the Stoic ideal of *sōphrosynē*, self-control or moderation, but they do so through a Senecan gloss on Sallust.[124] Sometimes silence is unavoidable—there are other, non-Sallustian ways for people to distinguish themselves, such as, in this case, through a lack of excessive consumption.

Seneca develops this contrast between master and slave vis-á-vis silence later in the letter, when he reaffirms that physical punishment is appropriate for animals, but not enslaved

[123] Bradley 2008: 337. But the use of the word *hominibus* is probably just a component of the "token recognition of their humanity" that Bradley (341) argues is advanced by Seneca in the interest of maintaining the status quo.
[124] For a wide-ranging discussion of the paradoxes of the free/slave dichotomy in Seneca's letters, see Edwards 2009.

people: “Therefore I judge that you are acting most correctly because you do not want to be feared by your slaves, because you use the punishment of words: mute animals are punished by blows” (*rectissime ergo facere te iudico quod timeri a servis tuis non vis, quod verborum castigatione uteris: verberibus muta admonentur*, 47.19). Here the master’s use of words marks him as humane: words, unlike disgorged food, are a positive oral product. Enslaved people and animals are contrasted by their speech faculty: enslaved people can and should speak, as Seneca implies in his discussion of the master’s inhumane treatment of them. The fact that they are *muti* is unnatural; here non-human animals are properly *muta*. This letter is a much subtler nod to Sallust than the obvious engagement with him in *Ep*. 60, but here Sallustian belly-slavery gets a chronological and generic renovation, with a Stoic focus on the arbitrariness of slavery and the lack of correlation (if not negative correlation) between power and belly-restraint. (Cato’s control of the appetites of his enslaved people in *de Ag*., discussed above, seems to be in the background as well.)

Seneca thus uses the gap between the *distentus venter* of the master (and the uncontrolled mouths of his guests) and the silence of the enslaved people as fodder for philosophical criticism. But, as in *Ep*. 60, we see a socio-political critique as well. The *distentus venter* cannot properly digest, and so does not fulfill its function (*officium*). It is difficult to divorce *officium*, which at a glance means “function” or “role,” from its Roman social context, especially considering the sense of agency given to the *venter* which, like its master, has its own *officium*. The overloaded *venter* cannot be useful for its owner (or anyone else), just like the people in *Ep*. 60 who might as well be dead because of their belly-slavery. The master ought to treat his slaves better, Seneca

argues throughout this letter, and the *venter* likewise needs to be able to digest, which it cannot do when distended. The master is just like his *venter*; as the belly goes, so does the person.[125]

Seneca returns to the *distentus venter* in *Ep.* 95, where he describes the bodily afflictions of the excessive eater:

> Inde pallor et nervorum vino madentium tremor et miserabilior ex cruditatibus quam ex fame macies; inde incerti labantium pedes et semper qualis in ipsa ebrietate titubatio; inde in totam cutem umor admissus distentusque venter dum male adsuescit plus capere quam poterat; inde suffusio luridae bilis et decolor vultus tabesque †in se† putrescentium et retorridi digiti articulis obrigescentibus nervorumque sine sensu iacentium torpor aut palpitatio [corporum] sine intermissione vibrantium. (95.16)

> Then there is pallor and a shaking of muscles wet with wine, and a thinness, more wretched from indigestion than from hunger; then the feet are unsure in their tottering and there is always a stagger, as in drunkenness itself; then a moistness sent through the entire skin and a belly swollen while it has the bad custom of taking in more than it can; then a suffusion of sallow bile and loss of color from the face and rotting of parts putrefying among themselves and desiccated fingers, with their joints hardening, and numbness of nerves situated without feeling, or palpitation beating without end.

[125] Seneca also broaches the subject of the master's gustatory appetite (*gula*) in *Ben.* 3.28.4, where he builds his case for a system of social reciprocity (*beneficia*) between enslaver and enslaved based on the arbitrariness of (legal) slavery. See Griffin 2013: 223 for discussion of this section.

The connection with the master in *Ep*. 47 is clear, even beyond the *distentus venter*: both eat "more than they can take in" (*plus capere quam poterat* in this case, *plus quam capit* in 47). Here the distended belly is one of many symptoms of the breakdown of the body, its inability to function properly. Notably the symptoms described in 95, the putrefaction of various body parts, recall corpses. The image of the corpse-like excessive consumer from *Ep*. 60 thus returns. We are reminded of both the uselessness of such a body in a Stoic philosophical context, where the parts must add up to a functional whole, as well as a Roman social one, where corpses (and distended corpse-like bodies) are not useful to anyone.

In yet another one of the *EM*, near the end of the collection as we have it, Seneca continues to explore the connection between swollen corpse-like bodies, animals, and death itself. The symptoms listed in 95 resemble those of the people who stay up all night and sleep during the day, and thus never see sunlight, in *Ep*. 122. These people are like pale, fattened birds:

> aves quae conviviis comparantur, ut inmotae facile pinguescant, in obscuro continentur; ita sine ulla exercitatione iacentibus tumor pigrum corpus invadit et †superba umbra† iners sagina subcrescit. at istorum corpora qui se tenebris dicaverunt foeda visuntur, quippe suspectior illis quam morbo pallentibus color est: languidi et evanidi albent, et in vivis caro morticina est. (122.4)

> Birds that are prepared for banquets, immobile so that they may easily grow fat, are kept in darkness; thus for those lying without any exercise swelling overtakes their sluggish body and in their arrogant darkness lazy fat grows up in them. But the bodies of those who have dedicated themselves to the darkness seem disgusting, indeed their complexion

> is more dubious than for those pallid from sickness; they are pale, languid, and fading away—there is dead flesh in those living people.

They are not only both living and dead, paradoxically, but, like fattened birds, they are more fit *to be* eaten than to eat. As in *Ep*. 60, they are both animal *and* dead, ready for the *conditivum*, both tomb and storeroom for preserving food. The *distentus venter* is not mentioned here by name, but the relevance of this bird imagery is nonetheless clear: Senecan conceptions of how people interrelate, engage with each other, and discharge their social obligations in a healthy society are continually illustrated through swollen bodies, which Seneca sees as useless from both a philosophical and a social standpoint.

It is not only in the *EM*, however, that the danger of the *distentus venter* to subsume the entire body and bring metaphorical death to its owner appears. Years earlier, Seneca had written *de Ira*, his guide for managing anger, in which he posited that some people are more prone to anger than others for biological reasons. Such people need to take even more care than others to regulate their health so as not to become uncontrollably mad with anger, so Seneca offers dietary advice: "Nor indeed must they be filled with foods, since their bodies will distend and their *animi* will swell along with the body" (*ne cibis quidem implendi sint; distendentur enim corpora et animi cum corpore tumescent*, 2.20.3). As he does in *Ep.* 95 and elsewhere, Seneca sees bodily symptoms as revelatory of the condition of one's *animus*. Since Stoicism is a materialist philosophy, the soul, just as the body, is comprised of substance, so bodily afflictions are both indicative of and directly impact one's inner state. The body is thus much more than a

"container" for the soul, or a "digestive pipe for food and drink"; the condition of the *animus* correlates directly with that of the body.[126]

Seneca, then, grounds his belly-images in Roman prose precedents (which, as his enthusiasm for quoting Sallust shows, he is not subtle about), but he imbues them with a greater sense of social (ir)responsibility: the improperly used belly has no place not only in the body of the aspiring Stoic sage, but the full participant in society. But what relevance does the belly as a social and philosophical symbol have in a society where the *venter* has gone global? What steps can Seneca take to ensure that his belly says something timely and urgent to a contemporary reader? He must incorporate the belly of the empire, which for him is not just an individual *venter* but a *gula*, an excessive appetite.

Gula, the globalized *venter*

As the reader works their way through the *EM*, they notice that Seneca's approach to moral philosophy becomes more refined, developed, and systematic.[127] This is true not just of *Ep*. 95, as mentioned in the previous section, but a letter written shortly before it, *Ep*. 89. Placed prominently at the beginning of the fourteenth book of the *EM*—not to mention at the very beginning of the second volume of Seneca's letters[128]—the letter illustrates not only Seneca's concern about the misuse of the *venter*, but also his general preoccupation with overconsumption, which tends to break into discussions that seemingly have nothing to do with the subject.

[126] See above, 37-8.
[127] See, e.g., Maurach 1970, Inwood 2007b: xv, Schafer 2009, esp. 74-83, Edwards 2019: 9-10.
[128] The *EM* circulated in this two-volume set, *Epp*. 1-88 and 89-124, as far back as antiquity: see Reynolds 1983: 369-70, Inwood 2007a. Reynolds's *OCT* maintains this division.

The letter is, on its face, a survey of the ways different philosophical schools have delineated types of philosophy. After establishing the relationship between philosophy and wisdom (the former is a path to the latter, 5-6) and philosophy and *virtus* (they are codependent and *cohaerent inter se*, "cohere among themselves," 8), he breaks down moral, natural, and finally rational philosophy (which subsumes logic and dialectic). He gives relatively scant attention to each of these branches, however, before breaking off abruptly in section 17 in order to suggest talking points for Lucilius to use against the imagined interlocutors who might complain about his moral lessons.

This digression is not in itself all that unusual, since (as is the case in *Ep*. 60), Seneca is fond of introducing discussion topics, treating them at unexpected lengths, and then moving on. But the subjects for which Seneca chooses to interrupt his promised analytical discussion are telling and reveal his preoccupation with excessive appetites. In section 22, the last in Seneca's series of four talking points (in 19, 20, and 21), he returns to the belly. His suggested response for Lucilius to use when faced with a glutton is below:

> 'Ad vos deinde transeo quorum profunda et insatiabilis gula hinc maria scrutatur, hinc terras, alia hamis, alia laqueis, alia retium variis generibus cum magno labore persequitur: nullis animalibus nisi ex fastidio pax est. Quantulum [est] ex istis epulis [quae] per tot comparatis manus fesso voluptatibus ore libatis? quantulum ex ista fera periculose capta dominus crudus ac nauseans gustat? quantulum ex tot conchyliis tam longe advectis per istum stomachum inexplebilem labitur? Infelices, ecquid intellegitis maiorem vos famem habere quam ventrem?' (89.22)

> 'I pass next to those of you whose vast and insatiable appetite searches the seas here, the lands there, and pursues some places with hooks, some with snares, others with different kinds of nets, with a great effort: there is rest for no animals except from your weariness. How little do you taste from these banquets, prepared by so many hands, with your mouth bored from pleasures? How little does the crude and nauseous master taste from that wild beast, dangerously captured? How little slips into that bottomless stomach from so many shellfish imported from so far away? Unfortunate wretches, do you understand at all that you have a hunger greater than your belly?'

The *venter* itself is not the problem, but its *maior fames*. This *maior fames* has real-world consequences, like the belly's *ambitio* in *Ep.* 60, that result in environmental, economic, and even interpersonal destruction (i.e., the danger of the beast *periculose capta* for its captor, who is most likely a laborer, not to be identified with the *dominus crudus ac nauseans*). The *profunda et insatiabilis gula* is the subject, the acquisitive searcher, itself an agent (and symptom) of Roman global empire.

Indeed, for Seneca the *gula* is a kind of overgrown, globalized version of the individual *venter*.[129] Here, as elsewhere, Seneca associates the *gula* with *fastidium* (*nullis animalibus nisi ex fastidio pax est*, "there is rest for no animals except from your weariness"), the sort of bored disgust created by an overabundance of (food) options.[130] The *fastidium* is the limit of the *gula*, but only insofar as it tires of known foods and gapes further for new ones. This is a desire fulfilled by the discovery of new animals to eat, new seas to traverse, new human labor to exploit. It is a problem of empire.

[129] The word is also occasionally used in the stricter anatomical sense of "throat." See, e.g, *Ep.* 108.14, 114.25.
[130] For a bipartite analysis of *fastidium* as natural and involuntary (the "per se reflex") and cultural and intentional ("deliberative ranking"), see Kaster 2001.

A flip back (and forward just a few letters from 89) to *Ep*. 95 reveals more about overconsumption in a Roman imperial context and will help qualify the symptom of the *distentus venter* discussed in the previous section. Seneca makes two different appeals to the imperial *gula*, one generalized and one specific. The *gula* is connected with *luxuria*, a destructive force on both land and water: "see how much of things about to pass through one belly luxury mixes together, the destroyer of earth and sea" (*vide quantum rerum per unam gulam transiturarum permisceat luxuria, terrarum marisque vastatrix*, 95.19). Notably *luxuria*, a *vastatrix* (a *hapax legomenon*), is at fault, not any individual belly, but the *gula* here is the belly as the recipient of a perversely mixed (and labored over) meal, the kind Seneca rails against in the passages discussed above. *Luxuria* is not just a "destroyer," however, but a mixer: just as in *Ep*. 89, hooks, snares, nets, and all manner of methods are needed to capture, kill, and then serve the mixed imperial meal, comprised of shellfish, beasts, birds, and anything else that requires too much effort for just one meal.[131]

Not just animals and their captors but land and sea itself, a metonymy popular in the characterization of Roman empire,[132] are a victim of the mixed global meal. Seneca uses the same pair to illustrate the acquisitiveness of imperial eating in *Ep*. 89 above (*profunda et insatiabilis gula hinc maria scrutatur, hinc terras*), as well as in *Ep*. 60 discussed earlier (*homo et terra et mari pascitur*). Rome's dominance over both land and sea is a commonplace, even to the point of seeming a trite expression of empire, but Seneca turns this cliché on its head. Land and sea are not just geographical spaces ripe for conquering but an effective vehicle for

[131] On the mixed meal as the stuff of satire, see below, ch. 3.
[132] See, e.g., Cic. *Ver*. 1.1.3, *Man*. 9.9, 48.2, and 56.8 (among many other loci in Cicero), Sall. *BC* 13.3, Livy 1.19.3 and passim, Augustus *RG* 4 and 13. Seneca himself places it into the mouth of his deified Augustus in *Apoc*. 10.

discussing the harmful environmental consequences of the global meal. The imperial *gula* searches, mixes, and consumes land and sea.

Seneca had written about the notion of empire-as-consumer earlier in his life as well. In the *Consolatio ad Helviam* (ca. 42 CE), wherein Seneca writes to his mother to reassure her about his own exile on Corsica, he uses *exempla* of famous Romans who endured exile to offer comfort to his mother. The minimal needs of the body in exile are emphasized, and contrasted with, acquisitiveness and empire:

> Non est necesse omne perscrutari profundum nec strage animalium ventrem onerare nec conchylia ultimi maris ex ignoto litore eruere: di istos deaeque perdant quorum luxuria tam invidiosi imperii fines transcendit! ultra Phasin capi volunt quod ambitiosam popinam instruat, nec piget a Parthis, a quibus nondum poenas repetimus, aves petere. undique convehunt omnia nota fastidienti gulae; quod dissolutus deliciis stomachus vix admittat ab ultimo portatur oceano; vomunt ut edant, edunt ut vomant, et epulas quas toto orbe conquirunt nec concoquere dignantur. (10.2-3)

> We do not have to scour all the deep sea, nor overload the belly with the slaughter of animals, nor dig up shellfish from an unknown shore of the farthest sea: may the gods and goddesses destroy those whose luxury transcends the boundaries of an empire so envious! They want food to be caught beyond Phasis which can equip the ambitious café, nor is it displeasing to seek birds from the Parthians, from whom we have not yet received restitution. They bring in all known foods from everywhere for the weary appetite; that which the stomach, dissolute with treats, can hardly admit is carried from

> the furthest reaches of the ocean; they vomit so that they may eat, they eat so that they may vomit, and they do not deem it worthy to digest the feasts which they search for the whole world over.

As in *Ep.* 89, the *gula* is the motivation for scouring the deep (*perscrutari profundum*). Seneca is not subtle in emphasizing the limits of empire (*imperii fines*) with his repeated references to the furthest reaches of the sea (*ultimum mare*, *ignotum litus*, *ultimus oceanus*) and even the entire world (*totus orbis*) as a mere food source. The act of overloading the belly (*ventrem onerare*) and a swollen stomach (*dissolutus stomachus*) are here figured as the concomitants of imperial acquisition, which itself is personified as a bored appetite, a *fastidiens gula*. As in *Ep.* 60, hunger is not the issue, but *ambitio*, which here takes the form of the *ambitiosa popina*. *Ambitio* takes on a new meaning in this global context, however, as it designates not political canvassing but a literal "going around" the world for new fodder.

The place names Seneca mentions are no less relevant in his focus on the bounds of the Roman world. The river Phasis (mod. Rioni), in western Georgia, lies at the eastern coast of the Black Sea, which itself was a sort of no man's land for those living in Rome.[133] Ovid was exiled to Tomis, of course, but even his place of exile was on the western coast of the sea, in modern-day Romania. These foodstuffs come not only from Phasis but from *beyond* Phasis (*ultra Phasin*). Although Seneca does not mention game from Phasis by name, he probably refers to the pheasant (whence it derives its name), which is itself proverbial for far-off food—indeed, Petronius's Eumolpus mentions the *ales Phasiacis* in a poem that seems to parody the sort of

[133] Even its Greek-derived name, *pontus Euxinus*, "hospitable sea," suggests an apotropaic euphemism, since the sea was notoriously difficult to navigate.

sentiment that Seneca expresses here.[134] The Parthians, whose empire stretched from western to south Asia, were perennial enemies of the Romans: their defeat of the general Crassus at Carrhae in 53 BCE resulted in the loss of Roman battle standards, which would be a sore subject for years to come. (Augustus touts his recovery of the standards among the achievements in his *Res Gestae*.[135]) Perhaps it is not surprising that Seneca is so fixated on the ends of empire, as he writes the *consolatio* to his mother during his exile on Corsica—hardly far from Italy, but barren and isolated, a faraway place culturally if not geographically.[136]

This vivid description of the edible empire now brings Seneca to its recently dead head, the emperor Gaius:

> C. Caesar [Augustus], quem mihi videtur rerum natura edidisse, ut ostenderet quid summa vitia in summa fortuna possent, centiens sestertio cenavit uno die; et in hoc omnium adiutus ingenio vix tamen invenit quomodo trium provinciarum tributum una cena fieret.[137] (*ad Hel*. 10.4)

> Gaius Caesar, whom the nature of things seems to me to have produced in order to show what the highest vices could do in the highest fortune, dined in one day at a cost of ten

[134] Petr. 93. See also Eumolpus's later poem on the civil wars: *iam Phasidos unda / orbata est avibus* ("Now the water of Phasis has been deprived of its birds," 119.36-7).
[135] *RG* 29.
[136] As he writes in *Cons*. *Helv*. 6.5: "What can be found so bare, so precipitous on each side as this rock? What can be found that is emptier in terms of resources for one looking for them? What can be found less mild for people? What can be found more rugged for one considering the site itself of the place? What more intemperate than the nature of the sky?" (*Quid tam nudum inveniri potest, quid tam abruptum undique quam hoc saxum? Quid ad copias respicienti ieiunius? Quid ad homines inmansuetius? Quid ad ipsum loci situm horridius? Quid ad caeli naturam intemperantius?*)
[137] It is clear from the context that Seneca means Caligula (Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus), whose extravagant expenditures are well attested (see also, e.g., Suet. *Cal*. 37), and not Augustus, since in contemporary texts Seneca discusses Augustus in overwhelmingly positive terms: see, e.g., *de Ira* 3.23.4-8, 3.40.2-5. As Miriam Griffin writes, "Augustus' main quality for Seneca, even outside these works, was his clemency" (1976: 211).

> million sesterces. Although he was aided by everyone's ingenuity in this pursuit, nevertheless only with difficulty did he find out how the tribute of three provinces could be spent on one dinner.

The emperor can freely exploit the boundless resources of empire, but this consumption still requires a sense of ingenuity (*ingenium*). The expansion of empire needs innovation in order to reach new places for new foods to satisfy the *gula*. But this is not just a Senecan idea, as this theme occurs elsewhere in contemporary Latin literature. Petronius, for example, has his poet Eumolpus state the issue succinctly: "the *gula* is ingenious" (*ingeniosa gula est*, 119.33). Add to this Lucan's description of Caesar eating a meal next to the dead at Pharsalus and the literary zeitgeist of the mid-first century seems, then, to favor empire as a perennially unsatisfied appetite.[138] But the monarchic context of Seneca, Petronius, and Lucan provides a sense of clarity missing from Republican discussions of the belly: the emperor's appetites are those of the empire.

Gaius is, however, not the only consuming emperor. As part of his wide-ranging gustatory discussion in *Ep*. 95, Seneca breaks into an anecdote about the emperor Tiberius's fishmongering:

> Mullum ingentis formae—quare autem non pondus adicio et aliquorum gulam inrito? quattuor pondo et selibram fuisse aiebant—Tiberius Caesar missum sibi cum in

[138] *BC* 7.792-94. Regarding the preference for images of imperial eating in the *Satyrica*, Connors 1998: 110-11 puts it thus: "Eumolpus chooses neither the suicidal body nor the dismembered body as his image of Rome's body politic, but the banqueting body."

> macellum deferri et venire iussisset, 'amici,' inquit 'omnia me fallunt nisi istum mullum aut Apicius emerit aut P. Octavius'. (95.42)
>
> After Tiberius Caesar had ordered a mullet of enormous size that was sent to him to be brought to the market and to go on sale, he said "Friends, I'd be shocked if either Apicius or P. Octavius didn't buy that mullet." (Why shouldn't I mention its weight and excite the appetite of some people? They used to say it weighed four and a half pounds!)

Apicius and Octavius entered a bidding war over the fish, Octavius won it (for 5000 sesterces), and Seneca closes with a judgment that Octavius's price was *turpis*, but it would not have been so for the man who bought the fish to give to the emperor, since this is not an unreasonable price to spend on a gift for Tiberius but is absurdly expensive for a glutton's bragging rights. Seneca thinks the fact that Apicius was not able to buy the fish was a selling point for Octavius.

There are several aspects of this anecdote worth highlighting for its relevance to the imperial *gula*. First, Tiberius as fishmonger. While there is an oddly quotidian quality in Tiberius, Roman Emperor, obtaining and then selling a fish, any potential surprise at such a depiction is qualified by the very size of the fish.[139] This is not the sort of fish that just anyone could afford. While Tiberius is not made the butt of the joke—indeed, as elsewhere in the *EM*, he instead *tells* the joke[140]—he is still associated with the sort of overconsumption that makes buying a giant fish into a game for gourmands. In this respect he is like his successor Gaius. Heads of empire are, of course, ripe for such criticism: Seneca sees the destruction reaped by the *gula* across land and sea and turns to the autocrat for an exemplum of blame. This example

[139] For the size of the mullet as a site of satiric competition for Seneca, see below, ch. 3.
[140] See 122.10, where he publicly zings Acilius Buta for his habit of staying up all night and sleeping all day.

would later be followed by Juvenal, who makes the unnecessarily huge size of the emperor Domitian's turbot into a symbol of global overconsumption.[141]

Another striking aspect of the way that Seneca presents this anecdote is his awareness of his readership's own appetites. He syntactically cuts off the huge mullet from the rest of the passage with his teasing reference to the *gula* and the detail about the fish's weight, since his audience will surely include gourmands who want to know about it. This passage gives a neat representation of the paradox of eating in Seneca: he appeals to the *gula* in order to make a point about its pernicious cultural persistence. It would be irresponsible not to tackle the subject of eating in a Latin Stoic text written in the mid-first century, after all, since Seneca *knows* his readership is full of eaters, beneficiaries of the horizontally expanded Roman meal, where different courses are caught with the different laborious methods he had decried in 89.22.[142]

This anecdote builds on the *distentus venter* from earlier in the letter (95.16) and illustrates the interconnectedness of the individual body and global empire: as the *distentus venter* is symptomatic of its owner's sick *animus*, the *gula* of his Roman readership, tickled by mullet-descriptions, metastasizes under the leadership of a fishmonger.

But these discussions gain significance from their exact context. *Ep*. 95, along with its predecessor 94, is where Seneca outlines one of the most important topics of Stoic pedagogy, the difference between *decreta* (doctrines) and *praecepta* (teachings) and the need to combine them normatively. 95 is a kaleidoscopic exposition on the right ways to teach moral philosophy, and yet it returns, over and over, to eating.[143] Not only is this gustatory content crucial to Seneca's

[141] See, e.g., Umurhan 2018: 75-9 and below, 151-52.
[142] For the horizontal expansion of the Roman meal, see Gowers 1993: 16 and passim. For the complex response of the Senecan reader, who is also an eater, see Richardson-Hay 2009: 86-7.
[143] In addition to the passages discussed in this chapter, it ends with the exemplum of Q. Aelius Tubero (see below, ch. 2) and also features the *nobilis patina* (see below, ch. 3).

understanding of how to teach philosophy, then, but Seneca's conception of moral philosophy is indebted to Roman gastro-moralistic discourse, the persistence of the *venter* and *gula*. 95 is more than just a philosophical teaching-text since, as these passages indicate, it is interwoven with Seneca's anxieties about cultural overconsumption and the Roman literary and historical past.

This cultural overconsumption is also a topic of discussion in the *Naturales Quaestiones*, a text contemporary with the *EM*. The *NQ*, Seneca's intervention into the tradition of Greek and Roman scientific literature, explains natural phenomena such as meteors, rainbows, comets, hail, earthquakes, thunder, and lightning from a Stoic cosmological perspective. But the *NQ* is as much a text about Stoic moral concerns as it is about physical ones, since for Seneca these issues are deeply intertwined.[144] Indeed, at various points in the text Seneca contrasts philosophical inquiry with imperial acquisition; to master the world by gaining knowledge about it is superior to doing so by conquering it with armies and fleets.[145] It follows that fish, a symbol of foreignness and globalization in this text as in those discussed above, represent the imperial project—and so help illustrate how appetitive those living under empire have become.[146] In Book 3, an exposition on terrestrial waters, Seneca goes on an extended digression on fastidiousness in the consumption of fish. Fine diners are no longer content to eat fish in the usual way, but now they must watch their dinners die at the table: "They [sc. these gourmands] are not content with their teeth and belly and mouth at the café; they have to be appetitive with their eyes, too" (*non sunt ad popinam dentibus et ventre et ore contenti; oculis quoque gulosi sunt*, 3.18.7). As the net is cast more widely into the sea, global consumption now drags more body parts into the act of

[144] On moral philosophy as an integral part of the *NQ*, see, e.g., Inwood 2005: 157-200, Volk 2006: 191-92, Williams 2012.
[145] See Hine 2010a: 13-4.
[146] On fish as symptomatic of foreignness and luxury, see, e.g., Ennius's Hedyphagetica (Apul. *Apol*. 39.2-4, l.2), Cic. *Rep*. 2.7, Ovid *Fast*. 6.173-74, Pliny *NH* 9.53 in addition to the passages discussed. For modern discussion see, e.g., Wilkins 2005: 36-8, Davidson 1997: 4-11 and passim, Déry 1998.

eating, to the point that the *natura*-ordained structure of the human body is remade as a consequence of the cultural taste for exotic fish.[147] People become more and more *gulosi* as the imperial *gula* scours the seas for exotic seafood. Cato's abhorred salted fish would have farther-reaching consequences than he could have ever known.

This focus on the empire-as-consumer is a significant development of the belly-as-enemy and belly-as-master sentiments expressed by Cato and Sallust respectively. The belly can no longer be a *hostis* because the global *gula* has brought the Mediterranean under Roman command: the belly *is* the state.

Conclusion

Seneca, for all of his admiration of Cato's sternness, is not a republican. He is too far removed chronologically, politically, and philosophically from the Republic to convincingly parrot the Catonian-Sallustian model of the Roman belly, which exists in an unmistakably Republican framework.[148] But this is not Seneca's world—nor even, as Zanda and La Penna have argued, Horace's. *Luxuria*, exemplified through the foreign foods consumed by the global *gula*, is a moving target, and Seneca knows that by harnessing these concepts and making them work within his Stoic project he speaks to his audience in a language that it will understand.

Still, the even older motif, Hesiod's "only bellies," provides a useful literary-philosophical foil for our understanding of the Senecan belly. For Seneca human beings are not "only" bellies, but the belly, as part of the well-functioning body, cannot abdicate its *officium*,

[147] On this problem, see my discussion of Hostius Quadra below, 111-19.
[148] Seneca's views on the principate are articulated most clearly in the *de Clementia* (55 CE), whose main project is an acceptance of the principate and guide for Nero to rule it benevolently. On Seneca's view of the principate in this text and elsewhere see, e.g., MacMullen 1966: 62-5, Griffin 1976: 202-221, Wilkinson 2012: 26-7, 103-4 and passim.

even in a global society that makes available all manner of tempting treats. The belly, enemy for some and master for others, is nevertheless the only digesting organ that each of us has.

Chapter 2: Exemplary Eaters

"I don't like people watching me eat, man. Make [sic] me feel like I'm in a zoo." - Alfred "Paper Boi" Miles, *Atlanta* (2016)

<Romulus in caelo> ferventia rapa vorare - Lucilius, possibly

Seneca's interest in Republican figures, authors such as Cato and Sallust but also other historical people of political and military significance, extends as far as they can serve the Stoic moral message that he espouses in his text. The main way that the Republic factors into his written project is through its usefulness in producing exempla, stories of mythological or historical figures used to persuade the reader to adopt a behavior or worldview. Since history is subordinate to philosophy in Seneca's eyes, his relationship with the Republican past is indeed defined by exempla.[149]

Seneca's tendency to use exempla to help build the Stoic moral arguments that he makes in his prose texts has attracted a lot of scholarly attention.[150] The variety of angles from which these scholars argue—pedagogical, philosophical, literary—leaves little doubt that the study of exempla provides a fruitful point of access both to Seneca's moral philosophy as well as his relationship with the Roman literary and historical past. Indeed, the fact that Seneca is forthright in his reflection on the efficacy of exempla in teaching moral philosophy (as will be discussed

[149] On this point see Griffin 1976: 182-83.
[150] For some general studies, see Mayer 2008, Griffin 1976: 182-201, Backhaus 2019: 95-125, Codoñer 2005: 151-53; Sauer 2018, esp. 93-4; Roller 2018: 265-89. For the Senecan preference for lists of exempla, see also Roller 2015a. For exempla in Senecan tragedy, see Rodríguez Herrera 1997.

below) is a compelling reason why his use of exempla has received such wide and varied interest. But in this chapter I will focus on a subset of Senecan exempla: people who eat in various ways, the owners of the bellies discussed in the previous chapter. Seneca incorporates exempla of eaters into his text not only in order to bolster his Stoic moral lessons about the proper way to live in accordance with *natura* but also to reflect directly on the Roman institution of the exemplum. Exempla that involve eating have a distinct advantage for Seneca: they are both quotidian and easy to follow.

Seneca's interest in the exemplarity of eating suggests that, despite his embrace of exempla for their effectiveness in illustrating precepts, in some ways he rejects the very concept of Roman exemplarity. Indeed, in his 2018 monograph on Roman exempla, Matthew Roller identifies Seneca as the purveyor of a particularly Stoic form of exemplarity whose criteria for excellence are not limited to the stereotypically Roman sites of the forum and battlefield but instead require attention to long-term actions over the various other settings of one's life. Roller assigns to Seneca two different critiques of exemplarity: the "misjudgment" critique and the "insufficient evidence" critique.[151] Audiences—which are required for the creation of exempla—often misjudge the performances of exemplary actors, since they, not being perfect Stoic sages, do not understand the nature of the good: this is "misjudgment," which Seneca lays out in *Ep*. 94, as Roller argues.[152] Even if someone correctly judges the action of an exemplum, exemplarity demands a continued pursuit of virtue, not just a one-off display, hence "insufficient evidence" for the exemplarity of a subject.[153] Two of Seneca's favorite exempla are Cato the Younger and Socrates, who are exemplary in their deaths—but their deployment is appropriate in Seneca's

[151] Roller 2018: 266-83.
[152] Ibid.: 266-75.
[153] Ibid.: 275-83.

brand of Stoic exemplarity, since the manner in which they die embodies the virtue with which they had lived.[154]

This Stoic exemplarity decentralizes the institution of the exemplum from competitive public sites and allows Seneca to write exempla for everyday activities like eating. The Stoic sage need not display the courage of conventional exempla, early Republican figures like Marcus Valerius Corvus, who defeated a Gaul in single combat aided only by a raven, Mucius Scaevola, who stuck his hand in a flame and let it burn away in order to intimidate the Etruscan king Lars Porsenna, or Horatius Cocles, who defended Rome from an Etruscan invasion by destroying the Pons Sublicius. The *proficiens* can instead enter the realm of the exemplary by choosing to shun excessive and exotic foods in favor of simple meals, as do Seneca's own Republican heroes Manius Curius Dentatus, Gaius Fabricius Luscinus, or Quintus Aelius Tubero. But exemplary eaters do not need to eat humble foods in the public eye in order to be exempla, since Seneca makes even Socrates, with his iconic death, into a virtuous consumer—of the famous hemlock.[155] Eating is a way that Seneca explores the public position of exempla, but the eater still matters more than the food.[156]

But there is a limit to this decentralization of the exemplum. An essential feature of the exemplum is its dependence on visibility, after all. Exempla are useful to the community; one cannot become an exemplum without some sort of audience. Matthew Roller breaks down the Roman brand of exemplarity (that is, how exempla operate within Roman culture), which consists of four distinct operations: action (someone performs an act), evaluation (an audience

---

[154] They are paired in, e.g. *Ep*. 98.12 (referenced below). See Roller 2018: 283-84 and Langlands 2018: 92-3.
[155] E.g., *Prov*. 3.4, 3.12, *Ep*. 13.14, 67.7, 98.12.
[156] He quotes Epicurus on this point in *Ep*. 19.10: *'Ante' inquit 'circumspiciendum est cum quibus edas et bibas quam quid edas et bibas; nam sine amico visceratio leonis ac lupi vita est.'* ("He said 'It must be examined with whom you eat and drink rather than what you eat and drink, since feeding without a friend is the life of a lion and wolf.'")

witnesses it and judges it good or bad), commemoration (the deed itself, its doer, and the community's evaluation is recorded in one or more "monuments" that usually include a text), and norm setting (the deed becomes a morally prescriptive model for how future generations should behave).[157] Rebecca Langlands puts this exempla-theory more succinctly: "an exemplum needs a hero."[158] Exempla must therefore be conspicuous, clearly seen by their community. To help understand the paradox of the visibility of the exemplum and its appropriation by Seneca to include quotidian activity, I will introduce the economist Thorstein Veblen's idea of conspicuous consumption, as outlined in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). Veblen's theory, although rooted in a late 19th-century context socially and chronologically alien to Ancient Rome, nevertheless is applicable to a society where (literal) consumption and being seen go hand in hand. But for Seneca there are two ways of becoming an exemplary eater: conspicuous consumption, which involves extreme or extrahuman eating, and conspicuous nonconsumption, which the aforementioned Senecan heroes perform.

This chapter structure will proceed chronologically with a view to exploring the stages of Seneca's thinking about exempla. After establishing Veblen's concept of conspicuous (non)consumption as a theoretical framework, I will analyze Seneca's own theorizing about exempla in some of his earliest extant texts, the *Consolationes* and *de Ira*, all written in the early 40s CE. To put his theoretical discussions into practice Seneca introduces the exemplary eaters Manius Curius Dentatus (*ad Hel*. 10.8), Cambyses (*de Ira* 3.20.3-4), and Vedius Pollio (*de Ira* 3.40). I will then proceed to the mid-50s, after the death of the emperor Claudius, when the *Apocolocyntosis* facetiously invokes the exemplum of Romulus as a turnip-eater, as well as the potential of the recently dead Claudius to be an eater. This discussion builds on Seneca's view of

[157] Roller 2018: 4-8. Most of Roller's focus is on positive exempla.
[158] Langlands 2018: 29.

the emperors Tiberius and Gaius as eaters, as discussed in the previous chapter. Finally, I will end with exempla in some of Seneca's latest texts of the 60s: Hostius Quadra (*NQ* 1.16), Gaius Fabricius Luscinus (*de Prov*. 3.6), and Quintus Aelius Tubero (*Ep*. 95.72-3). In these literary contexts Seneca again theorizes about exempla and uses these exemplary eaters (particularly Hostius Quadra and Tubero) at crucial junctures within his Stoic pedagogical project. At this point Seneca is most forthright about the ability of his reader to become an exemplum, which is the eventual goal of Stoic exemplarity. One can do so by eating in a Fabrician or Tuberonian manner, with Hostius serving as a reflection on the visual nature of exempla themselves in a society obsessed with visual consumption. As a brief final note, I will consider the exemplarity of Seneca's own death, as sketched in Tacitus's *Annales*. Doing so will help show how Senecan exempla-theory can be put into practice—or at least how a later writer imbues Seneca's death story with his life lessons.

Conspicuous (non)consumption

Conspicuous consumption is, for Veblen, a feature of modern capitalism, which he calls "barbarism." His titular leisure class tends to consume—broadly construed but including the consumption of food—in an ostentatious, immoderate way in order to make a public display of its wealth. For the leisure class (that is, the stratum of the upper class that spends its time in economically unproductive activities), consumption is "a means of repute."[159] Conspicuous consumption creates a trickle-down effect as well, wherein people of lower socioeconomic classes begin to take on the consuming habits of the leisure class. This is a feature of a broader

[159] Veblen 1899: 41.

phenomenon that Veblen calls "pecuniary emulation," the vying for a higher status through the trappings of status.[160]

Although capitalism was unknown to the Ancient Romans, the applicability of Veblen's theory to antiquity nonetheless seems clear. In Republican Rome the sumptuary laws championed by Cato were designed to promote the maintenance of the status quo through the repression of excessive public displays of luxury, which themselves would lead to greater and greater competition between the upper classes.[161] In fact, Zanda uses conspicuous consumption in her monograph, discussed in the previous chapter, as a byword for the ostentatious displays targeted by sumptuary legislation.[162] The connection between conspicuous consumption and eating is strong here, thanks to Cato's interpretation of these laws as *leges cibariae*.

Exempla, in their public capacity, can be exemplary because they eat in certain ways. This too can have a trickle-down effect considering the role of exempla as norm-setters for their communities. But consumption can only be conspicuous when it is excessive or somehow notable. I will argue that Seneca details some conspicuous consumers in Apicius, Vedius Pollio, Cambyses, and Hostius Quadra. These eaters are all exemplary in their extremeness, namely through their consumption of too much food or even things that are not (or should not be) food. Seneca's interest in these figures points to his awareness of the visual component of both eating and exemplarity, as well as its effectiveness for establishing vivid images in the mind of his reader, a surefire way of making pedagogical lessons stick.

These eaters are only half the story, however. What about the virtuous, moderate eating of Curius, Fabricius, or Tubero (the latter of whom is virtuous for the details of his public

[160] On pecuniary emulation, see Veblen 1899: 12-7 and passim.
[161] See Zanda 2011: 13-26.
[162] See Zanda 2011: 3, 73-4.

banquet and not his personal eating habits)? These figures are exemplary not because they are conspicuous consumers, but conspicuous nonconsumers. Exemplary conspicuous nonconsumption is similarly a norm-setter, in part because of the competitive nature of Roman society, which, as Zanda argues, establishes sumptuary laws in an effort to curb excessive competition. Moderate eaters are thus the sort of exempla favored by Roman elites, but as René Girard writes, from an anthropological perspective conspicuous nonconsumption stems from the same mimetic desire as its counterpart—and a societal frenzy that commands the consumption of less and less can be similarly harmful when resources are systematically destroyed in an "anorexic" frenzy.[163] But Seneca, who uses exempla of conspicuous nonconsumers in an attempt to inspire a positive change in the life of his reader, the very goal of his Stoic therapy, is clearly not concerned about the possibility of the Roman elite suddenly trying to outdo each other with a competition to see who can eat the least. Even so, Curius, Fabricius, and Tubero all offer normative models to follow for the reader's own Stoic edification, which is Seneca's ultimate goal. Roman society is a foodie society, which is the very reason why Seneca adduces these exempla as a means to reach his audience. Exempla are popular and eating is popular. Hence exemplary eaters.

The limits of exemplarity in the early 40s CE

Given the Roman cultural love affair with exempla in the Tiberian and Caligulan period, Seneca's interest in them in his earliest writings is not surprising. The most prolific writer of exempla, Valerius Maximus, writes during Tiberius's principate; a good part of his text is a distillation of Cicero, Livy, Sallust, and other Republican prose writers who had included

[163] Girard 2013, esp. 21-4.

exempla in their own texts. Seneca's father, too, in recording the notes from his own rhetorical training that comprised the *suasoriae*, deliberative oratorical exercises wherein a student attempts to persuade a famous figure from myth or history to make one decision or other, and *controversiae*, fictitious court cases, captures a current where exempla have a central place in declamatory rhetoric, but more importantly in education itself. The turn to declamation in education may be, as Conte argues, a symptom of the post-Augustan literary world, where literature and spectacle are joined intrinsically.[164] The audience of the *recitatio*, the public literary recitation, has grown beyond the elite who had listened to the likes of Vergil and Ovid. Striking exempla of virtue and vice make up the stuff of such recitations.

But Seneca's early reflections on exemplarity express an anxiety about the limits of its use for the reader as well. Near the beginning of his earliest extant text, the *consolatio* to Marcia on the death of her son (40 CE), Seneca implies that exempla are an inferior method of teaching philosophy, condescending tools for people not equipped for more sophisticated teaching methods like *praecepta*. Not much later, in his *consolatio* to his mother (42 CE), Seneca seems to qualify this earlier position by pitting the exemplary eater Manius Curius Dentatus against the gourmand Apicius. In another contemporary text, the *de Ira*, Seneca offers Cambyses and Vedius Pollio, who both engage in some degree of cannibalism, as negative gustatory exempla. These extreme eaters correspond, to some degree, with the turnip-eating Curius, but the drastic nature of cannibalism is not much of a foil for the quotidian consumption of the Republican hero. Eating can be exemplary, and exemplarity implies conspicuousness, but these early musings on and deployment of exempla suggest that Seneca has not worked out the value of exemplary eating just yet.

[164] Conte 1994: 403-6. For the influence of declamation on Seneca's writing, especially his letters, see Williams 2015: 137-39.

Exempla in the *consolationes*

Seneca writes a letter to Marcia, daughter of the historian (and republican sympathizer) Aulus Cremutius Cordus, consoling her on the death of her son. This letter is a *consolatio*, part of an epistolary subgenre concerned with offering therapeutic comfort to someone who has experienced a loss. Early in the letter Seneca discusses the use of exempla in *consolationes*:

> 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 stupentibus. Duo tibi ponam ante oculos maxima et sexus et saeculi tui exempla…. (*ad Marc*. 2.1-2)

> I know that everyone who wants to advise someone begins from precepts and ends with *exempla*. But in the present case it seems advantageous that this custom be changed; it must be handled differently with each person: reason influences some, and for others, those gaping at attractive things, famous names should be placed before them, and the sort of authority which does not leave the mind free. I will place before your eyes two of the greatest *exempla* of your sex and generation….

The exempla that Seneca will go on to detail are two of Marcia's fellow grieving mothers, Octavia and Livia. He adduces these exempla as part of the central goal of the *consolatio*, to offer Stoic therapeutic medicine.[165] Illustrative exempla will, in the case of Marcia (who, as

[165] On Seneca's deployment of these two exempla in this *consolatio*, see Fern 1941: 54-5, Wilcox 2006, Costa 2013: 9-10.

Seneca strongly implies, is not among those who will gain comfort from *ratio*, reason), capture the reader's attention.

The condescension is palpable, but we should not conclude that its target is Marcia. In the first paragraph of this letter Seneca praises Marcia for her strength of mind (*robur animi*, 1.1) and virtue (*virtus*, 1.1), and states that her character "is looked upon just as some ancient exemplar" (*velut aliquod antiquum exemplar aspici*, 1.1). Although flattery of the reader is common in *consolationes*,[166] a woman's capacity to benefit from the *consolatio* is not in doubt. The exempla themselves have limits: they can grab attention but on their own do not offer a complete education. Seneca thus acknowledges their usefulness in the Stoic therapeutic project, but he still implicitly admits the superiority of *praecepta*. Much later, in the *EM* and especially in *Ep*. 95 (discussed at the end of this chapter), Seneca will end a systematic discussion of *praecepta* with Tubero's exemplum as a realization of the relationship between the two pedagogical modes as set out in this passage. In this *consolatio* Seneca certainly comes off as condescending vis-à-vis exempla, but this is an early position; he does not yet fully appreciate what Langlands calls the "special capacity" of exempla for moral persuasion and instruction.[167]

Even so, the concept of placing exempla "before the eyes" (*ante oculos*) deserves attention. In Stoic physics *phantasiai*, "images" or "appearances," occur as part of the sense-perception that is a natural component of reading.[168] The vividness of these literary *phantasiai* and their capacity to enliven the reader's experience are some of Seneca's reasons for the vivid turns of phrase and metaphors he uses throughout his philosophical corpus (and, as Gregory

[166] E.g., *Cons. Polyb*. 3, 11.5, *Cons. Helv*. 2.4-5.
[167] Langlands 2018: 48-9.
[168] See above, 26-7.

Staley argues, why he chooses to write tragedies).[169] But exempla lend themselves especially well to these sorts of mental images. Indeed, in the text that provides the standard ancient definition of *exemplum*, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the author states that the exemplum as a device "places an argument before one's eyes, when it expresses everything so clearly that the matter can practically be touched with the hand" (*ante oculos ponit, cum exprimit omnia perspicue ut res prope dicam manu temptari possit*, 4.62). Seneca is already familiar with this ability of exempla: their reuse in literature, his own and that of others, is no less conspicuous (*ante oculos*) than the original deeds of the exemplary heroes themselves.

The exempla that Seneca places before Marcia's eyes are not of a gustatory nature, but he gives a prominent place to exemplary eaters in the next *consolatio* he writes, to his mother Helvia (42 CE). Seneca writes to his mother near the beginning of his exile on Corsica—which lasted for most of the 40s—in order to reassure her that he is keeping well in exile, since he (like all human beings) needs little to survive.[170] In this letter Seneca contrasts two exemplary eaters: Manius Curius Dentatus, a conspicuous nonconsumer, and Apicius, a conspicuous consumer. Before deploying Curius as an exemplum for simple eating, Seneca extensively describes the Roman cultural obsession with exotic foods, delicacies which people do not even properly digest (10.2-3), before mentioning a dinner of Gaius Caesar that cost ten million sesterces (10.4), discussed in the previous chapter.[171] His point is that such extravagant expenditure on food is entirely unnecessary since Curius himself had lived on so little.

Curius, consul in 290, 275, and 274 BCE, was an early Republican military hero, known for his leadership in the Roman victory in the Third Samnite War. He is, in many ways, an

[169] Staley 2010. On the place of images and metaphors in Seneca's corpus more generally see also Armisen-Marchetti 1989 and 2015, Gazzarri 2020.
[170] For a contrast between the use of exempla in the *consolationes* to Marcia and Helvia, see Costa 2013: 7-52.
[171] See above, 73-4.

archetypical Roman exemplum; exemplary tales celebrate him for his frugality. As the story goes, when some Samnite legates come to his house to try to bribe him they find him roasting turnips (*rapa*) in his hearth.[172] Curius, unsurprisingly for a representative of Old Roman Virtue, refuses the Samnites' bribe:

> Scilicet minus beate vivebat dictator noster, qui Samnitium legatos audit, cum vilissimum cibum in foco ipse manu sua versaret, illa, qua iam saepe hostem percusserat laureamque in Capitolini Iovis gremio reposuerat, quam Apicius nostra memoria vixit, qui in ea urbe, ex qua aliquando philosophi velut corruptores iuventutis abire iussi sunt, scientiam popinae professus disciplina sua saeculum infecit. (*ad Hel*. 10.8)

> *Naturally* our dictator who received the Samnite legates, when he was turning food of the cheapest variety over in his hearth by his own hand—that hand with which he had by this time often struck the enemy and placed the laurel in the lap of Capitoline Jupiter—must have lived less happily than did Apicius, in our time, who in this city, whence the philosophers were formerly expelled on the grounds that they were corrupters of the youth, having professed knowledge of the café stained his generation with his teaching.

Curius's humble meal makes an appearance in a number of different authors of the Republic and Empire.[173] His frugality was already proverbial by Seneca's time; indeed, just a few years earlier, Valerius Maximus had referred to him as "the most exact standard of Roman frugality and the

[172] The food is identified as turnips in, e.g., Pliny *NH* 19.87, *Liber Memoralis* 18.8.1, Plut. *Reg.* 73 and *Cato Maior* 2.2. Juvenal calls them *holuscula* at 11.79. Other sources, such as Seneca, do not name the vegetable.
[173] E.g., in addition to the authors mentioned above, Cic. *De Rep.* 3.28 (40), though fragmentary, Valerius Maximus 4.3.5, Athenaeus X 419 A.

most perfect specimen of strength" (*exactissima norma Romanae frugalitatis idemque fortitudinis perfectissimum specimen*, 4.3.5). Curius's exemplum is so well known, in fact, that Seneca does not even mention his name while deploying his culinary simplicity as a proud contrast with the degeneracy of foods culled from the far reaches of the empire; he refers to him simply as *dictator noster*.[174]

Humble root vegetables in general, and turnips in particular, are a popular metonym for the fantasyland of Old Roman Virtue; as I will discuss below, Romulus himself is sometimes depicted as eating boiled turnips (*ferventia rapa vorare*). Simple foods like turnips represent a site of contention, Republican Italic restraint versus imperial foreign excess, understood by Seneca as integral to the role of Roman exempla. The fact that he does not mention the name of the food hints at a wider applicability of this exemplum: any very cheap food, not just *rapa*, is sufficient to sustain human life. By the same token, his use of the periphrasis *vilissimus cibus* puts more emphasis on the eater than the food. Curius has a literary patrimony of which Seneca takes full advantage: by eating humble food in a public capacity his act of (non)consumption is itself the spectacle.

In her article about food in Seneca, Christine Richardson-Hay emphasizes Seneca's overeaters (who are, for our purposes, conspicuous consumers): "It is not the food but the diner who becomes the real spectacle, as he exhibits his diverse appetite, the quantity of his consumption, and its insatiability."[175] But the opposite holds true for Curius, of course, as well as for Fabricius and Tubero below: the diner becomes the spectacle, but for a *restrained* appetite that consumes *little* and is easily satiated. This conspicuous nonconsumer embodies a brand of Republican *virtus* that Seneca is keen to promote—and incorporate as a Stoic moral lesson.

[174] For the resonance of Curius's political power in this passage, see Costa 2013: 32-3.
[175] Richardson-Hay 2009: 86.

Outside the confines of his text, however, Curius has currency as a vessel of Republican myth-making, since he hearkens back to a supposedly simpler time, before Roman global *imperium*. Indeed, as John Wilkins notes in his account of Juvenal's use of Curius, the exemplum, "which diverts the minds of Roman readers from their slave-owning imperial mastery of the Mediterranean," calls to mind Curius's role within Roman myth-making.[176] The permanence of Curius and his turnips is a rejoinder to the seventeen ships per day filled with imported edibles that arrived at Rome in the early Imperial period.[177]

The conspicuous consumer in this passage, contrasted with Curius, is Apicius, a notorious Roman gourmand from the Tiberian era. Apicius is not just a consumer but, even worse, a teacher of excessive eating.[178] He is a sort of mirror image of the philosophers whose expulsion Seneca laments, as he teaches the *scientia popinae*, the "knowledge of the café." The use of *scientia* for perverse ends is something of a theme in early Imperial literature, as Tacitus attributes to Petronius the *scientia voluptatum*, "knowledge of pleasures" (*Ann.* 16.18). Apicius's celebrity status counterbalances that of Curius, and his culinary education persists even today, through the surviving collection of cookbooks attributed to him by their ancient compilers. He is set apart from Curius, moreover, by his era, not far removed from Seneca's moment of writing: he is a so-called *novum exemplum*, the sort that Seneca will later discourage in his developed theory of exempla (as will be discussed below). Like other *nova exempla*, he is a representative of the imperial emporium, a decidedly anti-Curius figure. Apicius's existence, as both person and exemplum, provides the reason why Curius's frugality is needed.

---

[176] Wilkins 2005: 34.
[177] See above, 54-5.
[178] Apicius is a negative exemplum in *de Vita Beata* 11.4 as well, where Seneca contrasts sensory pleasure (for which Apicius lives) and goodness. For the contrast between the supposed vices of the philosophers and the real vice of Apicius's *scientia popinae*, see Costa 2013: 33-5.

The publicity of both of these figures is of course central to their use as exempla, which allows us to read them in Veblenian and Girardian terms. Their usefulness as exempla depends on them eating in a public capacity, but they are restaged *ante oculos* in Seneca's text itself. By pitting them against each other Seneca can provide an alternative tradition to Apicius's *scientia popinae*, Curius's *vilissimus cibus*, far more satisfying than gourmandise that constantly seeks new ingredients. Apicius's popularity is, after all, a symptom of Rome's consuming empire and the imperial *gula*—indeed, Gaius's feasting is the context in which Seneca deploys these two exemplary eaters.

It is worth asking, before moving on to the gustatory exempla in the *de Ira*, what exactly the original reader of this text, Seneca's mother, could have gained from these exempla. Helvia may not be an aspiring Stoic *sapiens*, but she has an intimately personal connection to the writer.[179] In Seneca's understanding of the expectations of the *consolatio* genre, a positive exemplum of virtue to be imitated is very much at home even in such a personal letter, as is a characteristically Senecan assault on the imperial Roman obsession with foreign foods and its ambassador Apicius. His justification for his use of exempla so early in his *consolatio* to Marcia provides a blueprint for his use of Curius here: the exemplum helps his mother, who does not have specialist training in philosophy, come to terms with his exile.[180] Curius's *nomen clarum*

[179] Seneca does tell us near the end of the *consolatio* that she had an education of some sort, though not an extensive one, since his father had forbade her the intensive study of philosophy: "Even had you never been accustomed to these [sc. the *liberales artes*], now you would have had to use them; but for how much my father's old-fashioned strictness allowed you, you certainly did not learn all the good arts, but you touched them. If only my father, certainly the best of men, had been dedicated less to the custom of our ancestors and wanted you to be educated in the precepts of wisdom, and not just dipped in them!" (*his etiam si numquam adsuesses, nunc utendum erat; sed quantum tibi patris mei antiquus rigor permisit, omnes bonas artes non quidem comprendisti, attigisti tamen. Utinam quidem virorum optimus, pater meus, minus maiorum consuetudini deditus voluisset te praeceptis sapientiae erudiri potius quam imbui!*, 17.3-4). For an outline of the letter and an analysis of its formal characteristics, see Fern 1941: 64-72. See also Costa 2013: 25-52 for an analysis rooted in the tension between Seneca's use of past exempla and Helvia's present suffering.

[180] But for an argument that Helvia shared in Seneca's philosophical studies, based on a remark Seneca makes in *Cons*. *Helv*. 15.1 ("Where are the studies, in which I had taken part more freely than a woman, more familiarly than

(so *clarum* Seneca does not even need to mention it for her to connect the dots) suffices in helping Helvia achieve her philosophical mission, which is in this case the personally difficult but not philosophically complex goal of understanding that Seneca is enduring his exile as best as he can and taking some comfort in his letter, which is meant to be therapeutic.

So one does not need to be as "toothy" (*Dentatus*) as Curius to gain nourishment from *vilissimus cibus*, although his cognomen, unmentioned by Seneca, becomes at least as important for his mode of eating as it does for the ostensible reason that he received the nickname in the first place (the fact that he was born with teeth[181]). Right down to his cognomen, he is ripe for appropriation by Seneca as a positive exemplum for Stoic-approved eating, which recognizes that luxurious food will not help the reader down the path to virtue. But once again it is the eater, not the food itself, that captures the reader's imagination *ante oculos*. Langlands's dictum is worth repeating: "An exemplum needs a hero."[182] Or a villain, as it turns out.

Exempla in the *de Ira*: Cambyses and Vedius Pollio

Seneca's contemporary use of exempla in Stoic therapy continues in the *de Ira* (41 CE) and especially in its third book. In this text, a handbook devoted to the theory of anger and the therapy needed to properly extirpate it,[183] Seneca gives his reader a rich store of negative exempla on which to ruminate. The theme of power and its abuses recurs in the text, which has led modern readers to assume an audience within the imperial family beyond its dedication to Seneca's brother Novatus. Although Seneca would later be closely associated with the young

a mother?", *Ubi studia, quibus libentius quam femina, familiarius quam mater intereram?*), see Hemelrijk 1999: 40-41.

[181] Pliny *NH* 7.68.

[182] Langlands 2018: 29.

[183] Which the Stoics alone among ancient philosophers thought was possible: see Kaster 2010: 3-4.

Nero—and would explicitly dedicate the *de Clementia* (55 CE) to him—the future emperor himself is not likely the intended reader, as Nero would have been about three years old at the text's likely date of publication.[184] Regardless, the text visits and revisits exempla in positions of power who treat their subordinates with either mercy or cruelty.

As in his *consolatio* to Marcia, Seneca expresses a concern early in the third book of the *de Ira* about the plurality of his audience, a complement to his unique strategy of beginning that text with exempla before moving to *praecepta*: "Counsel will have to be taken in proportion with each person's character" (*consilium pro moribus cuiusque capiendum erit*, 3.1.2). Clearly the problem of the varied audience is an early educational concern for Seneca. Although Seneca evinces that he knows that a variety of strategies is needed for the reader of his Stoic therapy, exempla are effective here, too, for their ability to put the lesson before the reader's eyes and evoke *phantasiai*. As in the *consolatio*, Seneca once again gives a rationale for the use of exempla in achieving his aim, in this case teaching anger management tactics:

> id fieri posse apparebit, si pauca ex turba ingenti exempla protulero, ex quibus utrumque discere licet, quantum mali habeat ira ubi hominum praepotentium potestate tota utitur, quantum sibi imperare possit ubi metu maiore compressa est. (3.13.7)

> It will be evident that this [sc. the restraint of anger] can be done if I bring forth a few *exempla* from the enormous crowd of them, from which one can learn each thing, how much capacity for evil anger has when it uses all the power of very powerful people, and how much it can check itself when it has been lessened by a greater fear.

[184] For a summary of the evidence for the text's date, see Kaster 2010: 3 n.1.

This emphasis on the powerful, conspicuous in their social and political positions as well as on the Senecan page, lends itself particularly to the use of exempla.

One of the clearest expressions of power over someone or something is, of course, to eat them. The exemplary eaters I will detail here are Cambyses and Vedius Pollio, both of whom Seneca connects with cannibalism. The extremeness (and publicity) of their perverse consumption guarantees them notoriety among Seneca's readership but also emphasizes the limitations of exempla with which Seneca grapples in his early texts. His reader is, of course, not likely to eat someone under their command or feed them to an animal. But the fact that they are figures in positions of power (royal or social) who eat in public ways and forcefully involve their underlings in this consumption reifies the nature of power itself. Indeed, as Veblen writes:

> Under the requirement of conspicuous consumption of goods, the apparatus of living has grown so elaborate and cumbrous, in the way of dwellings, furniture, bric-a-brac, wardrobe and meals, that the consumers of these things cannot make way with them in the required manner without help.[185]

This "help," soldiers (in Cambyses's case) and enslaved workers (in Vedius's), are not only a consequence of the need for greater consumption but are themselves consumed.

Son of Cyrus, the first king of Achaemenid Persia, and his successor as king of the Persians (530-522 BCE), Cambyses is known for his insanity and general lack of stability, of which his cruelty, bizarre behavior, and callous treatment of the religious customs of the people

[185] Veblen 1899: 31.

he encounters all provide evidence.[186] In Seneca's exemplum he leads his army on an expedition against the Ethiopians but fails to bring proper provisions. After eating everything available to them, the army is forced into cannibalism:

> Sustinebant famem primo tenerrima frondium et cacumina arborum, tum coria igne mollita et quidquid necessitas cibum fecerat; postquam inter harenas radices quoque et herbae defecerant apparuitque inops etiam animalium solitudo, decimum quemque sortiti alimentum habuerunt fame saevius. Agebat adhuc regem ira praecipitem, cum partem exercitus amisisset, partem comedisset, donec timuit, ne et ipse vocaretur ad sortem. Tum demum signum receptui dedit. Servabantur interim generosae illi aves et instrumenta epularum camelis vehebantur, cum sortirentur milites eius, quis male periret, quis peius viveret. (3.20.3-4)

> At first the tenderest shoots and tree branches sustained their hunger, then animal skins softened by fire and whatever food necessity had furnished; afterwards, among the desert sands, roots and grasses too had failed them, and the desert appeared still to lack animals, having chosen each tenth man by lot they gained nourishment crueler than hunger. To this point anger was driving the king headlong, since he had lost a part of his army, he had eaten another part, until he feared lest he himself might be called to the lot. Then, finally, he gave the sign for retreat. Meanwhile choice birds were kept for him, and eating utensils were carried on camelback, while his soldiers were choosing by lot who would die badly and who would live even worse.

[186] The most famous and detailed account is Herodotus 3.27-38.

As this exemplum makes clear, Seneca makes Cambyses himself a consumer (*partem comedisset*) and directly juxtaposes Cambyses's own fancy feasts (and the *instrumenta* of his feasts, carried on camels) with his soldiers, who had to eat their own and be eaten themselves.[187] This same story is related by Herodotus (3.25), who gives far less emphasis to this cannibalism and even writes that Cambyses was unaware that it was happening and was horrified to discover it.

Seneca's embellishment of the story accords with his own interest in exemplary eaters, the greater program of the *de Ira*, as well as his moral pedagogy as a whole. Although Herodotus generally depicts Cambyses as insane, he is somewhat equivocal in his portrait of the king, as Truesdell Brown has argued; the fact that he is sufficiently disgusted by his troops' cannibalism is proof against his complete madness.[188] In Seneca's passage, however, not only does the king partake in cannibalism himself, but anger is the cause of this perverse eating (*agebat adhuc regem ira praecipitem*). *Ira* is intrinsically dangerous, as Seneca tells the reader of *de Ira* 1,[189] but it can also lead to cannibalism, the most transgressive sort of eating imaginable. The horror of cannibalism that results from anger makes Cambyses a compelling exemplum for refraining from anger, despite the fact that most of Seneca's readers would need to take it metaphorically.

---

[187] There might seem an ambiguity in Cambyses's participation in cannibalism, since *comedo* can be used metaphorically (and Seneca is, of course, a lover of vivid metaphor), but the translation of Kaster 2010 also takes the verb literally. This interpretation seems to me to give the best sense for the contrast Seneca makes between the feasting of the king and that of (and on) his soldiers.

[188] Brown 1982, esp. 403.

[189] "In the other emotions there is something of quiet and calmness, but this one is entirely violent and contained within the force of its pain, raging with a most inhuman desire for weapons, blood, and punishments, negligent of its own needs provided that it can harm someone else, dashing itself onto its very weapons and greedy for vengeance that will drag the avenger down along with it" (*ceteris enim aliquid quieti placidique inest, hic totus concitatus et in impetu doloris est, armorum sanguinis suppliciorum minime humana furens cupiditate, dum alteri noceat sui neglegens, in ipsa irruens tela et ultionis secum ultorem tracturae avidus*, 1.1.1).

This deployment of the cannibalistic Cambyses is Seneca's second use of him in an exemplum within a few chapters. In 3.14 Seneca details the story of Praexaspes, whose admonition of Cambyses to drink less wine leads to Cambyses shooting an arrow straight through the heart of Praexaspes's son in order to prove that his hand is steady even while intoxicated. The Cambyses of this passage is also cruel as a result of his anger, though the exemplum is modeled more on the behavior of Praexaspes, who not only accepts his son's death but tells Cambyses that not even Apollo could have hit the mark so well (3.14.2). This response is for Seneca both fulsome and necessary—given the circumstances, what else could Praexaspes have done?

The collocation of these two exempla related to Cambyses makes him the cruel king par excellence, but the cannibalistic Cambyses is more of a sequel to Seneca's Harpagus, whose story is related in 3.15, than his earlier Cambyses. Harpagus, well-known from Herodotus's earlier account (1.119.3-7), is unwittingly forced by the Median king Astyages to eat his own children. When asked by the cruel king how he is enjoying his dinner, he replies, with Stoic calm, "Every dinner at the king's palace is pleasing" (*"Apud regem," inquit, "omnis cena iucunda est"*, 3.15.2). Seneca states that such a reply was necessary to avoid being asked to eat more, but in general such an attitude would help navigate the dangers of an irrationally angry ruler; as in Praexaspes's case, there is little else he can do.[190]

Seneca's account of Cambyses's cannibalistic journey has a more detailed focus on eating than these other exempla, however, and makes a greater contrast in what the king eats

[190] For the paradoxes of these two reactions (that is, the fact that they are literally "contrary to expectation"), see Lavery 1987: 281-82. For an argument that these cruel acts are undertaken by rulers in order to undermine the commensality of the feast, where all participants are supposedly equal, see Fertik 2019: 148-50. Avramescu 2009: 99 adduces Cambyses's and Harpagus's cannibalism as evidence for anthropophagy as a product of passion in Stoic thinking (but, since Seneca does not mention Astyages by name, erroneously names Cambyses, not Astyages, as the king who forces Harpagus to cannibalize).

versus what his soldiers eat. Indeed, the king himself is a consumer, and only gives up the expedition when he fears he himself might be eaten, the inversion of his status as eater.

Cambyses's transgressive eating is not limited to cannibalism, however. The disparity of the food kept for him (*generosae aves*, with utensils carried on camelback) and that of his subordinates, even before they are forced to eat each other, marks him as the exact opposite of Curius (or Fabricius and Tubero, to be discussed later). There are, of course, wider cultural and class stereotypes at play—virtuous Republican heroes are supposedly completely antithetical to luxurious Persian monarchs —but the foods Cambyses eats, even on a long, dangerous expedition, are quite similar to those scorned by Fabricius, as I will discuss later.

Here exists another connection with the exemplum of Curius (and Apicius), a structural similarity. Cambyses's gustatory exemplum also directly follows a negative exemplum of the (recently dead) emperor Gaius. The specter of the dead Gaius, angry, hungry, and insane, very much haunts these early Senecan texts. Seneca offers a blunt final judgment after his anecdotes about the anger of Cambyses and Gaius (as well as Cambyses's father Cyrus): "And these must be considered *exempla* which you should avoid" (*et haec cogitanda sunt exempla quae vites*, 3.22.1). Once again, these exempla are more metaphorical than practical. Anyone can eat turnips, but most will not have the opportunity to feed on their underlings. The visibility of the eating-acts of the powerful nonetheless renders them unforgettable exempla, part of a Stoic exemplarity that favors attention to quotidian activity—even if the thing eaten is extreme.

Seneca would deploy another server of human meat later in Book 3 of *de Ira*: Vedius Pollio, a Roman equestrian and associate of the emperor Augustus. Vedius is best known for his monstrous practice of feeding his slaves to his pet lampreys for punishment, as well as the destruction of his house by Augustus as a form of *damnatio memoriae* after his death in 15

BCE.[191] Earlier, Ovid discusses this house destruction in the context of the Porticus Liviae, the portico built by Augustus for his wife Livia on the site of Vedius's home. In this passage Ovid explicitly connects Vedius with exemplarity:

> Te quoque magnifica, Concordia, dedicat aede
> Livia, quam caro praestitit ipsa viro.
> disce tamen, veniens aetas: ubi Livia nunc est
> porticus, immensae tecta fuere domus;
> urbis opus domus una fuit spatiumque tenebat
> quo brevius muris oppida multa tenent.
> haec aequata solo est, nullo sub crimine regni,
> sed quia luxuria visa nocere sua.
> sustinuit tantas operum subvertere moles
> totque suas heres perdere Caesar opes:
> sic agitur censura et sic exempla parantur,
> cum vindex, alios quod monet, ipse facit. (*Fast.* 6.637-48)

> You too, Concordia, Livia gifts with a magnificent shrine, which she herself presented to her dear husband. Nevertheless, learn, later generation: where the Portico of Livia is now once stood the roof of an immense home: one house was the contents of a city and held a

[191] His lampreys are first attested by Seneca; see also Pliny 9.77 and Tacitus *Ann*. 1.10.1. Dio 54.23 uses Seneca as a source for his lamprey-feeding and mentions the razing of his house as well. On this destruction see, e.g., Roller 2010: 163-66, Kontokosta 2019: 68. For a prosopographical view see Syme 1961. D'Arms 1970: 111-12 shows, through epigraphical evidence, that Vedius's villa at Posillipo "remained continuously within the imperial domain at least until the death of Hadrian, administered by an imperial freedman of procuratorial rank." Thus Seneca's use of Vedius as an exemplum would continue to have currency for an imperial audience.

> space greater than many towns hold with their walls. This home was leveled to the ground, under no charge of royal power, but because its own luxury seemed to be harmful. Caesar decided to overthrow such great masses of the building and, although the heir, to ruin so much wealth of his own. Thus the censorship is handled, thus *exempla* are supplied, when the avenger does himself what he advises others to do.

As Paul Zanker notes, the publicity of this act of destruction on Augustus's part is a component of the focus on example-setting through images and public demonstrations in the Augustan cultural program.[192] For Seneca Vedius likewise lends himself to an exemplary tale—*sic exempla parantur*—but not for the destruction of his house. Both Ovid's and Seneca's Vedian exempla emphasize power and the visual, but Seneca elaborates on the *luxuria* that Ovid mentions by giving a full account of Vedius's gustatory transgressions. Vedius is Cambyses-like in his abuse of power and conflation of power with consumption, but—as for Ovid—he has a foil in Augustus, who is horrified by his method of slave punishment:

> castigare vero irascentem et ultro obirasci incitare est; varie adgredieris blandeque, nisi forte tanta persona eris, ut possis iram comminuere, quemadmodum fecit divus Augustus, cum cenaret apud Vedium Pollionem. Fregerat unus ex servis eius crustallinum; rapi eum Vedius iussit ne vulgari quidem more periturum: murenis obici iubebatur, quas ingentis in piscina continebat. Quis non hoc illum putaret luxuriae causa facere? saevitia erat. Evasit e manibus puer et confugit ad Caesaris pedes nihil aliud petiturus, quam ut aliter periret, ne esca fieret. (*de Ira* 3.40.2-3)

[192] Zanker 1988: 137.

> Indeed, to castigate a man in the throes of anger and to become angry in response is to incite him; approach him with different methods and coaxingly, unless you happen to be so great a person that you can thoroughly crush his anger, as the deified Augustus did when he dined at Vedius Pollio's house. One of Vedius's slaves had broken a crystal cup. Vedius ordered that he be seized and not die in an ordinary way: he was ordered to be thrown to the lampreys, enormous ones which Vedius kept in a fishpond. Who wouldn't think that he did this because of luxury? It was from cruelty. The slave escaped from his hands and fled to Caesar's feet, to beg for nothing else than that he might die some other way, lest he become food.

Seneca takes the *luxuria* with which Ovid characterizes Vedius's house and transfers it to the manner in which he feeds his lampreys. As I argued in the previous chapter, Seneca thinks of *luxuria* as an agent of imperial eating: it mixes land and sea and transcends the boundaries of empire.[193] Although there is something particularly *luxuriosus* about the role of Vedius's lampreys here, representatives of the sea, Seneca underscores that his behavior is not just fueled by *luxuria* but its extension *saevitia*, a cruelty springing from luxury. *Luxuria* as imperial wantonness is not far removed from *saevitia*.

In Seneca's account Augustus responds by pardoning the slave, breaking the rest of Vedius's crystal cups, and blocking up his fishpond. As Harriet Fertik points out, Augustus's intervention represents another level of power dynamic, not necessarily a humanitarian move; the emperor is the arbiter of eater and eaten.[194] We have already seen that Seneca figures

[193] *Ep*. 95.19, *ad Helv*. 10.2; above, 70-71.
[194] Fertik 2019: 151-52.

Tiberius and Gaius this way, too: Tiberius mocks gourmands through his sale of a huge mullet and Gaius spends an exorbitant sum on feasts. But Augustus is, as elsewhere in Seneca, the merciful ruler, who in this passage uses his power of life and death (eater and eaten) for good.[195]

But for Seneca this story is an effective exemplum against anger regardless of Augustus's motives, an exemplum that doubles as a positive one to encourage the powerful to forgive their victims. The basic dichotomy of eater/eaten must not be thrown into confusion, so the exemplum of Vedius Pollio helps ensure its stability. Seneca no doubt also knows about the fate of Vedius's house; the fact that his crystal cups were not the only thing destroyed by Augustus bolsters the normative force of this exemplum.

Seneca would later use this same exemplum, fittingly enough, in *de Clementia* (55 CE), a "mirror of princes" text on the virtue of clemency written to the teenage emperor Nero. Here Seneca considers the possibility of the lampreys themselves as food, or else, as here, as pets bred specifically to eat human flesh:

> Quis non Vedium Pollionem peius oderat quam servi sui, quod muraenas sanguine humano saginabat et eos, qui se aliquid offenderant, in vivarium, quid aliud quam serpentium, abici iubebat? O hominem mille mortibus dignum, sive devorandos servos obiciebat muraenis, quas esurus erat, sive in hoc tantum illas alebat, ut sic aleret. (*de Clem.* 1.18.2)

> Who did not hate Vedius Pollio worse than his slaves, because he used to fatten his lampreys on human blood and ordered those who had offended him at all to be thrown

[195] For the *clementia Augusti* see also *de Ira* 3.23.4-8, *de Clem*. 1.9.1-11.1.

> into the fish-pond (what was it, other than a snakepit)? Oh man worthy of a thousand deaths, either because he threw his slaves to be devoured by the lampreys, which he was about to eat, or perhaps he was feeding them for this reason alone, that he feed them this way.

The consumption of an animal fed on human flesh is just one step removed from cannibalism, far too close for comfort for Seneca (and, he hopes, for his readers[196]). But the context of this passage, in a discussion of the need to treat one's enslaved workers mildly, makes clear the relationship between eating, power, and exemplarity. Vedius, though he tries, cannot morally be the arbiter of eater and eaten, as the emperor is in the previous version of his exemplum. Slavery is a condition of the body, not of the mind, and one's free status is always tenuous.[197] As in *Ep.* 47, Seneca inverts the expected relationship between enslaver and enslaved: Vedius reveals himself to be the one truly enslaved, from a Stoic standpoint, to his cruel appetites.

So Vedius, like Apicius, is a *novum exemplum*, a representative of imperial excess and power diametrically opposed to virtuous Republican exemplary eaters. His exemplum, like that of Cambyses, is designed for Seneca's reader, an elite citizen and enslaver, to rethink how they treat their underlings. Gustatory practices are front and center in these exempla because of their relatability and cultural relevance, although they must be taken metaphorically—at least in most cases.

---

[196] One of whom is Tertullian, who reads Vedius as a cannibal in *Pall.* 5.6: *de piscibus placuit feras cogere, utique statim coquendis, ut in visceribus earum aliquid de servorum suorum corporibus et ipse gustaret* ("it was pleasing to make fish into wild beasts, certainly to be cooked immediately, so that he himself might taste something from the bodies of his slaves in their entrails"). On the Christian context of Tertullian's inclusion of this story in a catalog of Roman vices, see Carbonero 1993. Faber 2020: 239-40 takes it for granted that Vedius is a cannibal.

[197] See *Ep.* 47, *Ben.* 3.20.1; above, 58-60.

Romulus and Claudius: Roman heads of state as eaters

Very early in Nero's reign, most likely shortly before the *de Clementia*, Seneca publishes the *Apocolocyntosis*, his satire on the death and failed apotheosis of the emperor Claudius.[198] Many scholars think that this text was written for performance at the Saturnalia, which took place two months after the death of Claudius on October 13th, 54 CE.[199] Such a performance, at the holiday festival that acted as a sort of pressure-valve in allowing enslaved people to criticize their enslavers, would fit Seneca's description of Claudius as *Saturnalicius princeps*, the "Saturnalian emperor" (8.2) whose reign was characterized by the power and influence his slaves and subordinate freedpeople had over him.[200] But Claudius had been fond of banquets, as well, and unrestrained in his eating and drinking habits,[201] so in his satire Seneca makes him, as he does his two predecessors Tiberius and Gaius, into a consuming emperor, as well as an excreting one.

Claudius is identified as an eater in the *concilium deorum* scene, where the gods debate about whether to admit Claudius into heaven. The minor god Diespiter, his biggest advocate, suggests that Claudius be deified because "it is in the interest of the state that there be someone who can 'devour boiled turnips' with Romulus" (*sitque e re publica esse aliquem qui cum Romulo possit 'ferventia rapa vorare',* 9.5). The source of this quotation is much debated, but *ferventia rapa vorare* is clearly a hexameter ending and thus belongs somewhere in the history of

[198] For the title *Apocolocyntosis*, a pun on *apotheosis* and *kolokynthē* (Greek for "gourd") usually translated as "Pumpkinification," see Cassius Dio 61.35.3. The text is now commonly agreed to be Seneca's: for an exposition of the authorship controversy see, e.g., Eden 1984: 6-8, Conte 1994: 420, Nussbaum 2010: 198, and Freudenburg 2015: 93-5.
[199] See, e.g., Eden 1984: 5, Nussbaum 2010: 197-98, and most fully Nauta 1987.
[200] See, e.g., Dickison 1977.
[201] Suet. *Cl.* 33.

Roman verse satire. Some scholars think that it is part of a Lucilian verse; the missing first half of the line may have been *Romulus in caelo*.[202]

The (now obscure) literary allusion may have provided some of the humor for the text's readership, especially since the *Apoc*. is peppered throughout with a plethora of allusions and references to canonical Latin and Greek authors, including Homer, Euripides, Varro, Catullus, Vergil, Horace, and Greek lyric poets.[203] But the locus of humor must be in the absurdity of Claudius eating—in an animalistic way, since *vorare*, like German *fressen*, connotes a ravenous, bestial eating—with the deified Romulus, a powerful representative of Old Roman Virtue. But the very fact that Romulus is an eater (and a bestial one at that) suggests a development in Seneca's thinking about exemplarity. The loftiness of the political-military sphere, for which Romulus serves as a byword, is itself fodder for parody. The founder of Rome is, like the recent heads of state, also an eater. But he eats in the Curian manner, humble root vegetables, and does not engage in the excessive fishmongering of Tiberius or the enormous expenditure on delicacies of Gaius. Seneca thus uses a comparison with the buffoon Claudius to make Romulus lighten the rather serious institution of exemplarity.

Claudius's association with grotesque bodily activity only widens the gap between himself and the virtuous Romulus and adds another layer of humor in Diespiter's speech. Claudius is, of course, not only a consuming emperor but a defecating one. In Seneca's account his death is marked by a bowel movement: "These last words of his were heard among the people around him, after he had emitted a greater sound from that body part from which he spoke more easily: 'Oh no, I think I've shit myself!' I don't know whether or not he did, but he

[202] Marx lists it as Lucilius fr. 1357; Skutsch 1968: 111 posits *Romulus in caelo*. See Eden 1984: 114 for a fuller discussion.
[203] For the uniqueness of Seneca's engagement with the Greek and Roman literary canon in the *Apoc.* see Santucci 2022. For its intertextuality see also Blänsdorf 1986 and Trinacty 2012.

certainly shat up everything else" (*ultima vox eius haec inter homines audita est, cum maiorem sonitum emisisset illa parte, qua facilius loquebatur: 'vae me, puto, concacavi me.' quod an fecerit, nescio; omnia certe concacavit*, 4.3). This image is reinforced by a later moment in the text when Augustus, who argues passionately against Claudius's deification, compares the ease with which Claudius had ordered people to be murdered with that with which a dog squats to defecate (*tam facile homines occidebat, quam canis adsidit*, 10.3).

The dramatization of Claudius's disgusting bodily functions—especially, though not exclusively, in a visual performative context at the Saturnalia—makes visible the arbitrariness and absurdity of power (and, as Nussbaum argues, creates a distancing effect between the reader/viewer and the facade of politics, which Claudius's death reveals to be a mere fecal mess.[204]) This death scene is not wholly unimaginable, as other ancient sources paint Claudius as a gorger and farter,[205] but the possibility of such a death is of course key to Seneca's caricature. Gaius, the expensive banqueter, has been supplanted by Claudius the gorger (*vorare*) and shitter. Thus conspicuous consumption reaches its *reductio ad absurdum* in conspicuous excretion: the *Apocolocyntosis* is not just the "Deification" of Claudius but his "Defecation."

Nova exempla and their development in Stoic pedagogy

The grotesqueness of Claudius, like that of Vedius, leaves a bad taste in the reader's mouth. But Seneca has not yet explicitly theorized these *nova exempla*, representatives of the contemporary debased state of Roman eating. He will go on to do so in his final group of prose texts, in the early-mid 60s. Moreover, in the *de Providentia* and *Epistulae Morales* he fully

[204] Nussbaum 2010: 211-12. For a contrary view, one that downplays any coherent political message within Menippean satire, see Relihan 1993: 75-90.
[205] See Suet. *Cl*. 32-3.

realizes his own (and his reader's) capacity to be exemplary. These musings on exemplarity are bolstered by his deployment of the exemplary eaters Gaius Fabricius Luscinus and Quintus Aelius Tubero.

Seneca ties a plea for moderate eating with the suggestion to avoid *nova exempla* in the *de Tranquillitate Animi* (early 60s CE) and thus incorporates negative exempla like Vedius and Claudius more fully into his Stoic pedagogical project. In a discussion of the need for self-reliance in the face of the vicissitudes of fortune, a typically Stoic sentiment, he writes: "Let food tame hunger, let drink tame thirst, let desire proceed where it must; let's learn to rely on our limbs and not arrange our habits and diet to new *exempla*, but as the *mores maiorum* urge us" (*cibus famem domet, potio sitim, libido qua necesse est fluat; discamus membris nostris inniti, cultum victumque non ad nova exempla componere, sed ut maiorum mores suadent*, 9.2).

Clearly these *nova exempla* are those who act (and eat) in a somehow unrecommended manner. *Nova* implies recent, fashionable figures, but it should be noted that the adjective also means "strange." These are exempla that are new or strange, explicitly contrasted with the virtuous old Romans represented by the practitioners of the *mores maiorum*, Curius certainly among them. Those who violate the eater/eaten hierarchy, like Cambyses and Vedius, are of course exempla not to be followed, but even the very notion of their availability as exempla is threatening to the societal and philosophical guidelines that Seneca tries to establish. Those most conspicuous are most influential, which is why Curius, and his followers Fabricius and Tubero, are so important to Seneca's notion of exemplarity. When Seneca invokes the *mores maiorum* he does so with the hope of establishing a normatively Roman consumption apart from his distaste for overconsumption, distended bellies, and foods culled from the far reaches of the world—not to mention the extreme consumption of Cambyses and Vedius. By giving conspicuous

nonconsumers a place within the myth of the *mos maiorum* Seneca can enact a positive change in societal consumption through his text, or at least reconcile Roman exemplary eaters with his own brand of Stoic therapy.

Before analyzing Fabricius and Tubero as more developed versions of the conspicuous nonconsumption represented by Curius, I will read Hostius Quadra, *novus* in the sense of both "new" and "strange," for his exemplary potential. Hostius holds a mirror, both physically and metaphorically, up to the very idea of exemplarity. But he is not just a negative exemplum because of his sexual practices, but his gustatory ones, which Seneca emphasizes throughout his description of him.

Hostius Quadra (*NQ* 1.16)

In recent years Hostius Quadra, the katoptronophile (mirror fetishist) detailed at the end of Book 1 of the *Naturales Quaestiones*, has been of great interest to Senecan scholars.[206] A moral exemplum used to illustrate the principles about visual phenomena (atmospheric lights such as rainbows and meteors) that Seneca explains throughout Book 1, Hostius is the very embodiment of Seneca's maxim in his *consolatio* to Marcia: start with precepts and end with

[206] To give a few examples: Stahl 1960: 81-6, Waiblinger 1977: 69-70, and Codoñer 1989 are important in identifying connections between Hostius's mirror obsession and the themes of the book as a whole, Walters 1998: 362-63 uses Hostius to illuminate Juvenal's invective against the sexualized display of male bodies, Leitão 1998 gives a literary reading of Book 1 of the *NQ* that argues that Hostius is a dramatization of the various images of distortion that Seneca presents throughout the book, Kaster 2002 takes Hostius as an exemplum for the negative conception of patientia (sexual passivity unbefitting a man), Berno 2002 points out that Hostius's unnatural watching of his sexual activity is his real transgression (not the activity itself), then makes the case for Hostius as a tragic figure, Bartsch 2006: 103-14 examines Hostius as a case study in the relationship between reflection/representation and depravity, Toohey 2004: 261-82 presents a Lacanian reading, Williams 2005 reads Hostius himself as a mirror image of the philosopher eager to learn about natural phenomena (later expanded in Williams 2012, esp. 55-60 and 67-75). Le Blay 2013 reads Hostius as a perverter of the sort of self-knowledge espoused by Seneca and explicitly cites him as a negative exemplum.

exempla.[207] His exemplum is unabashedly negative; Hostius himself is like the distorted mirror images that he uses for sexual pleasure.[208]

Hostius, who lived during Augustus's reign, is introduced as a *fabella* ("little story," 1.16.1). He was apparently infamous in Seneca's time, as Seneca notes that he was "known for his obscenity to the point that it was produced for the stage" (*obscenitatis in scaenam usque productae*, 1.16.1). Hostius is mentioned in no other surviving Classical Latin text, and the script of this theatrical performance (if it was indeed produced; the meaning of this phrase is a point of contention for scholars) is surely a top-tier contender among lost Latin texts that we wish had survived.[209] Thus his exemplum might even have been dramatized for public viewing, as *fabella* has theatrical connotations as well. A man who watches himself watching might have been watched by others.

But what is this Hostius-drama? Seneca adduces Hostius, who employs mirrors with greatly exaggerated reflections while engaging in intercourse with people of different sexes, as part of his discussion about the properties of mirrors:

> fecitque specula huius notae cuius modo rettuli imagines longe maiores reddentia, in quibus digitus brachii mensuram et crassitudinem excederet. Haec autem ita disponebat ut, cum virum ipse pateretur, aversus omnes admissarii sui motus in speculo videret ac deinde falsa magnitudine ipsius membri tamquam vera gaudebat. (*NQ* 1.16.2)

[207] Seneca follows the same practice in Book 4, with an account of people who drink snow in order to extinguish burning hot mushrooms; for this and Hostius as examples of the "moralising epilogue" at the end of each book of the *NQ* see Williams 2008: 218.
[208] See, e.g., Williams 2005, Hine 2010a: 13.
[209] See Hine 1996b ad loc.; there are a number of textual alternatives to *scaenam* which Hine considers weak.

> He had mirrors made of the kind which I just mentioned, those that reflect images far greater, in which a finger might exceed the length and width of an arm. He arranged these mirrors in such a way that, moreover, when he was submitting to a man, even turned away from him he might see all the movements of his stallion in the mirror and then enjoy the false size of his very member, as if it were real.

With Hostius Seneca distorts the very idea of the exemplary. Hostius not only watches his own sexual behavior but changes the visual experience so as to enhance his pleasure. He is an exemplum quite literally reflected back on itself, watched by its own agent. With his visual activity Hostius subverts the hortatory nature of exempla that Seneca tries to establish in the *EM* (as I will discuss below).

An often-neglected aspect of Hostius's behavior, however, is Seneca's approximation of it to eating; he focuses on Hostius's ocular consumption of the mirror images of his sexual partners as if he were eating them:

> In omnibus quidem balneis agebat ille dilectum, et aperta mensura legebat viros, sed nihilominus mendaciis quoque insatiabile malum oblectabat… Foeda dictu sunt quae portentum illud ore suo lancinandum dixerit feceritque, cum illi specula ab omni parte opponerentur ut ipse flagitiorum suorum spectator esset, et quae secreta quoque conscientiam premunt, quaeque et sibi quisque fecisse se negat, non in os tantum sed in oculos suos ingereret… Spectabat illam libidinem oris sui; spectabat admissos sibi pariter in omnia viros… (*NQ* 1.16.3-5)

> He used to pick his favorite in all the public baths and would select men by their exposed length, but nevertheless his insatiable evil enjoyed the misrepresentations too… what that monster said and did is disgusting to say—he should have been torn apart with his own mouth—since he had mirrors placed opposite him from every side so that he himself could be spectator to his own shameful behavior, and so that he could heap not only into his mouth but into his eyes secret things which strain the conscience and which each person denies that he has done… He would watch that lusting of his own mouth, he would watch men admitted to him equally for all activities…

The gustatory language is clear: his sexual practice is called an *insatiabile malum* (1.16.3), an "insatiable evil," like a bottomless appetite, and oral sex delights not just his mouth but his eyes (*non in os tantum sed in oculos suos ingereret*, 1.16.4). Seneca continues to describe Hostius's fascination with looking at his own oral activity: "he watched that lusting of his own mouth" (*spectabat illam libidinem oris sui*, 1.16.5). He is, as Williams points out, like the fish-obsessed gourmands discussed elsewhere in the *NQ*, not content to eat with just their mouths, appetitive even with their eyes (*oculis quoque gulosi sunt*, 3.18.7).[210] The viewing and consuming experience is one and the same in Hostius's case as well.

"Feasting with the eyes" in the metaphorical sense is, of course, common in discussions both of viewing and eating, even apart from each other. One could feast their eyes on something that is not food, and at the same time the viewing of a meal before eating can be a synaesthetic experience. It should not be surprising, then, that the quotation "we eat with our eyes first" is sometimes attributed to Apicius. Other ancient viewing experiences bear out this similarity:

[210] See above, 77-8**.** See also Williams 2012: 77-8 for this point, although he makes this connection more in the context of Hostius and the dying mullet-watchers' viewing experience than their consumption.

David Larmour, in his analysis of the arena as a site of satire for Juvenal, writes "Consuming with the eyes is not unrelated to other types of consumption," which he explains by noting the popularity of gladiatorial depictions on cups and flasks.[211] But Hostius is the *reductio ad absurdum* of feasting with the eyes to the point that he is something of a monster, a *portentum*, as Seneca writes.

But nowhere else is the relevance of feasting with the eyes made clearer than in the monologue which Seneca attributes to Hostius:

> "...omnia membra stupris occupata sunt: oculi quoque in partem libidinis veniant et testes eius exactoresque sint. etiam ea quae a conspectu corporis nostri positio submovit arte visantur, ne quis me putet nescire quid faciam. nil egit natura quod humanae libidini ministeria tam maligne dedit, quod aliorum animalium concubitus melius instruxit. inveniam quemadmodum morbo meo et imponam et satisfaciam. quo nequitiam meam, si ad naturae modum pecco? id genus speculorum circumponam mihi quod incredibilem magnitudinem imaginum reddat. si liceret mihi, ad verum ista perducerem: quia non licet, mendacio pascar. obscenitas mea plus quam capit videat, et patientiam suam ipsa miretur." (NQ 1.16.7-9)

> All of my body parts have been occupied in these sexual acts; let the eyes, too, take part in desire and be its witnesses and exactors. Let even the things which the position of our bodies has removed from our sight be looked at by my art, lest anyone think I don't know what I'm doing. Nature has done nothing because it gave so inadequate equipment to

[211] Larmour 2016: 210-11.

> human lust, although it better equipped the sexual activities of the other animals. I will find the limit to which I will establish and satisfy my disease. What good is my wickedness if I commit wrong only to the limit imposed by nature? I will place this variety of mirrors around myself, the kind that reflects an incredible size of images. If it were permitted to me, I would make those images real; since it is not, I will feed on the lie. Let my obscenity see more than it takes in and let it itself marvel at its own submission.

This speech closes out the *fabella*, is clearly employed by Seneca for dramatic effect, and is, by all accounts, downright bizarre: why would a negative exemplum in a Stoic scientific prose text be given a speech?[212] Clearly the speech is indicative of Seneca's special interest in Hostius as a means of tying together his accounts of both natural and moral philosophy, but it also dramatizes Hostius's conflation of the roles of different body parts in sexual intercourse: "All of my body parts have been occupied in these sexual acts; let the eyes, too, take part in desire and be its witnesses and exactors" (*omnia membra stupris occupata sunt; oculi quoque in partem libidinis veniant et testes eius exactoresque sint*, 1.16.7). This is a decidedly un-Stoic castigation of *natura*, the divine provider and orderer of everything, which Hostius claims has endowed people insufficiently for sexual gratification; his mirrors complete what nature did not provide (1.16.8). The final two sentences give the logical conclusion of eyes as eaters, since the verb *capio*, which can mean "consume," strengthens the comparison.[213] Hostius is not only a negative exemplum

[212] Berno 2002: 225-28 considers this speech a tragic monologue and adduces parallels from figures in Senecan tragedy.
[213] *OLD* s.v. 3.

because of his unnatural sexual and ocular behavior but because of the way he endeavors to consume his own sexual consumption.

So Hostius's eyes are a crucial part of his ability to "feed on the lie." The eyes subsume the place of the mouth; they both watch the sexual acts of his mouth and act as a mouth themselves. Hostius is, then, both eater and eaten, like Cambyses and Vedius a violator of the eater/eaten hierarchy. He is an even more offensive infractor, however, since in making the eyes an organ of consumption he mocks *natura*'s ordering of the human body and tries to establish his own new one. This inverse innovation on the organizational work of *natura* accords with recent scholarly interpretations of Hostius as an "anti-sapiens."[214]

Hostius's speech, as Le Blay argues, even suggests his own desire to be an exemplum;[215] he himself is the mirror of the virtuous Roman exempla who eat moderately and in accordance with nature.[216] But another basic dimension of the exemplum may help explain Hostius's speech: exempla are, of course, public figures that need to be *seen* acting in their capacity as exempla. There must be an audience. Seneca makes Hostius aware of this dimension, which is perhaps why he pushes his point so far with the monologue. Hostius is, in addition to both eater and eaten, both viewer and viewed. He revels in his ability to become his own inverted sort of exemplum and, with his ultra-conspicuous consumption, provides Seneca an opportunity to reflect on the operations of the very institution of exemplarity.

But Hostius has something else in common with Cambyses and Vedius: Veblen's "help." The victims of Cambyses's and Vedius's consumption are their underlings. Seneca points out,

---

[214] See Berno 2002: 228, Williams 2012: 67-75.
[215] Le Blay 2013: 306: "il se voulait de fait exemplaire dans sa dépravation."
[216] Seneca's offers other mirror-image negative *nova exempla* elsewhere: see, e.g., the *turba lucifugarum* ("crowd of light-fleers") in *Ep.* 122, who sleep during the day and conduct their daily routine at night; these are figures from the Tiberian period and later.

before detailing Hostius's behavior, that he was murdered by his enslaved people, an act which Augustus did not deem him worthy of restitution (1.16.1). No reason is given for his murder, though Seneca implies that his behavior had something to do with it. After Hostius's speech, Seneca closes the episode by noting that he should have been killed in front of his own mirror (1.16.9). As in the case of Vedius, Hostius suffers as a consequence of unexemplary behavior that includes the abuse of his slaves; the intervention of Augustus is a part of each story, though more directly in Vedius's case. This pattern is relevant both to Seneca's calls for clemency toward one's enslaved people (as discussed in the previous chapter) and his configuration of Augustus as a positive exemplum who models this very clemency, albeit in his capacity of master of the citizen body as a whole. Augustus is the temperate emperor, the anti-Gaius and -Claudius.

The place of Hostius in the *NQ* suggests a reaction to the contemporary fascination with ocular consumption. As most scholars agree, what is now known as Book 1 of the *NQ* was originally the seventh of eight books, near the end of the text.[217] A look at the *gulosi* people in Book 3, the first book originally, suggests that Hostius's exemplum represents a development. A culture that starts out by eating dying mullets with its eyes devolves into consuming distorted mirror images of itself. Public becomes private, but private is still public, a dramatization of itself: the obscene (*obscaenitas*) put on stage (*in scaenam*), as Seneca puns at the beginning of the Hostius-drama. Seneca further dramatizes the exemplum by making Hostius himself speak, his own representation of conspicuous consumption insisting on itself. Society has become obsessed with its own theatricality, as the contemporary interest in public declamations suggests. Seneca uses Hostius, a mess of watching and consuming, as a commentary on this phenomenon.

[217] As Hine 2010a: 1-2 proposes, the original book order is 3, 4a, 4b, 5, 6, 7, 1, 2. The order was earlier proposed by Codoñer 1979 and is accepted by, among others, Williams 2012.

He naturally does not mention Nero by name in this passage, but it would be difficult for a contemporary reader to read Hostius without picturing the notorious *imperator scaenicus*, the theatrical emperor. Seneca's deployment of Augustus as a foil for Hostius makes the implication more apparent.

Gaius Fabricius Luscinus (*de Prov.* 3.6)

Fortunately, Seneca offers corrective measures for the perverse consumption and visuality of Hostius in other texts of the early-mid 60s. In *de Providentia* (64), a text that gives a Stoic explanation for the problem of evil, Seneca gives the exemplum of Gaius Fabricius Luscinus (consul in 282 and 278 BCE). Fabricius is best known for his conflicts with Pyrrhus of Epirus, and, like Curius, is celebrated for his austerity. Seneca's account of his exemplum makes him a sort of sequel to Curius, as well as a contrast with some of his conspicuous consumers.

Fabricius occurs early in the text. After expatiating on Stoic physics, Seneca claims that the *deus*, the divine providence that orders the world, tests the truly good man (1.6). The good Stoic, moreover, is equal to the task: he considers all hardships to be challenges (*omnia adversa exercitationes putat*, 2.2). Evil therefore does not exist; all hardships are mere character-building exercises (3.1). The use of exempla of virtuous men who endured suffering is a natural way to illustrate this point. Here, as elsewhere, Seneca reflects self-consciously on his use of exempla when he writes "Nothing, save for bad fortune, finds a great *exemplum*" (*magnum exemplum nisi mala fortuna non invenit*, 3.4). He then lists a number of exemplary icons, including Mucius Scaevola, Fabricius, Rutilius, Regulus, Socrates, and Cato, in order to refute the idea that, although they had endured such *mala fortuna*, they are *infelix* ("unfortunate," with reference to

their lives and reputations).[218] The societal valuation of *felix/infelix* is a sticking point in Senecan moral philosophy;[219] indeed, the final sentence of *Ep.* 124, the last letter in Book 20 of the *EM* and thus the very end of the Senecan corpus as we have it, reads "I will give you a brief maxim by which you may measure yourself, by which you may know that you are complete: you will have what is yours at this point, when you understand that the ones called least fortunate are really the fortunate ones" (*brevem tibi formulam dabo qua te metiaris, qua perfectum esse iam sentias: tunc habebis tuum cum intelleges infelicissimos esse felices*, 124.24).

Fabricius is certainly among those whom contemporary society would call *infelicissimus*. His "unfortunate" state is a result, Seneca writes, of his rural way of life and simple consumption. Seneca's version of his exemplum focuses mostly on his eating, which is tied directly to his being *infelix* and thus Seneca's greater message of the topsy-turvy priorities of society:

> Infelix est Fabricius, quod rus suum, quantum a re publica vacavit, fodit? Quod bellum tam cum Pyrrho quam cum divitiis gerit? Quod ad focum cenat illas ipsas radices et herbas quas in repurgando agro triumphalis senex vulsit? Quid ergo? Felicior esset, si in ventrem suum longinqui litoris pisces et peregrina aucupia congereret, si conchylis superi atque inferi maris pigritiam stomachi nausiantis erigeret, si ingenti pomorum strue cingeret primae formae feras, captas multa caede venantium? (*de Prov*. 3.6)

[218] For Senecan lists of exempla, see Roller 2015a, Backhaus 2019: 101-4. For the similar grouping of Cato, Socrates, and Laelius in the *EM*, see Ficca 1995.
[219] For the valances of *felix* and *infelix* in Senecan prose, see Viansino 2005.

> Is Fabricius unfortunate because he tills his land, as much as he had leisure time from the state? Because he wages war as much with Pyrrhus as with wealth? Because he dines at his hearth on those very radishes and vegetables which he, an old man who had received a triumph, plucked while tidying his field? So what? Would he be happier had he heaped up into his stomach fish from a remote shore and foreign fowl, if he had roused the laziness of his sick stomach with shellfish from the highest and lowest part of the sea, if he had surrounded choice wild beasts, captured with much bloodshed on the part of the hunters, with an enormous pile of fruit?

Fabricius is fortunate—markedly not *infelix*—to eat *radices et herbae*. As in Curius's exemplum (as well as the lead-up to it that features the expensive habits of Gaius) there is a contrast between homegrown Italian vegetables, the stuff of ancient virtue, and exotic foods. Several culprits from the *consolatio* to Helvia reappear here, namely the foreign shellfish (*conchylia ultimi maris ex ignoto litore eruere*, *Hel*. 10.2) and birds (*a Parthis… aves petere*, 10.2), the cultural milieu in which Curius is notable for his nonconsumption. But this is an image that Seneca develops in the *EM* too, alongside the *de Prov.*, as I wrote in the previous chapter. *Ep*. 89.22 criticizes the mixed global meal, and there are numerous points of correspondence here: the dangerously caught wild meat (*fera periculose capta*, 89.22), the imported shellfish (*conchyliis tam longe advectis*, 89.22), the notion of a variety that sickens (*fastidium* in 89.22, the *nauseans stomachus* here).

The language of Fabricius's exemplum is much more vivid than that of Curius, as we can see; Fabricius is a more developed version of Curius. Here Seneca prefers to draw an even more extensive contrast between Fabricius's radishes and herbs and the exotic delicacies of the long

final sentence, which are themselves, in the larger cultural context, supposed to be the appetizing dishes. Great quantities of food, like the *ingens strues* of fruit, represent the vertical expansion of the Roman meal, while the dazzling diversity of dishes (foreign fish and fowl, shellfish, wild game, a fancy fruit garnish) represents a horizontal expansion: dinner just gets bigger and bigger. But simple foods prepared by one's own hand are the mark of the truly *felix* person, who recognizes that bad fortune is what you make of it. This is a key part of how the good Stoic handles adversity.

Seneca, through humbly eating exempla like Curius and Fabricius, attempts to reinvent the idea of desirable food in light of Stoic values, where Curius's *vilissimus cibus* or Fabricius's *radices et herbas*, which do not sound particularly appetizing on their face, can be more appealing than sought-after exotic delicacies. It makes sense, then, that he draws on a Roman tradition that connects (and even conflates) these two figures.[220] Curius and Fabricius are the darlings of Roman exemplary virtue, the very portrait of simplicity and austerity. But Seneca, by paying special attention to their eating habits and bringing them into the context of the Roman imperial emporium, makes them Stoic exempla by Roller's definition: their military exploits do not define them, but the way they live their lives does. Whence comes Seneca's interest in their eating: for these figures eating cheap food is not performative, but a microcosm of their quotidian gustatory activity.

Fabricius is not only a more fully realized Curius, however, but a correction of the sort of perversely conspicuous eating done by rulers such as Cambyses. Fabricius's locavore vegetarian

[220] They are connected in, e.g., Cic. *de Sen*. 6.15, Val. Max. 4.3.7, Pliny *NH* 9.118, and Gellius *NA* 1.10.1; a famous remark of Curius, about preferring to rule rich people than to be one, is attributed to Fabricius in Frontinus *Strategemata* 4.3.2 and Gellius *NA* 1.14 (paraphrasing Hyginus). Among modern scholarship they are therefore often examined side-by-side: see Berrendonner 2001, Vigourt 2001 (both of whom link them as *novi homines* and analyze them with the lens of the "great man" at Rome), Costa 2013: 32 n. 77, and Martin 2019.

meal, which does not consist of exotic dishes like foreign birds (*peregrina aucupia*) supplants the meat-eating and cannibalism (the *reductio ad absurdum* of meat-eating[221]) of Cambyses, who had himself dined on *generosae aves*. The passages are mirror images of each other: Fabricius rejects wild beasts caught at the risk of the hunter, while Cambyses and his men are, most unnaturally, both hunter and hunted. The conspicuous nonconsumer can, as Seneca seems to suggest, rewrite the rules for how a leader should treat his subordinates.

Quintus Aelius Tubero (*Ep*. 95.72-3)

Given the centrality of the *EM* to Seneca's philosophical mission, it should not be surprising that the exemplary eating discussed throughout this chapter reaches its zenith therein. Seneca writes about exempla throughout: early in the body of letters Seneca writes that they help aid the reader's comprehension "since the journey is long through precepts, short and efficient through exempla" (*quia longum iter est per praecepta, breve et efficax per exempla***,** *Ep*. 6.5). Moreover, exempla are preferable to Stoic syllogisms in effecting real positive behavioral change; as Seneca sardonically writes in *Ep*. 82, a syllogism would be of no use to the Spartans attempting to defend the pass at Thermopylae, who need the passionate encouragement of a Leonidas, not the academic proofs of a Zeno, to lay down their lives as heroes.[222]

But the clearest statement of Seneca's brand of Stoic exemplarity occurs near the end of the *EM*, in *Ep*. 98. After listing some positive exempla (including Fabricius and Tubero), he directly exhorts his correspondent Lucilius to join him among the ranks of the exemplary: "Let's

[221] A Pythagorean idea, which had influenced Seneca's youthful vegetarianism: see *Ep*. 108.17-22.
[222] *Ep*. 82.21: "How should you exhort that they accept the ruin of their entire people, with their bodies thrown in the way, and retreat from their life rather than their position? Will you say, 'what is bad is not glorious; death is glorious; therefore death is not bad?' Oh, what an effective speech! Who would hesitate after this to throw himself on enemy weapons and die standing?" (*quemadmodum exhortaris ut totius gentis ruinam obiectis corporibus excipiant et vita potius quam loco cedant? Dices 'quod malum est gloriosum non est; mors gloriosa est; mors ergo non malum'? O efficacem contionem! Quis post hanc dubitet se infestis ingerere mucronibus et stans mori?*)

do something courageous ourselves, too: let's be among these exempla!" (*nos quoque aliquid et ipsi faciamus animose; simus inter exempla*, *Ep*. 98.13). His self-conscious use of exempla here and in the above passages indicates that he, in the words of Roland Mayer, creates "a basic role for exempla within a moral system" to an extent not done by previous Roman authors.[223] Even in a generally exempla-obsessed culture, Seneca broadens the horizons of what it means to use exempla as tools for teaching behavior or values. Exempla are permeable: one can enter the realm of the exemplary by studying up on those detailed by Seneca throughout his corpus.

Quintus Aelius Tubero is one of the exempla that Seneca lists as part of this exhortation. Seneca had just given his exemplum in *Ep*. 95, surely fresh in the mind of the cover-to-cover reader of the *EM*.[224] Tubero, a candidate for the praetorship in 129 BCE, was a Stoic philosopher and Roman public figure. A student of the eminent second-century Stoic Panaetius of Rhodes (a philosopher influential to Seneca[225]), he is known for his family connections: he was the grandson of Lucius Aemilius Paullus, who commanded the Roman forces that defeated Perseus of Macedon at the Battle of Pydna in 168, and the nephew of Scipio Aemilianus, also a famous general but better known for his literary and intellectual patronage, as the founder of the so-called "Scipionic Circle." Tubero's exemplary moment, like those of Curius and Fabricius, comes from his frugality.[226] When his uncle Scipio died in 129, Tubero threw a funeral banquet for him, which he organized a bit too austerely for Roman public taste, with earthenware eating utensils and wooden seats covered with goatskins.

---

[223] Mayer 2008: 312.
[224] Most recent scholars agree that this is the preferred method of reading the *EM*; for some of the more creative holistic readings of the collection of letters see Schafer 2011, J. Henderson 2004.
[225] Seneca quotes him approvingly in *Ep*. 116.5. For Tubero as student (and occasional literary dedicatee) of Panaetius, see Grimal 1978: 174-76, 345, 348, 351.
[226] A connection between Curius and Fabricius and the Tubero family (though not the Tubero of this exemplum, but his father) is made by Valerius Maximus: "Some might think, rightfully so, that Quintus Tubero, who had the cognomen Catus, was a student of Curius and Fabricius" (*Curi et Fabrici Q. Tuberonem cognomine Catum discipulum fuisse merito quis existimaverit*, 4.3.7).

At the end of *Ep*. 95, often seen, along with the letter preceding it, as a centerpiece of Senecan moral philosophy, Seneca not only includes Tubero in a list of positive exempla but gives him place of preference:

> Proderit non tantum quales esse soleant boni viri dicere formamque eorum et liniamenta deducere sed quales fuerint narrare et exponere, Catonis illud ultimum ac fortissimum vulnus per quod libertas emisit animam, Laeli sapientiam et cum suo Scipione concordiam, alterius Catonis domi forisque egregia facta, Tuberonis ligneos lectos, cum in publicum sterneret, haedinasque pro stragulis pelles et ante ipsius Iovis cellam adposita conviviis vasa fictilia. Quid aliud paupertatem in Capitolio consecrare? Ut nullum aliud factum eius habeam quo illum Catonibus inseram, hoc parum credimus? censura fuit illa, non cena. O quam ignorant homines cupidi gloriae quid illa sit aut quemadmodum petenda! Illo die populus Romanus multorum supellectilem spectavit, unius miratus est. Omnium illorum aurum argentumque fractum est et [in] milliens conflatum, at omnibus saeculis Tuberonis fictilia durabunt. (95.72-3)

> It will help not only to state the sort which good men usually are, to describe their form and features, but also to narrate and explain which kinds of men like this there have been: that famous final, most steadfast wound of Cato, through which liberty lost its spirit, the wisdom of Laelius and his harmony with his friend Scipio, the distinguished deeds at home and abroad of the other Cato, and the wooden couches of Tubero, when he spread, at a public event, goatskins instead of tapestries and earthenware vessels placed before the shrine of Jupiter himself at the banquet. What else was this, other than to consecrate

> poverty on the Capitoline? Although I can offer no other deed of his with which to insert him among the Catos, do we think this one isn't enough? That was an act of censorship, not a dinner. Oh, how men desirous of glory are unaware of what it is, or how it should be sought out! On that day the Roman people saw the furniture of many men, but it marveled at that of only one. The gold and silver of all those men has been broken and melted down a thousand times, but Tubero's earthenware will endure in every age.

Seneca's virtuous Tubero is, in part, a response to Cicero, an important earlier writer of his exemplum.[227] In his courtroom speech in defense of the consul-elect Murena (late 63 BCE), Cicero, in an attack on the Stoic commitment of Cato, his enemy and the prosecutor of his client, invokes Tubero's own public display of Stoic principles at Aemilianus's funeral, which Cicero alleges cost Tubero his upcoming election for the praetorship. As Francesca Berno has shown, Cicero sarcastically uses phrases like *eruditissimus ac Stoicus* ("very erudite and Stoic," *Mur*. 75) to implicate Tubero's Stoicism in the failure of the funeral banquet and his subsequent political career and, on a wider level, to criticize the application of Stoic principles to daily life.[228] Cicero's core idea is that the Roman people appreciated private frugality, but not its public consequences: "The Roman people hate private luxury, but they appreciate a public magnificent display" (*odit populus Romanus privatam luxuriam, publicam magnificentiam diligit*, *Mur*. 76). Seneca thus, in his use of Tubero as a positive exemplum of frugality done right, directly takes on Cicero's anti-Stoic rhetoric by making Tubero an exemplary hero.[229]

---

[227] *Pro Murena* 75-6.
[228] Berno 2014: 370-74.
[229] Grimal 1978: 175 provides an apology for Cicero, whom he claims is "du courant panétien du stoicisme" and, because of this allegiance, rejects Tubero's squalid display on the grounds that it is closer to Cynic practice. Cicero had written that Tubero's preparations were more appropriate for Diogenes the Cynic (*Mur*. 75).

Tubero is a normative exemplum for conspicuous nonconsumption: Seneca writes that he embodies the very way that glory *should* be pursued (*quemadmodum petenda*).

Seneca's positive version of Tubero competes with Cicero's negative exemplum on several fronts: Seneca's Tubero is not the object of criticism because of an electoral defeat; Seneca ranks him with the Catos, who are here depicted positively (the younger Cato, of course, had been the real target of Cicero's scornful invocation of Tubero); Tubero achieves a rare immortality through his frugal banquet, while Cicero (and Murena) are of course not mentioned at all. It is, of course, important that Tubero is a Stoic—in Roland Mayer's words, Seneca's positive use of Tubero indicates that he is "setting the record straight on behalf of a fellow Stoic"[230]—but Seneca does not praise him explicitly for this reason and this passage is not a mere defense of an earlier adherent to Seneca's philosophical school.[231]

The context of this exemplum suggests its importance. Tubero's earthenware (which will live forever) is the climax of *Epp*. 94 and 95, a pair of letters that work together to form the core of Seneca's explications of *decreta* (doctrines) and *praecepta* (teachings), one of the most crucial components of his Stoic teachings throughout the *Epistulae*.[232] The fact that Seneca ends his discussion, extended through these two lengthy letters, with Tubero both responds to the sort of profligate eating that he had castigated earlier in the letter and embodies the Stoic virtues of goodness and indifference toward material things.[233] Seneca uses Tubero to correct the destructive eating that is promoted by *luxuria*, "the destroyer of earth and sea," represented by

[230] Mayer 2008: 311.
[231] The amount of scholarly attention Seneca's Tubero has received is not proportionate to his importance in this letter, which, as stated here and in the previous chapter, is one of his most philosophically important. The fullest analysis is by Berno 2014, who points out the lack of attention paid to his place in the letter (379, n. 28); for briefer analyses see also, e.g., Grimal 1978: 404-5, von Albrecht 2004: 92-6, and Mayer 2008: 311. Sauer 2018: 93-4 compares Seneca's use of Tubero and the other exempla at the end of the letter as normative ethical models with Cicero's earlier use of them to represent certain philosophical positions in his own literature.
[232] Schafer 2009 is a monograph entirely dedicated to the structural analysis of these two letters in tandem.
[233] For a fuller discussion of Tubero's representation of Senecan virtue, see Berno 2014: 378-81.

the Roman culinary obsession with mixed-together foods, and exemplified in the epicures Apicius and Octavius, who engage in a bidding war over Tiberius's giant mullet.[234] The prominent place of Tubero thus shows the importance not only of exempla in general in Seneca (and, of course, their normative potential in promoting moral virtue), but their use in Seneca's revision of the Roman gustatory record as a positive plank of moral education. Simply put, Seneca's ending this letter with Tubero is a big deal.[235]

Tubero may not himself be an eater (as Curius and Fabricius are), but because of his *censura non cena* he is associated with the same sort of culinary frugality, and in an explicitly public (and conspicuous) setting at that. If Curius and Fabricius, who each get relatively quick mentions in their respective passages, are appetizers, then Tubero must be the entree. Seneca's Tubero is thus a fitting demonstration of his ability to rewrite Roman gustatory exempla as part of a Stoic moral curriculum. The bad taste of Vedius and Hostius is thus replaced by a representative of Old Roman Virtue.

Seneca's ending this letter with an exemplum brings this chapter full circle, since he returns to the conventional wisdom from which he had deviated in his *consolatio* to Marcia: begin with precepts, end with exempla. The confidence of the final words in the letter, *omnibus saeculis Tuberonis fictilia durabunt*, imply that not just Tubero's earthenware but his name itself[236] will live forever. This is precisely why Seneca prefers to end with exempla—as he ends Book 3 of the *de Ira* with Vedius and Book 1 of the *NQ* with Hostius. These exempla live on in

[234] On these passages, see above, 70-76.
[235] Tubero (as well as the other exempla at the end of this letter) is downplayed by Schafer 2009; in his generally persuasive reading of *Epp*. 94 and 95 he calls these exempla "rhetorical flourishes" and does not mention Tubero by name ("Cato and a series of other exemplary Romans round out the letter," 23).
[236] The *Tuberonis cognomen* also relates to eating, since *Tubero* the Aelian cognomen may be connected with *tuber*, a type of fungus.

the minds of their readers, *phantasiai* to experience and lessons to carry, but none so explicitly as Tubero, a man for all seasons.

Conclusion

From the preceding it is clear that exemplary eaters are a crucial part of Seneca's moral philosophy (as well as his conception of what moral philosophy should do) from his earliest extant texts to his latest. Hostius in the *NQ*, Fabricius in the *de Prov*., and Tubero in the *EM* represent the most developed of his exemplary eaters, as they build on the lessons in power and visuality that he had begun with the *consolationes* and *de Ira* (and of which he created a humorous version in the *Apoc*.). But as a final note I want to suggest a way in which Seneca takes his own advice from *Ep*. 98 and joins the ranks of the exemplary with his death.

The picture of Seneca's death as sketched by the historian Tacitus (*Ann*. 15.62-4) is familiar territory in scholarly reconstructions of the end of Seneca's life and its reconciliation with his literature.[237] One of the most persistently quoted phrases in this scene is Seneca's determination to leave to his friends an "image of his own life" (*imaginem vitae suae*, 15.42) with his manner of death, which is tortuous: after he is unable to die by slitting his veins, he drinks poison (which also does not work), and then speeds the bleeding with a hot bath.

This *imago*, of course, resembles that of Socrates. Tacitus himself makes this connection, though he does not mention Socrates by name, when Seneca opts to drink poison.[238] Thus Seneca makes the exemplum of Socrates as drinker into a blueprint for his own exemplum. But he also

[237] As well as iconic for his thinking about death in general: see, e.g., Ker 2009.

[238] 15.64: *Seneca interim, durante tractu et lentitudine mortis, Statium Annaeum, diu sibi amicitiae fide et arte medicinae probatum, orat provisum pridem venenum quo damnati publico Atheniensium iudicio extinguerentur promeret* ("Meanwhile, with the harsh and slow drawing out of death, Seneca begs Statius Annaeus, a man for a long time favored by him for the faith of his friendship and his skill in medicine, to bring out the poison previously provided, the sort with which those condemned by the public tribunal of the Athenians were murdered.")

says to his wife Pompeia Paulina, who tells him that she wishes to die with him, "I will not begrudge your *exemplum*" (*non invidebo exemplo,* 15.63). Nero foils her attempt, but Seneca ends his own life, not just a text, with these exempla.

Luckily the end of Seneca's life is not his final act. Just as Tubero and his earthenware persist, so does Seneca's text, the exemplary medium that the reader can consult over and over, whenever necessary for their own Stoic education. As in *Ep.* 2.4, these exempla become part of the *proficiens*'s diet, each a protection to ward off the negative consequences of living in Roman society.

Chapter 3: Satiric Courses

"Napoleon liked seafood. His favorite dish was oysters Florentine. It's amazing, isn't it? Churchill liked seafood. All the great generals were keen on seafood. What did Julius Caesar like, or Hitler? Hitler liked clams. And Mussolini liked squid." - Albert, *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (1989)

Curius's turnips and Vedius's human flesh-stuffed lampreys are one thing. The foods popular in Seneca's contemporary Rome are quite another. Seneca must have *something* to say about food in a context apart from its exemplary eaters, who only eat virtuously or monstrously. What is there *between* the turnips of Old Roman Virtue and the cannibalism of Cambyses or Vedius? Earlier in his literary career Seneca had begun looking to exemplarity and visibility in order to delineate the place of eating within Stoic moral philosophy, but in his late texts he appropriates the foodstuffs of satire, a miscellaneous, messy genre that he makes into a vessel for more abstract concepts of Stoic philosophy.

This appropriation is, on its face, strange. What do satiric foods like oysters, mullets, or mixed dishes containing any and all seafood have to do with Stoicism? Seafood is fancy, exotic, strange, luxurious—ripe for complaint and comparison to Rome's mythical golden age of virtue when the *maiores* would not dare eat something as sumptuous as fish.[239] As Davidson pithily puts it, "Fish seduces and conquers."[240] These products of Roman marine expansion are fodder for Seneca's marriage of Roman literature and Stoicism in part because of his satiric

[239] See, e.g., Purcell 1995: 134-35, Déry 1998, Tietz 2013: 44-5 and passim. For the absence of fish in respectable (Greek) literary genres, see Davidson 1997: 11-20. For Roman attitudes toward food and their shaping of political and social identity and ideology, see Purcell 2005.
[240] Davidson 1997: 10.

predecessors' fascination (and uneasiness) with imperial incursions across the seas, embodied by the exotic fish they made available at Rome.

I discussed some of Seneca's reactions to maritime imperialism in the first chapter, but here I will emphasize that Roman satiric literature is redolent of these flavors. Satiric food has been described as "corruption in the midst of civilization" and "simultaneously the object of moral and aesthetic repugnance" for satirists such as Horace and Persius.[241] But Seneca seeks to use satire, just as he does exempla and Republican moralistic belly-discourse, in his marriage of Roman literature and Stoicism. His project is one of reclamation: satire, messy though it is, can serve a purpose as a plank of a positive literary-pedagogical project.

The satiric moments in Seneca's philosophical corpus, especially the *Epistulae Morales* and the *Naturales Quaestiones*, engage with both Stoic philosophical concepts and the Roman satirists that precede Seneca. The relevance of satire to moral philosophy is nothing new—Horace's own brand of satire, given the title *Sermones*, "Conversations," is a vessel for Epicureanism (to be discussed later in this chapter) and Persius's Stoicism finds literary form in verse satire[242]—but Seneca uses satiric foods to work out ideas about Stoic cosmology, not just moral philosophy. Satiric foods present viable images for discussions of the unity of the Stoic universe, with special attention to questions of relationality, the correspondences of parts with their wholes, and the concept of *forma*, a word that Seneca exploits for its cosmological, generic, and aesthetic significance, both cosmic matter and the quality of physical beauty.

But satire is not just an intelligible frame for expressing Stoic concepts to a literarily-informed Roman readership. Seneca's satiric courses, through their shared subject matter with the satirists Horace and Lucilius, promote an agonistic relationship with these literary forebears.

---

[241] Gowers 1993: 109, 121.
[242] For satire as a way for Roman authors to incorporate the Greek philosophical tradition, see Mayer 2005.

The use of satire, identified as a genre that allows its authors to assume "threatening poses" of competition,[243] helps Seneca stake out a competitive claim for his place within the Roman literary canon. In so doing he establishes another point of contact between his Stoic philosophical message and his status as a reader-producer of Latin literature.

Since the texts I will be discussing, the *EM* and the *NQ*, are not satire of the verse or Menippean form, I read Seneca's use of satire as dialogic, a literary mode that is intergeneric and can appear in texts that seemingly have nothing to do with the genre of satire.[244] So Dustin Griffin conceives of satire in his 1994 monograph: satire is a "body-snatcher" that can "invade *any* literary form" (his emphasis) and "alter its 'potential'."[245] This flexible reading of satire helps locate some elements of satiric content (disgusting foods, for example) *outside* the genre's form and asks what satire can do on the dialogic level, as a tool for negotiating different questions posed by different genres.

Such a scholarly intervention is necessary because satire has spent most of its modern interpretative history as the rope in a game of tug-of-war between a historicist perspective (one that asks questions such as "Which historical figure is Horace's pesky interlocutor in *S.* 1.9?") and a New Critical one, limited to the contents of the text itself. Attempts to destabilize satire and break it from these restraints have emphasized the incompleteness and outdatedness of these lenses yet tend to remain in a certain zone of aporia.[246] But the application of Griffin's

[243] See especially Freudenburg 2001.
[244] I do not use the word "mode" in a Fryean manner, since for Northrop Frye satire is a *mythos*; see Frye 1957: 223-39.
[245] Griffin 1994: 3. Griffin mentions several genres to illustrate this point, though none relevant to Seneca. See also Connery and Combe 1995: 5: "Satire's own frequent formlessness forces it to inhabit the forms of other genres (as in the mock-heroic), and makes satire resistant to simplistic versions of a formalist approach…." As a complement to Griffin's conception of satire, see Knight 2004: 4 on satire as "pre-generic": "It is not a genre in itself but an exploiter of other genres." Another conception of the metamorphic nature of satire is Arthur Pollard's (1970: 22) "a chameleon adapting itself to its environment."
[246] For recent grapplings with these problems see, in addition to Griffin, Connery and Combe 1995, Bogel 2001, Gilmore 2018.

metamorphic satire to Seneca's philosophical texts, within the genres of the epistle and scientific manual, will help give a sensible explanation to the great deal of satiric imagery contained within. The body-snatcher invades these texts, bringing with it a mess of seafood, but this invasion is no accident, as Seneca uses the flavor of satiric foods as a Stoic pedagogical aid and an assertion of his place in the "wholly Roman" (*tota nostra est*) satiric literary tradition.[247]

Indeed, scholars have identified this satiric intrusion into Senecan philosophy, but they tend to merely mention his use of satiric imagery without problematizing it, or even investigating its very strangeness.[248] Seneca's dialogic use of satire to grapple with contemporary cultural consumption, such as the horizontal and vertical expansion of the Roman meal, may be unsurprising considering the clear connections between satire and moral philosophy. But Seneca's satire as a vessel for Stoic cosmology remains unexplored. The *EM* and *NQ* are texts that teach Stoic philosophy as a holistic exercise, after all, with an emphasis on the interconnectedness of the moral and the natural. Satiric foods can help express not just this interconnectedness but the relevance of Stoic philosophy to the history of Roman literature.

I will begin by analyzing the so-called *nobilis patina*, a dish of mixed seafood that appears in the middle of *Ep*. 95, a letter that provides one of Seneca's most important systematic discussions of Stoic pedagogy. The *nobilis patina* is simultaneously a reflection on satire itself

[247] So the very famous (and often debated) judgment of Quintilian: "Satire, at least, is all ours" (*satura quidem tota nostra est*, *Inst*. 10.1.93).

[248] E.g., Matthews n.d. 13, who makes the important point that the major sources for Roman cooking from the late first century are "either moralists or satirists," but then draws an artificial distinction between the two; Motto 2001 is more descriptive than argumentative: she reads what she calls Seneca's "culinary satire" forward through the golden age of English satire, but takes for granted the difficulty in pinning down satire itself; Degl'Innocenti Pierini 2013 reads *Ep*. 114, specifically the burlesque of Maecenas, as satire, but similarly does not reflect much on the concept itself. On various satiric images (including banquets) in *de Brev. Vit*. 12, see Williams 2003 ad loc. On connections between the *Moral Epistles* and Horatian satire see Edwards 2017, who is more open-minded than most: "Even at his most seriously philosophical Stoic Seneca, perhaps, cannot altogether escape the railing of satirist Seneca" (81). Berno 2008 investigates *pienezza*, fullness, in Seneca, but (rather purposefully) downplays the connections he makes between fullness and eating, let alone his relationship with *satura* as a literary mode.

and Stoic cosmology: the confused farrago of its ingredients is an inversion of the proper relationality of the well-ordered Stoic world. I will then move to the two most visible ingredients in the dish, oysters and mullets, which Seneca returns to at several points not only in *Ep*. 95 but throughout the *EM* and in the *NQ* as well. Seneca's oysters are slimy, disgusting, and ambiguous; they lack *forma*, the shape of Stoic matter, and are problematic from both a gastro-moralistic perspective and also a Stoic physical one. In contrast, mullets have *forma*, but too much of it. Tiberius's mullet in *Ep*. 95 has *ingens forma*, huge size, and represents a site of competition with the earlier Epicurean satirist Horace. The mullets eaten by gourmands in Book 3 of the *NQ*, on the other hand, are *formosa* in the sense of "beautiful," a misunderstanding of the lessons about Stoic cosmology that Seneca espouses in the *NQ*. Seneca's attention to matters of *forma* thus underscores contemporary Rome's lack of interest in philosophy, while the intrusion of satire helps close the gap between the literary and the philosophical.

Satire, the mixed dish, and Stoic (micro)cosmology

Satire is a mess. In Juvenal's famous estimation the contents of his satires ("whatever people do," *quidquid agunt homines*, 1.85) make up a medley, *nostri farrago libelli*, "the fodder of our book" (1.86), with *libelli* occupying the liminal space between subjective and objective genitive, both the food that the book eats and that which it provides. Scholars are keen to call attention to satire's status as a miscellany, even to the point that the *lanx satura*, satire's mythical "full plate," inspired the term *lex satura* for a piece of legislation whose appealing heading

masks less popular provisions within.[249] The most satiric food is then like the genre itself, a *farrago*: unrecognizable, unformed, unassimilable.

Seneca's *Ep*. 95 is a sort of *lex satura*. At first glance the letter is a systematic analysis of *praecepta* and *decreta*, the sort of nitty-gritty discussion Seneca's interlocutor Lucilius (not to be confused with the early Roman satirist[250]) has carefully worked his way up to within the intricately dramatized education that Seneca presents in his letters. Therefore, the letter tends to be read for its exposition of Stoic moral teaching for the aspiring Stoic of the mid-first century.[251] Such a focus, however, can obscure an extensive middle section of the letter: its satiric innards.[252] *Ep*. 95 is, in this sense, a microcosm of the *Epistulae Morales* and makes a good starting point for the discussion of satire within Senecan philosophy.

Ep. 95's menu begins after Seneca notes that the philosophical schools are empty, but the kitchens are stuffed (*at quam celebres culinae sunt*, 95.23); *celebres* is the first of many metaliterary references to satire itself, the stuffed genre. With an anaphoric *praeteritio* for the variety of different entertainers and workers required for one dinner—flocks (*greges*) of boys, herds (*agmina*) of male sex-workers, a crowd (*turbam*) of bakers and servers, themselves as well as their conglomeration all the stuff of elaborate satiric setting (24)—Seneca turns to the foods. Mushrooms (*boleti*) are a *voluptarium venenum*, a "pleasurable poison" that can kill their taster even without immediate effects (like satire, a venomous attack couched within pleasing literature); snow kept in summertime (*nix aestiva*) has adverse effects on the liver; oysters

[249] The fourth-century CE grammarian Diomedes's *Grammatici Latini* 1.485 is the *locus classicus* for this etymology; for some modern discussion of the *lex satura* or *lex per saturam* see, e.g., van Rooy 1965: 14-5, Gowers 1993: 109-26, Griffin 1994: 6-10 and passim.
[250] As sometimes happened even in Rome, as the title *ad Lucilium* was used to refer to the *EM*; see Gellius 12.2.3, as well as Sosin 1999: 294-95 for modern discussion.
[251] See, most thoroughly, Schafer 2009.
[252] Gazzarri 2014 does note the presence of satiric food imagery in the letter but explores it in a Hippocratic medical context more so than one that emphasizes Seneca's place in the Roman satiric tradition.

(*ostrea*) that soak up mud and filth weigh down those people eating them; and the infamous garum, a fermented fish sauce, burns up the innards with a salty rotting.[253] These foods are already rotten and continue to rot in the stomach once consumed (25). These are courses in normalized gustatory depravity.

But most striking about the foods in this letter is what Seneca does with them next: he mixes them all up. The next three sections are worth quoting in entirety:

> Memini fuisse quondam in sermone nobilem patinam in quam quidquid apud lautos solet diem ducere properans in damnum suum popina congesserat: veneriae spondylique et ostrea eatenus circumcisa qua eduntur intervenientibus distinguebantur †echini totam destructique† sine ullis ossibus mulli constraverant. Piget esse iam singula: coguntur in unum sapores. In cena fit quod fieri debebat in ventre: expecto iam ut manducata ponantur. Quantulo autem hoc minus est, testas excerpere atque ossa et dentium opera cocum fungi? 'Gravest luxuriari per singula: omnia semel et in eundem saporem versa ponantur. Quare ego ad unam rem manum porrigam? plura veniant simul, multorum ferculorum ornamenta coeant et cohaereant. Sciant protinus hi qui iactationem ex istis peti et gloriam aiebant non ostendi ista sed conscientiae dari. Pariter sint quae disponi solent, uno iure perfusa; nihil intersit; ostrea, echini, spondyli, mulli perturbati concoctique ponantur.' Non esset confusior vomentium cibus. (26-8)
>
> I recall that there was once a fancy dish making the rounds in *sermone* into which a cookshop, hastily rushing into bankruptcy, had heaped together whatever sort of thing

[253] On garum, see, most fully, Grainger 2014 and 2020.

> tends to be a day-wasting pursuit among elegant people: aphrodisiac nautili, mussels, and oysters cut around the point where they are eaten were separated for those customers dropping in; boneless mullets had covered them.[254] At this point it is unsatisfying for these foods to be served individually: the flavors are collected into one. What should happen in the stomach happens at the meal: I expect that next they'll be served already chewed! Moreover, how close must we be to this point, when the cook picks out shells and bones and usurps the job of the teeth? "It is too much work to indulge ourselves through individual dishes: let them be served as one and transformed into the same flavor. Why should I extend my hand to one thing? Let more come at the same time, let the contents of many trays join and stick together. Let them know at once, those who used to say that boasting and glory were the goals of these things, that it's done not for show but as part of a way of life! Let the things which are usually separated be together, poured together in one *iure*; let no distinction be made; let oysters, urchins, mussels, and mullets be served mixed together and cooked together." The food of those vomiting couldn't be more confused.

Seneca closes with the observation, his ostensible reason for this satiric outburst, that philosophy has become more complex in order to better respond to the convoluted diseases resulting from such a convoluted diet.

This intrusion of satire is riddled with metaliterary nods to the genre itself. The opening verb *memini* marks Seneca's shift into the realm of storyteller, capable of manipulating Rome's

[254] This sentence is just as confused as the dish it describes. Attempts at emendation have been made, though none all that convincing; *intervenientibus* could modify another seafood-name that dropped out of the text or else refer to the *popina*'s customers. I take it as a substantive: "drop in" is given as a definition of *intervenio* at *OLD* 1b.

past in any way advantageous for him. He immediately hedges his story, however, with the phrase *in sermone*, which marks his ensuing account of the multiplex seafood monstrosity as a hybrid itself: the *nobilis patina* is the subject of gossip (whose?) and can be overheard in conversations (*sermones*), but also is the stuff of satire, since *Sermones* is the title given by Horace to his own satires.[255] Horace himself even describes the dangers of a somewhat similar mixed dish in *Satire* 2.2:

> at simul assis
> miscueris elixa, simul conchylia turdis
> dulcia se in bilem vertent stomachoque tumultum
> lenta feret pituita. (2.2.73-6)
>
> But as soon as you mix boiled and roasted meat, shellfish along with thrushes, sweet foods will transform into bile and thick phlegm will bring trouble to the stomach.

Seneca's *nobilis patina* is a clear evolution of this earlier *cena dubia* (*S.* 2.2.77), a dinner of uncertain ingredients, whose satiric relevance he underscores by the species of fish he includes; Seneca takes a satiric dish and stuffs it with even more satire.[256] This is appropriate enough considering the miscellaneous nature of satire; indeed, as Gowers observes, mixed dishes are "internal metaphors for the [satiric] generic form."[257]

---

[255] For a wide-ranging discussion of the title *Sermones*, see Freudenburg 2001, esp. 112-14. For the applicability of the term *sermo* to Lucilian satire, see Keane 2018.
[256] For a brief discussion of the cultural relevance of the gustatory satires in Book 2 of Horace's *Sermones* see Zanda 2011: 20-21.
[257] Gowers 1993: 120. Seneca's *nobilis patina* gets a quick mention later in this chapter (123), though without much discussion.

With the (unsignalled) speech in this passage Seneca uses his favored device of the imagined interlocutor to provide an opposing point of view.[258] But the perspective here is, of course, hardly different from Seneca's own; the speech serves to dramatize this meal by making the diner speak. Seneca's own *sapor* is detectable, his answer to the dialogues prevalent in verse satire.[259] As the foods are blended together in *uno iure*—a pun that means both "in one law" and "in one sauce"—so different satiric foods come together in the middle of one of Seneca's most technical expositions of Stoic moral philosophy.[260] The voice of Seneca's interlocutor is, as always, still his own.

But this is no mere hollow moralizing about how (not) to eat: Seneca presents a problem of Stoic concern. He notes that *in cena fit quod fieri debebat in ventre*, and, as is often the case, the *venter* stands for the body itself. We are reminded of Seneca's belly-discourses (discussed in chapter 1 above) and their evolution of the Hesiodic rhetoric of human beings as "only bellies" (only bodies, that is), as well as Cato's use of food to signify bodily pleasures in general and Sallust's slippage between the *venter* and the *corpus* in the proem of the *BC*. Stoic *natura* designs the human body just as the universe, so all parts function within the whole; as I argued in chapter 1, for Seneca the *venter* is an organ with a task to fulfill, much more than an object of scorn. Stoic cosmology posits that each of us is comprised of parts of a whole just as we are ourselves individual parts of a much larger system, the cosmos.[261]

---

[258] A common device in philosophical texts in general; see also the speech of Hostius Quadra discussed above, 115-18, and the mullet narrative detailed later in this chapter. See Hine 2010b and Roller 2015b for this aspect of dialogue in Seneca.

[259] For dialogue and conversation in Lucilius, see Keane 2018; for Horace see Freudenburg 2001: 23-5, 100-5, 113-15 and passim.

[260] For some puns on *ius*, see, e.g., Horace *S.* 1.7.19-20, 2.4.38 and 63; Petr. 35.7; Juv. 5.9. Gowers 1993: 128 calls it "satire's favourite pun," which she discusses throughout her book.

[261] See, e.g., Hadas 1958: 19-26, Todd 1978, Hadot 1995: 82-6, Wildberger 2006: 244-69 and 2018: 113-14 and passim.

Stoicism is a materialist philosophy that focuses on unity. Thus for Seneca the different components of Stoic philosophy—moral, physical, psychological—are coequal and ultimately indivisible.[262] This is why a text entitled *Moral Epistles* is not limited to direct exhortations about the best way to live one's life (although there are plenty of those to be found in the *EM*). Our realization about the unity of the world, and our own place in it, is achieved through the Stoic process of *oikeiōsis*, "appropriation." We perceive ourselves and our existence in the world and we recognize, through the fact that we must be objects of our own concern, that all of humanity—as well as animalkind—has a common interest: survival.[263] Human beings are part of one big project, the *natura*-designed cosmos, so the unity of this project depends on us not confusing and misusing the component parts of our bodies, since our actions are among the few things that are truly within our power.[264]

The greater issue in the *nobilis patina*, then, is the usurpation of the *venter*'s function by the *cena*, as well as that of the teeth by the cooks. *Fastidium*, the sense of boredom, scorn, and disgust caused by overexposure to something, is the culprit, since the *venter* must be part of a well-designed and (ideally) well-functioning *corpus*.[265] Thus it is human ingenuity, inspired in this case by the need to innovate in the face of financial ruin, to blame for the functional and epistemological disaster of the mixed dish, where nothing makes sense in relation to other things. Everything looks like vomit, the product of eating, not food itself. This mixed dish is an inverted representation of Stoic (micro)cosmology, filtered through satire.

---

[262] But they are broken up so as to be better understood by *proficientes*: see *Ep.* 89.
[263] For *oikeiōsis* see, e.g., Diog. Laer. VII. 85, Cic. *Fin.* 3.16, Sen. *Ep*. 121. Among modern discussions: Striker 1983, Engberg-Pedersen 1986 and 1990, Long 1996: 250-63.
[264] *Ta eph'hēmin*, "the things up to us," an Aristotelian phrase (*EN* III.3 and 5, *EE* II.6 1223^{a}1-9 and 11.10) coopted by the Stoics. See Bobzien 1998: 280-84 and passim, Stough 1978.
[265] For a systematic attempt to define *fastidium*, see Kaster 2001. For the *fastidiens gula* as a misuse of the stomach, see *Ep*. 2.4, *ad Hel*. 10.2-3, above, 69-72.

Therein lies, paradoxically, both the problem with the mixed dish and its efficacy as a Stoic pedagogical tool. A mess is in no way "whole"; it may not even resemble food. Even vomit looks more like food, since its discrete elements are often still visible. Unintelligible messes like the *nobilis patina* lack the relationality that needs to characterize the eating experience no less than any other aspect of life.[266] Seneca can put the disorganized cosmos on a plate and throw it into his text to illustrate the societal and cultural misreception of philosophy.

I wrote in chapter 1 of imperial consumption as a way in which Rome eats land and sea, a metonymy for the world. The idea of culinary microcosmology goes a step further, however: the cosmos itself is now served up for dinner, albeit in a less literal sense in Seneca than elsewhere in contemporary literature. To give an example, culinary microcosmology features prominently in the *cena Trimalchionis*, where one of the courses is a representation of the zodiac, complete with an appropriate dish for each sign (*Sat*. 35); later Trimalchio, with his typical bombast and philosophical cluelessness, discourses on some essential qualities of people born under each sign (*Sat*. 39).[267] The narrator of the *Satyrica* notes that *novitas*, the "novelty" or "innovation" of the dish, is what captures the guests' attention. Seneca likewise stresses the strangeness of the *nobilis patina*, which cannot be incorporated or interpreted in a sensible Stoic worldview. I am not suggesting a one-way parody here (in either direction, Seneca to Petronius or Petronius to Seneca), but Trimalchio's zodiac courses are worth a mention for the way in which they serve up not just the world, as Imperial Rome likes to do,[268] but the universe. Seneca's account here does

[266] Recently there has been an unexpected resurgence of this Senecan idea: the "whole beast" philosophy of eating, as espoused by the British chef Fergus Henderson, emphasizes not only the culinary use of an entire animal (or even vegetable) but the meaningfulness of discrete cuts in relation with each other. See F. Henderson 2004; Campbell 2017: 95-6 for discussion.

[267] For the zodiac dish and its thematic significance within the *Sat*., see Rimell 2002: 52-5. For some textual emendations and sign-by-sign analyses, see Rose and Sullivan 1968. De Vreese 1927 is a monograph devoted exclusively to *Sat*. 39 and its connections with ancient astrological thought.

[268] In addition to the passages discussed here and in chapter one, the "Shield of Minerva" of the emperor Vitellius (reigned 69 CE) illustrates this point nicely. This dish contained livers of pike, pheasant and peacock brains,

so in order to contrast gourmandise with philosophy, with metaliterary appeals to the Roman satirical tradition.[269]

The *nobilis patina* is, then, an exact representation of satire itself, from its original literary iteration (*in sermone*) to its culinary version to its later literary iteration (that is, its insertion into *Ep*. 95). It provides a fascinating specimen of Seneca's concern with matching form and content, an aspect of his writing delineated by Gareth Williams and others.[270] But here Seneca turns this usual approach on its head by making unform match uncontent.

Although this awful mess of a passage is corrupted both textually and in its content, we can make out satiric *ostrea* and *mulli*. Both oysters and mullets have a history within Roman satire, but Seneca's use of them gives evidence for his own mission to incorporate Stoicism into satire—and vice versa.

Oysters and (*in*)*forma*

Oysters are one of several ingredients in Seneca's *nobilis patina* that are beloved by satirists.[271] The quality of the food itself provides an explanation for this fondness: they are strange, gross, and somehow alien. Beloved by upper and lower classes alike, oysters are imbued with ambivalence.[272] M.F.K. Fisher called the oyster "a flaccid, moping, debauched mollusc," which would pave the way for Margaret Visser's inclusion of oysters in her argument that at the

flamingo tongues, and lamprey milt (Suet. *Vit.* 13.2). Cassius Dio (64.3.3) explicitly connects this dish with domination over land and sea.

[269] For a wider-ranging discussion of the representation of cosmology with imagery of blended-together foods, see Gowers 2021.

[270] See especially Williams 2015. To give an example, Seneca uses the reflexive pronoun and adjective "as if a textually real being in its own right" (145) when arguing for the need to take possession of one's self. For the coherence of form and content in Seneca see also Wilson 2008, Inwood 2007a.

[271] Oysters have a place in Roman satire from its very beginning: see, e.g., Enn. *Hedyphagetica* (Apul. *Apol*. 39.2-4, l.2) in addition to the passage of Lucilius discussed in the next paragraph (amongst other loci).

[272] For the eating of oysters across social classes, see Déry 1998: 104-5.

dinner-table "we hate whatever oozes, slithers, wobbles."[273] Oysters are not themselves particularly viscous, but the substance that surrounds a freshly-shucked oyster, oyster "liquor," is rather viscous and thus inhabits the liminal state of viscosity as explored by Mary Douglas: neither solid nor liquid, the viscous "attacks the boundary between myself and it….I remain a solid, but to touch stickiness is to risk diluting myself into viscosity."[274] The oyster presents a crisis of form.

Part of this aversion to oysters may be due to their resemblance to bodily fluids and products. As Deborah Lupton writes, "Substances of such consistency are too redolent of bodily fluids deemed polluting, such as saliva, semen, faeces, pus, phlegm and vomit. Such bodily fluids create anxiety because of the threat they pose to self-integrity and autonomy."[275] Oysters, collectors of sea-scum, are for Seneca connected with feces; he calls them a "very lazy meat fattened on shit" (*inertissimam carnem caeno saginatam*, 95.25). This connection has a satiric pedigree, as Lucilius had also associated oysters with *caenum*: "What then, if Cerco discovers that oysters taste of river-mud and shit itself?" (*Quid ergo si ostrea Cerco / cognorit fluvium limum ac caenum sapere ipsum?* Lucil. fr. 357-58W=328-29M) Roman satire recognizes the uneasiness with which oysters appear at the table, as well as with which *caenum* is a course at the *cena.*[276]

[273] Fisher 2004: 139; Visser 1991: 311, also quoted in Bell and Valentine 1997: 52.
[274] Douglas 1966: 38. Her discussion owes much to Sartre 1943.
[275] Lupton 1996: 114, also quoted in Bell and Valentine 1997: 52. The early 6th-century food writer Anthimus generally discourages the consumption of oysters on the grounds that they are "cold and phlegmatic" (*de Observatione Ciborum* 49).
[276] For a pun on *caenum* and *cena*, see Petr. 119.58-60: *Hoc mersam caeno Romam somnoque iacentem / quae poterant artes sana ratione movere, / ni furor et bellum ferroque excita libido?* ("Could any arts have motivated Rome, drowned in this mess and lying in sleep, with sound reason, or only madness and war and desire stirred up with iron?") I take this as a pun because of the continued references to eating that Eumolpus makes throughout the *Bellum Civile*, of which this is an excerpt; see Connors 1998: 109-14.

The most immediate reason for the satiric association of oysters with *caenum* is their shared lack of definition, formless slimes both. A discordance exists between the oysters' exterior appearance (hard shell) and interior (ill-defined mass). They are barely recognizable even before they are blended into the *nobilis patina*. For Seneca this ambiguity of form has a cosmological resonance not felt by the earlier satirists. The Stoic world is composed of matter, which Seneca sometimes calls *forma*: to give a few examples, "*forma* is given to things" (*forma rebus datur*, *Ben*. 1.6.3); "it forms matter" (*materiam format*, *Ep*. 65.2); Seneca mentions the *formator universi*, the "former of the universe" (*ad Hel*. 8.3); "nature has given form" (*natura formavit*, *NQ* 3.15.1); the world is created from an "unformed unity" (*informis unitas*, *NQ* 3.30.1). The association of *forma* (and its related verbal and adjectival concepts) and Stoic matter is strong.[277]

The oyster's lack of *forma*, then, signals more than just the expected moral problem with eating a rich, decadent food. This ambiguity leads to an actual epistemological concern: what are we eating when we eat an oyster? The oyster is like a mini-version of the *nobilis patina*, completely unintelligible, hermeneutically disastrous. It cannot be consolidated within a reasonable Stoic worldview.

The epistemological confusion of the oyster extends to the way that it is eaten. In *Ep*. 108 Seneca expounds on its slurpability:

> Inde mihi quaedam permansere, Lucili; magno enim in omnia impetu veneram, deinde ad civitatis vitam reductus ex bene coeptis pauca servavi. Inde ostreis boletisque in omnem vitam renuntiatum est; nec enim cibi sed oblectamenta sunt ad edendum saturos cogentia

[277] See also Lucan *BC* 2.7-8, which describes the primordial elements as *informia regna / materiamque rudem*, "formless kingdoms and crude material."

(quod gratissimum est edacibus et se ultra quam capiunt farcientibus), facile descensura, facile reditura. (108.15)

Certain things from then [sc. his adolescent training in philosophy] have stuck with me, Lucilius, since I had approached all my schooling with a great fervor, then, led back to civic life, I kept a few things from those early lessons. From that point oysters and mushrooms were sworn off for my entire life, since they aren't foods, only enticements that compel full people to continue eating—a thing most agreeable for gluttons and those who stuff themselves past their capacity!—easy to get down, easy to bring back up.

Oysters (as well as their colleague mushrooms) are *facile descensura, facile reditura*.[278] Distinguishing oysters from vomit is difficult (as is also the case for the *nobilis patina*). They are thus not similar to just one product of eating (*caenum*), but two. *Facile descensura* might also be an allusion to Vergil's Sibyl, who famously warns Aeneas that although the road to the underworld is easy (*facilis descensus Averno*, *Aen.* 6.126), the difficult task is returning to the surface. The satiric tradition is not the only one appropriated by Seneca here, as oysters both go down and come back up easily. As for mushrooms, *voluptaria venena* both eaten and feared at Rome,[279] Seneca's main issue with them here is the fact that they are not even foods, insofar as

[278] In her exposition (and defense) of oysters, Fisher too pairs them with mushrooms: "Oysters can be bad, all right, if they are stale and full of bacteria that make for putrefaction. Mushrooms can be deadly, too. But mushrooms and oysters are alike in that they take the blame, because of superstition and something innately mysterious about their way of life, for countless pains that never are their fault" (2004: 135).

[279] The standard belief is that the emperor Claudius was killed by a poisoned mushroom, although not a naturally poisonous one: *infusum delectabili boleto venenum*, "poison sprinkled on a delicious mushroom," Tac. *Ann*. 12.67; *alii domestico convivio per ipsam Agrippinam, quae boletum medicatum avidissimo ciborum talium optulerat*, "others [report that the poison was delivered] at a domestic banquet through Agrippina herself, who had offered a drugged mushroom to Claudius, who was most fond of foods of that sort," Suet. *Cl*. 44.2. Seneca may have had Claudius in mind while discussing deadly mushrooms, but if so the total lack of references to them in the *Apocolocyntosis* is surprising, especially since Claudius's death scene is not one of its missing passages.

they do not nourish. Instead they are moreish: they only encourage the consumption of more food.[280] One should become full, not hungrier, by eating.

There is much else about this passage that is satiric, as the nameless people who eat these appetizers are described in satiric terms. They are *saturos*, "full people," a clear nod to the name of the genre. They also stuff themselves too much and are "crammers" (*farcientibus*). *Farcio*, "cram" or "stuff," and its related forms are, like the mixed dish, internal metaphors for *satura*, the "stuffed full" genre, as Diomedes, in his much-cited discussion of the etymology of the genre's name, calls it a *farcimen*, a forced stuffing.[281] Even this autobiographical passage is not immune to vermicular, body-snatching satire, which intrudes with obvious traces of its generic markers in Seneca's very language. This irruption could have been inspired by the ambiguous, formless nature of the oyster itself, which, like the mixed dish, implies a connection with satire, the form that invades other forms. Just as the oysters in *Ep*. 95 are circumcised (*circumcisa*), Seneca cuts around them and pastes them into the middle of this letter.

Another level of confusion, even more troubling for Seneca, is the slippage between oysters and their eaters. The food itself is very lazy and consumed with comparatively little effort; modern food-writing has associated oyster-eating with laziness and a "sedentary" lifestyle as well.[282] But Seneca's characterization of the oyster as *inertissima* signals a chicken-and-egg problem: does it make its eaters lazy in turn or are those eating it already lazy? To what extent are the lines separating eater and eaten blurred?

---

[280] On "moreish" ("that which makes one desire more") as an adjective that "speaks to an otherwise ineffable quality of food that encourages further indulgence, irrespective of any nutritional value or otherwise life-sustaining properties," see Campbell 2011: 55-6. It has a satiric pedigree as well, having appeared in Swift's *Polite Conversation: Consisting of Smart, Whitty, Droll and Whimsical Sayings, Collected for His Amusement, and Made into a Regular Dialogue* (1783).

[281] *Grammatici Latini* 1.485. See Gowers 1993: 110-13 for discussion.

[282] See Fisher 2004: 129, who quotes A.J. Bellows's *The Philosophy of Eating* (1870): "Oysters are very unsatisfactory food for labouring men, but will do for the sedentary, and for a supper to sleep on."

Elsewhere in the *EM*, Seneca provides a clue. When discussing people he derides as *antipodes*, those who sleep during the day and conduct their daily business at night, he compares them to fattened birds: "Birds that are prepared for banquets, immobile so that they may easily grow fat, are kept in darkness; thus for those lying without any exercise swelling overtakes their sluggish body and in their arrogant darkness lazy fat grows in them" (*aves quae conviviis comparantur, ut inmotae facile pinguescant, in obscuro continentur; ita sine ulla exercitatione iacentibus tumor pigrum corpus invadit et †superba umbra† iners sagina subcrescit*, *Ep*. 122.4). The collocation of *iners* and *sagina* brings to mind the oyster, a lazy fatty thing: *inertissimam carnem caeno saginatam*. Eating oysters can cause people themselves to become fattened on *caenum*, just like the oysters.[283] Not only do the oyster's lack of intelligible *forma* and easy vomitability pose problems for Stoic cosmology, but the relation between oysters and their eaters is a bit too close for comfort. Moreover, eating oysters inverts the proper order of consuming and excreting, since *caenum* should be the *product* of eating, not the thing eaten. (It is worth mentioning that the act of fattening birds for eating is sometimes called *fartura*, "stuffing," just as in satire.[284])

The oyster thus has both satiric resonance and relevance to Stoic cosmology; Seneca shudders at, but also seems fascinated by, its ambiguity, lack of distinct *forma*, and affinity more with the products of eating than with food itself. Even worse, the oyster can transform its eater into a large version of itself. Its appearance is, like the mixed dish, enough to signal the irruption of satire, which Seneca reclaims in the Stoic pedagogical project of the *EM*.

Mullets, *natura*, and satiric competition

[283] For fatness/thinness and satire, see Freudenburg 2001: 34-8 and passim.
[284] See, e.g., Var. *R*. 3.8.3 and *L*. 5.111, Col. 8.7.5.

"One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish." - Dr. Seuss's 1960 book

Oysters have too little *forma*. But another component of the *nobilis patina*, the mullet, has too much.[285] While the mullet has special importance both as an ingredient in the mixed dish and elsewhere in *Ep*. 95, as well as in the history of Roman satire, the big mullet in particular is the satiric fish *par excellence*. In Horace's *Satire* 2.2, which features a nascent version of Seneca's mixed dish as discussed above, the narrator discourses about a big mullet: "You lunatic, you praise a three-pound mullet, which you'll have to cut up into individual portions" (*laudas, insane, trilibrem / mullum, in singula quem minuas pulmenta necesse est, S*. 2.2.33-4). A three-pound mullet is enormous, since according to Pliny (*NH* 9.64) it is rare to find a mullet weighing over two pounds.[286] A few lines later Horace contrasts the weight of the mullet with the length of the pike: "since, of course, nature gave a greater length to those [sc. pikes], but a small weight to these [sc. mullets]" (*quia scilicet illis / maiorem natura modum dedit, his breve pondus*, *S*. 2.2.36-7).

Horace's mention of *natura*, for the Stoics so much more than just the bestower of length and weight to fish, might have caused Seneca's ears to prick up. Perhaps as a challenge to a literary forefather (and espouser of rival Epicureanism), Seneca incorporates an anecdote into *Ep*. 95, after his account of the satiric *nobilis patina*, about Tiberius's fishmongering. I discussed this anecdote earlier for its relevance to the consuming head of a global empire,[287] but I quote it again to give its enormous mullet its due:

[285] Generally *mullus* refers to the surmullet, or red mullet, *mullus surmuletus* or *barbatus* (Dr. Seuss's red fish?), more highly prized than *mugil cephalus*, the flathead grey mullet; see Andrews 1949, Déry 1998: 100-1.
[286] See also Andrews 1949, who argues that the size of the mullet was the sole (pun intended) reason for its popularity, since according to Galen (*Alim. fac.* 3.27) it did not actually taste very good.
[287] See above, 74-7.

> Mullum ingentis formae—quare autem non pondus adicio et aliquorum gulam inrito? quattuor pondo et selibram fuisse aiebant—Tiberius Caesar missum sibi cum in macellum deferri et venire iussisset, 'amici,' inquit 'omnia me fallunt nisi istum mullum aut Apicius emerit aut P. Octavius'. (95.42)
>
> After Tiberius Caesar had ordered a mullet of enormous size that was sent to him to be brought to the market and to go on sale, he said "Friends, I'd be shocked if either Apicius or P. Octavius didn't buy that mullet." (Why shouldn't I mention its weight and excite the belly of some people? They used to say it weighed four and a half pounds!)

The mullet, befitting the *gravitas* of its seller, is fifty percent larger than Horace's—not quite Dr. Seuss's "two fish," but "one and one-half fish." While Seneca couches the rumor of its size in popular conversation (*in sermone*, in effect, like the mixed dish itself), and the (seeming) purpose for the anecdote's inclusion in the first place is Seneca's illustration of the irony of castigating money spent on the appetite (*si gulae datur*, 41) and praising the same expense as a gift for the emperor (*si honori*), it is wholly the satirist's mullet.

The mullet intrudes a safe distance after the reader has tasted the *nobilis patina*, about 700 words, enough time for Seneca to return to his earlier stated purpose of the effectiveness of combining *praecepta* with *decreta* in teaching philosophy. It breaks in suddenly; Seneca's word order in *mullum ingentis formae*, the opening words in the section, is stunning in its complete lack of transition. The mullet is suddenly in front of our eyes and it is a huge one. Seneca immediately interrupts his reason for introducing the mullet, however, with an enticing description of its size; his invocation of someone else's authority ("they," but who?) in *fuisse*

aiebant recalls the opening *memini fuisse* with which he had introduced the *nobilis patina*. The revelation of the fish's four-and-a-half-pound bulk makes it clear that this parenthetical is no digression, as it helps the big fish take its place among the fish of Roman satire. Horace's three-pound mullet has to be cut into pieces, so how many more are necessary for the emperor's?

Furthermore, the absurdity of the huge fish mocks the enormity of political power. The extent of an attack on Tiberius himself in this passage is somewhat obscure—the Tiberian era is, in general, a preferred source of anecdotes and exempla for Seneca, and this passage seems to make fun of Apicius and Octavius more than Tiberius himself[288]—but the exoticism and excessive size of such a creature lends itself to parody. Of course, it is difficult for anyone familiar with Roman literature today to read Seneca's *mullum ingentis formae* and not conceive a mental picture of a different, more (in)famous satiric fish, Domitian's enormous turbot (*rhombus*) in Juvenal 4.

Domitian's turbot, which is so big that a council meeting has to be convened in order to figure out what to do with it, is the main event in this poem, a musing on the absurdity of imperial power and of the obsequiousness it demands.[289] But it is easy to forget that Juvenal precedes the *rhombus* with another big fish, a *mullus*, since Crispinus, a courtier of Domitian and frequent target of abuse from Juvenal, is also fond of spending big money on big mullets: "He bought a mullet for six thousand bucks, which certainly equaled its price with its weight, as people who are prone to exaggerate say" (*mullum sex milibus emit, / aequantem sane paribus sestertia libris, / ut perhibent qui de magnis maiora locuntur*, 4.15-7). The purchase of this

[288] Or at least Tiberius qua Tiberius, as opposed to Tiberius qua consuming head of empire. See also *Ep.* 122.10, where Seneca has Tiberius express his own position by mocking Acilius Buta, one of the *antipodes*. Suetonius (*Tib.* 34) notes that a 30,000-sesterce price-tag for three mullets inspired Tiberius to regulate market prices more intensely.

[289] See, e.g., Gowers 1993: 202-11; Hudson 1989: 70; Keane 2015: 50-1. Umurhan 2018: 75-9 reads the turbot as emblematic of Roman global empire.

mullet, whose enormous size dwarfs that of the satiric mullets that had preceded it, even surpasses the gourmandizing of Apicius, who is a frugal miser by comparison.[290] This passage suggests that Juvenal recognizes the satiric value of Seneca's Tiberian mullet anecdote and he, like Seneca, does not wish to be outdone, as his own mullet minimizes Seneca's four-and-a-half-pound mullet just as Seneca had exceeded Horace's three-pound one.[291] He even enlarges his mullet by the same increment, one and one-half pounds, by which Seneca had one-upped Horace's. This even bigger mullet is Juvenal's foray into the satiric competition for largest (and therefore most absurd) mullet; this is how the later satirist weighs in.

So the enormous Senecan mullet, like the oyster, stands in for the intrusion of satire itself: an exposition of Stoic moral pedagogy yields first a mixed dish and then, with a focus on one of its ingredients, a fish that outweighs an earlier satiric fish. Seneca's competitive mullet may seem like just another sling in the Epicurean versus Stoic debate, but it is so much more, a polemic used as part of a teaching-text, the potential of satire itself to educate a literarily-savvy audience about Stoic precepts.

Seneca uses mullets in another Stoic didactic text as well. The *Naturales Quaestiones*, written late in Seneca's life around the same time as the *EM*,[292] betrays a related satiric impulse. These texts, taken together, represent the culmination of a lifetime of many years of thinking about the pedagogical usefulness of eating.[293] Also dedicated to Lucilius, the *NQ* has been described as a "supplement of sorts" to the *EM*; natural phenomena are explained through a Stoic

[290] 4.22-3: "We witness many things that Apicius, a poor and thrifty man, didn't do" (*multa videmus quae miser et frugi non fecit Apicius*).
[291] Despite the fact that the turbot and mullet are hardly similar to each other, they are connected by Martial as well: "Don't put turbots or a two-pound mullet in front of me" (*nolo mihi ponas rhombos mullumve bilibrem*, 3.45.5). Incidentally (or not?), he pairs oysters with mushrooms in the subsequent verse. On the structural place of fish in Horace and Juvenal, see Hudson 1989: 80-1.
[292] On dating these texts see Griffin 1976: 396, 399-400; Williams 2008: 218 n. 4.
[293] A handful of passages in the *Dialogi* share similar concerns, though none to the extent of these late texts; for, e.g., the *popina* elsewhere in Seneca see also *de Brev*. 12.5, *de Prov.* 5.4, *Vit. Beat.* 7.3.

lens, but the line between physics and moral philosophy is blurred, as often in Seneca.[294] (Indeed, Gareth Williams calls this text "physicomoral."[295]) The text not only supplements but complements the *EM*, which itself purports to teach moral lessons but also tackles Stoic physics.

In Book 3, Seneca's discussion of terrestrial waters, after detailing the behaviors of underground fish he lets an imagined interlocutor speak to their strangeness:

> Multa hoc loco tibi in mentem veniunt quae urbane, ut in re incredibili dicas: "Fabulae! non cum retibus aliquem nec cum hamis, sed cum dolabra ire piscatum![296] Expecto ut aliquis in mari venetur." (3.17.1)
>
> At this point many things occur to you which you could say cleverly, as if you were faced with something unbelievable: "Nonsense—for someone to go fishing not with nets or hooks, but with a pick-axe! I expect that next someone may go hunting in the sea!"

A long satiric exposition, one featuring the mullet, follows this well-placed outburst of protest:

> Hoc miraris accidere; quanto incredibiliora sunt opera luxuriae, quotiens naturam aut mentitur aut vincit? In cubili natant pisces et sub ipsa mensa capitur qui statim transferatur in mensam. Parum videtur recens mullus, nisi qui in convivae manu moritur.

---

[294] The quotation is from Williams 2008: 218. On the *NQ* as a font of moral philosophy in addition to natural philosophy, see Williams 2012 and the earlier scholarship in ch. 2, n. 59. For Seneca's "incurable habit of moralizing" in the *NQ*, which turns out to be just one complaint of many about Seneca, see Rose 1961: 368.
[295] Williams 2012: 77 and passim. Williams's focus on the unity of the natural and moral aspects of the text confronts a longstanding scholarly perspective that "there is neither integration nor organic connection between the physical investigation and the moral inquiry" (Conte 1994: 412).
[296] See Hine 1996b ad loc for some textual difficulties in this passage, none of which bear on my argument.

> Vitreis ollis inclusi afferuntur et observatur morientium color, quem in multas mutationes mors luctante spiritu vertit. Alios necant in garo et condiunt vivos. Hi sunt qui fabulas putant piscem vivere posse sub terra, et effodi, non capi. Quam incredibile illis videretur, si audirent natare in garo piscem nec cenae causa occidi sed super cenam, cum multum in deliciis fuit et oculos ante quam gulam pavit! (3.17.2-3)
>
> You wonder that this happens, but how much more unbelievable are the trappings of luxury, as often as it imitates or surpasses nature? Fish swim in a bed, and the one caught *under* the table itself is the one which is immediately transferred *onto* the table. A mullet does not seem fresh enough unless it dies in the hand of the banqueter. They are carried away shut up in glass jars and their color is noted while they die, which death turns into many permutations while they struggle for breath. Other mullets people kill in garum and pickle while still alive. These are people who think that it is nonsense that a fish could live underground and be dug up, not caught in the traditional way. How unbelievable it might seem to them if they heard that a fish swims in garum and is not killed *for* dinner but *during* dinner, when it was very much done in fun and fed the eyes before the appetite!

The mullet is an ambiguous topic within this text. It has relevance to Seneca's investigation of natural phenomena for its natural (and wondrous) qualities, namely the colors it turns as it dies, and is in this way similar to the rainbows discussed at length in *NQ* 1.3.1-8.7.[297] But the fashion in which it is eaten communicates the *un*natural in contemporary human behavior. In this way it

[297] For connections between the mullets' colors and the rainbows, see Williams 2012: 76-80.

is a conduit for the crisis of relationality explored above, especially through the *nobilis patina*. The proper role of human anatomy is turned on its head: the eyes are fed, as they will be for Hostius Quadra later in the text. The satiric trope of the "feast for the eyes," popular in Petronius and Juvenal for example,[298] is made by Seneca to serve Stoic pedagogy. We saw in the *nobilis patina* that in Seneca's marriage of Roman satire and Stoicism *cena* subsumes *venter*, as do *coci* with *dentes*. Here, as with Hostius, *oculi* subsume *gula*. These are threats to bodily and cosmic unity.

Here the mullet is served whole (or in garum), not as a boneless ingredient in the *nobilis patina*, but experiences a perversion of life and death. People should eat dead things, not live ones; as usual, human behavior is much more unbelievable than the lifestyles of animals, who follow *natura* even when humans do not. The mullet's living death recalls the people similar to stuffed birds in *Ep.* 122, a clear violation of *natura*'s rules and the proper way to live, die, and eat.

Seneca next embarks upon a long castigation of *luxuria*, antithetical to *natura* as often in his text,[299] centered entirely on how people eat mullets. His main concern is the unnaturalness of eating live mullets, a practice which an additional imagined interlocutor (or perhaps the same one as before) continually defends:

> Tantum ad sollertiam luxuriae superbientis accedit tantoque subtilius cotidie et elegantius aliquid excogitat furor usitata contemnens! Illa audiebamus: "Nihil est melius saxatili mullo." At nunc audimus: "Nihil est moriente formosius. Da mihi in manus vitreum, in quo exultet trepidet." (3.18.4)

[298] Larmour 2016: 210-16.
[299] See, e.g., *NQ* 3.17.2, *Ep.* 90.19, 90.36, 122.5, *Vit. Beat.* 13.1.

> So much is added to the cleverness of arrogant luxury, and how much more subtly and elegantly every day does madness think up something new while scorning familiar things! We used to hear the following: "Nothing is better than a mullet under a rock!" But now we hear "Nothing is more beautiful than a dying mullet. Let me hold the glass jar in which it leaps and trembles in my hand."

After Seneca's respondent marvels at the changing color of the dying mullet, the satiric irruption finishes thus:

> Ex his nemo morienti amico assidet; nemo videre mortem patris sui sustinet, quam optavit. Quotusquisque funus domesticum ad rogum prosequitur? Fratrum propinquorumque extrema hora deseritur; ad mortem mulli concurritur. "Nihil est enim illa formosius." Non tempero mihi quin utar interdum temerarie verbis et proprietatis modum excedam. Non sunt ad popinam dentibus et ventre et ore contenti; oculis quoque gulosi sunt. (3.18.6-7)

> No one of these [mullet-watchers] will sit by a dying friend; no one will bother to witness the death of his own father—a death he hoped for! How few people follow a family member's funeral to the pyre? The final hour of brothers and relatives is abandoned—there is a mad dash to the death of a mullet! "Yes, because nothing is more beautiful than that." Sometimes I do not hold back from using words rashly and exceeding the limit of

> propriety. They are not content with their teeth and belly and mouth at the café; they have to be appetitive with their eyes, too.[300]

Connections with Tiberius's mullet abound: that mullet has an abundance of *forma* (*mullum ingentis formae*), but there is nothing more *formosus* than the dying mullet, which Seneca sees fit to point out thrice nearly verbatim.[301] This *popina*, like the bankrupt one that patented the mixed dish in *Ep*. 95, is the site of interpretative and functional ambiguity: people eat with their eyes in an anarchic multisensory confusion of proper (Stoic, *natura*-ordained) physiology, a prelude to Hostius Quadra.[302] The dying mullet feeds the eyes before the mouth, just as Seneca had lamented in the previous section. An eye for a tooth, a tooth for an eye.

The repetition of *nihil est formosius*, which occurs thrice in a short narrative span, seems strange. Why would Seneca place so much emphasis on the mullet's *forma*? I suggest that *forma* is, as for the oysters and mullets above, a term with Stoic significance. Seneca's interlocutor means *formosus* in the sense of "beautiful," of course, something possessing *forma* as an aesthetic trait. But in light of Seneca's perspective of *forma* as a cosmological phenomenon, a component of the natural that he investigates in the *NQ*, he puts *formosus* into the mouth of the mullet-lover as a misinterpretation of the sort of lessons that he teaches throughout this text (as well as in the *EM*). This misuse of *formosus*, a word which ought to signify *forma* as Stoic matter and not transient beauty, is an early piece of evidence for Seneca's claim at the very end of the

[300] On this passage also see above, 77-8**.**
[301] Also in 18.1: *"Nihil est," inquis, "mullo expirante formosius."* For a less charitable (and more standard) view of this mullet-narrative as digressive, see Waiblinger 1977: 43.
[302] Williams 2012: 75-9 also suggests a connection between Hostius and the *gulosi* people, but he does not go into much detail.

NQ: *philosophiae nulla cura est* (7.32.4). But this lack of interest gives Seneca fodder for his exploration of aspects of Stoic cosmology through fish and their eaters.

The imaginary interlocutor, Seneca's ringer, not only cannot properly consume in accordance with *natura*, as they eat live mullets with their eyes, but in justifying their lifestyle thus misuse Stoic cosmological terminology. This interlocutor seems to think—as perhaps Horace had?—that *natura* is only good for creating quality fish. Seneca's repetition of this perspective emphasizes its absurdity and makes the argumentative device of the interlocutor even more poignant for spelling out the unnaturalness of fish-obsessed gourmands, an unabashedly satiric target.

The *forma* of this mullet does not just remind us of that of Tiberius's, moreover, but its death (or rather, its state of dying) recalls the thread that Seneca picks up in *Ep*. 95 right after the mullet-anecdote, the problem of intentionality in right action. The example that Seneca uses there, as here, is attendance on a dying friend: "Someone will sit by a sick friend, we praise him. But he does this for the sake of an inheritance, so he is a vulture awaiting a cadaver" (*amico aliquis aegro adsidet: probamus. At hoc hereditatis causa facit: vultur est, cadaver expectat*, 95.42-3). The problem has worsened in the *NQ*: now no one does the right thing even for the wrong reason, and the dying mullet demands all of their attention. The shared focus on *forma* and the image of attending a dying friend (spelled out explicitly by *amico assidet* in both passages) strongly suggests that these are companion pieces, both joined by mullets and *forma*—though an excessive, misunderstood concept of *forma*. Again, we see the crisis of relationality within satire, the misunderstanding of the proper associations between things, the ways that the *Natural Questions* expresses the unnatural.

Before concluding it is worth looking at the penultimate sentence in this passage, as awkward as it seems in context, but striking for its sudden first-person admission: "Sometimes I do not hold back from using words rashly and exceeding the limit of propriety" (*non tempero mihi quin utar interdum temerarie verbis et proprietatis modum excedam*, 3.18.7). Here the satirist reflects upon his activity: words are used rashly, the *proprietatis modum* is surpassed.[303] The idea of a *modus* is an important theme within Horatian satire, of course, and Horace even writes about the *maiorem modum* given by *natura* to pikes in 2.2.37, as mentioned above. There once again might be polemic value to Seneca's use of *modus* in this passage, but certainly Seneca, lover of metaphor, exaggeration, and hyperbole, is not writing any differently here than elsewhere in his Stoic didactic project. If nothing else, this pseudo-*apologia* only emphasizes the self-consciousness of Seneca's satire, which shares the same first-person perspective as Seneca uses throughout his prose corpus, if only harsher at times. But the imagined reader of the *NQ*, the ringer, Seneca's audience-plant, consistently sets him up for these satiric intrusions; after all, what is the point in discussing the absurdity of mullet behavior if we are not also critiquing the absurdity of human behavior? We are all part of the same natural/*natura*-designed universe.

Conclusion

Seneca's satiric seafood finds a place within his Stoic pedagogy for its potential to critique the misunderstanding of philosophy. *Ep*. 95's mixed dish and the mullets in the *NQ* both point the finger at a culture that overvalues luxury foods and pays no heed to the correct applications of terms like *forma*. *Philosophiae nulla cura est*, but there is a concern for exotic fish, which is precisely why Seneca incorporates them into his text and refashions them as Stoic

[303] As Williams 2012: 77 notes, "Their [sc. the mullet-watchers'] lack of all limit and restraint is itself suitably matched by Seneca's inability to temper his outrage…."

teaching tools. These seafoods also allow Seneca to intervene in the ongoing Latin satiric conversation and compete with Horace on both a philosophical and literary level, as Juvenal later recognizes with his own giant mullet.

But the satiric irruption has to end somewhere, lest the Senecan reader depart from the text with an ambiguous message. *Ep*. 95, whose innards contain the *nobilis patina* and Tiberius's *mullus ingentis formae*, ends with the exemplum of Tubero, conspicuous for his *censura non cena*. The satiric *farrago* of the mixed dish has been transferred to Tubero's earthenware plates which, we must remember, will last forever: far longer than the mullet craze.[304]

[304] *Fictllia* are similarly contrasted with modern table settings in ancient satire: see, e.g., Juv. 3.168 and 10.25-7. For an inversion of this comparison, wherein newer exotic wood is more expensive than gold, see Petr. 119.27-30.

Chapter 4: Proper Digestion

"When I'm really upset, concentrating on a table of contents helps me calm down. It's like a menu, but the food is words." - Chidi Anagonye, *The Good Place* (2017)

"Reading gives you indigestion, didn't you know that?" - Albert, *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (1989)

In the preceding chapters I discussed how Seneca attempts to rehabilitate the belly from its Republican detractors, brings the lofty institution of the Roman exemplum down to earth in order to make it relevant to eating, and incorporates satiric images to give them a healthy place within Stoic philosophy. In short, he coopts his Roman gustatory literary patrimony as a vessel for Stoic life lessons. While these chapters have (necessarily) emphasized author and text, this one, on the other hand, will focus on the encouraged response of the reader, who "has always been the most underprivileged of this trio" (within literary criticism, at least).[305] Seneca has explicit plans not only for his reader's consumption of his material but also for how they will digest and productively regurgitate it. Literary consumption must yield some sort of end product, after all: what goes in must come out. I have discussed food and eater; this chapter focuses on the product of (figurative) eating.

Seneca's Stoic pedagogy is designed for more than just his readers' consumption and incorporation into their own worldview. He wants his reader to be generative as well, as he makes clear in *Ep.* 33, during a discussion on the shallow nature of quotations. The Stoic pupil should not lean too hard on what the old Stoics have said but needs to make their own way:

[305] Eagleton 2008: 64.

"'Zeno said this.' What do you say? 'Cleanthes said this.' What do you say? How long will you have moved under another's influence? Take command and say something to be handed over to memory, produce something from your own supply, too" (*'Hoc Zenon dixit': tu quid? 'Hoc Cleanthes': tu quid? Quousque sub alio moveris? impera et dic quod memoriae tradatur, aliquid et de tuo profer*, 33.7). Seneca's text is his own production but for his readers is an intermediary step in their own journey as reader-producers of literature. My contention in this chapter is that he uses images of, and references to, eating, digesting, regurgitating, and excreting in order to help his reader understand this relationship with his text.

I will start by arguing that Seneca develops a model of proper digestion in *Epp*. 2 and 84 (with support in some other loci), wherein he outlines the steps for consumption and regurgitation of the written word. As he does with exempla and satire, Seneca appropriates literary consumption, a well-known trope in Roman literature, for its usefulness in teaching proper eating and reading habits. His central metaphor for the ingestion and reproduction of literature is *Ep*. 84's bees, who flit to different flowers and collect food from each one before vomiting up a product that retains traces of these sources but is nonetheless a new creation. This is a positive model for the Senecan reader. A key element to this process is the transformation of this literature from a hodge-podge of influences to the reader's own idiosyncratic literary product. My reading of *Ep*. 84 helps situate the letter, which has been important for philosophical interpretations of Senecan prose writ large,[306] in the wider context of Senecan eating. I read the letter as a crucial part of the positive model of digestion that Seneca offers in the *EM*, as a

[306] The most famous of which is Foucault's reading of the letter as a Hadotian spiritual exercise, which he used to develop his own conception of *l'écriture de soi* or "self-scripting"; see Foucault 1994: 415-30 (originally published in 1983) and 2001: 338-353 (originally given as a lecture in 1982). Brad Inwood (2009) and Margaret Graver (2014) both fault Foucault for exaggerating the extent to which this is an eclectic approach for Seneca (that is, one that falls too far outside the realm of Stoic normativity), and in this respect they reprise an earlier criticism of Foucault by Martha Nussbaum, who thought that Foucault's approach downplayed Seneca's work as a philosopher. Seal 2021: 7-8 gives a good sketch of the debate.

supplement to his earlier advice in *Ep*. 2, and as a prologue to the account of his own early education he offers in *Ep*. 108.

Perhaps surprisingly, for Seneca the regurgitation of digested material is the healthy and productive way to evacuate what we read and eat, while excretion is a debased, improper, failed process. This distinction is borne out in the *Thyestes*, which I will read with Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, an affective response to a source of horror that causes a breakdown between subject and object and threatens one's sense of self. Thyestes's cannibalistic dinner might seem to represent a literal collapse of subject and object, as his consumption of his children makes them part of him forever. On the other hand, consumption implies evacuation. Feces is an unclean bodily product, food transformed into waste—according to Kristeva, it exemplifies the abject. Thyestes, I suggest, experiences abjection not just from his horror at the recognition that he has eaten his children but because of his feeling of dread at his future excretion. Atreus refers to this dread at the very end of the play, which serves as another point of contrast between the brothers: Atreus has perfected his own transformation of the Latin literary tradition, his unique version of an act of cannibalism even more terrible than his chief influence, Ovid's Procne and Philomela episode (*Met*. 6.438-674), which Thyestes, a clueless reader, comes to understand too late. My reading follows, and develops, recent scholarly interpretations of Atreus as the literary producer in command of the drama, and conversely Thyestes as a failed Stoic model.

Taken together these texts comprise Seneca's theory of proper digestion, instructions for his reader to learn how to internalize the lessons in consumption that I have analyzed in the last three chapters. The reader must digest, transform, regurgitate, and repeat, an ouroboros-like

cycle of production that Seneca models in the *EM*, but that is lost on Thyestes, a negative exemplum for the Senecan reader.

Seneca's interest in literary consumption is both culturally ingrained and better developed than in earlier Roman writers, for whom the metaphor of eating words tends to be hackneyed or colloquial. It appears in literature at least as far back as the second century, as Plautus uses it in his dialogue: "I want to taste his speech" (*gustare ego eius sermonem volo*, *Most*. 1063). Later on, Cicero would use literary consumption as an occasional colorful metaphor. The oratory of Gaius Gracchus, for example, is capable of "feeding the character" of his audience (*alere ingenium potest*, *Brut*. 126), and elsewhere Cicero mentions "banquets of learning" from which one can take leftover scraps.[307] For Seneca's contemporary Persius spoken poetry is "snacks for other peoples' ears" (*auriculis alienis…. escas*, 1.22) in a portrait of a superannuated declaimer.[308]

The metaphor would increase in popularity after Seneca. Quintilian in the later first century, Gellius in the second, and Athenaeus in the third all use it.[309] Of these authors Athenaeus is the one that takes the metaphor even further than Seneca, as the banqueters in his *Deipnosophistae* self-consciously stuff themselves with food and literature throughout the text—their banquet is a ἥδιστον λογόδειπνον, a "very pleasant word-feast," after all.[310] This *logodeipnon* finds its end in the evacuation of words as well, as it had for Seneca: some of the banqueters complain about those who have *logodiarrhoia*, "word-diarrhea."[311] In the fifth

[307] *Top*. 25: "But since I've received a man greedy for these banquets of learning, thus I will accept him, so that there be something of leftover scraps rather than that I allow him to leave not satisfied" (*sed quoniam avidum hominem ad has discendi epulas recepi, sic accipiam, ut reliquiarum sit potius aliquid quam te hinc patiar non satiatum discedere*).
[308] For an analysis of this image see Bramble 1974: 143-46.
[309] Quint. 12.2.4, 10.1.104, 4.1.14; Gell. 5.16.5.
[310] Ath. 1.1b and 1.2b.
[311] 22e; 159e; cf. Heath 2000: 346.

century Macrobius uses the metaphor, and even paraphrases *Ep*. 84 at length, which is a testament to the staying power of Seneca's bees.[312] Early modern literature would later pick up on literary consumption in manifold ways, often with a look back at Seneca's literarily regurgitating bees in *Ep*. 84. Erasmus, for example, describes the student that will "flit like a busy bee through the entire garden of literature"[313] and Ben Jonson includes the metaphor under the heading "Imitation," which he lists as one of the skills required for poets.[314] This may be due to a general interest in the metaphor in this time period—so much so that a 2019 edited volume is devoted to logophagy in early modern literature[315]—but it is clear that Seneca's bees enjoy a fruitful *Nachleben*.

As I have argued throughout this dissertation, Roman literary modes of eating must be made to fit within a Stoic mold, the program of Seneca's readable corpus. Literary consumption is not *just* poetic metaphor or ornamentation, but a real (and viable) way of thinking about how one reads—and eats. The fact that the term *sapiens*, which refers to the perfect learner and understander of Stoic wisdom, recalls both gustatory and intellectual activity is telling, and this knowledge is gained, for Seneca's reader, just so, through reading. But there are proper and improper ways to digest what one has read, and the evacuation of literary matter reveals whether what goes in comes out inspired or debased.

Before beginning the discussion in earnest, it may help to say a word about the interpretation of Senecan prose alongside tragedy, since this dissertation has heretofore not examined tragedy. Books on Senecan tragedy tend to plumb the prose texts, and the *EM* in

---

[312] Macr. 1.5-7.
[313] *De duplici copia verborum et rerum commentarii duo* II, translation from Thompson 1978: 639. See also Scott-Warren and Zurcher 2019: 4.
[314] He does, however, misattribute the quotation to Horace (Jonson 1640: R2r). See Swann 2019: 71-2 for discussion.
[315] Scott-Warren and Zurcher 2019.

particular, for passages that might help clarify certain aspects of the tragedies. Christopher Trinacty, for example, does this with *Ep*. 84's bees: "Seneca composes his tragedies in keeping with this very manner of literary production [sc. the apian metaphor]."[316] Some recent scholarship on Senecan prose, on the other hand, has emphasized its dramatic nature, how Seneca includes a multiplicity of voices, interlocutors (as I have discussed in the preceding chapters), and different argumentative perspectives with a view to creating a reading experience that imitates some aspects of drama. This scholarship comes from a sympathetic perspective that opposes itself to old-fashioned interpretations that read Seneca's tragedies as artificial versions of his prose.[317] My approach combines holistic readings of Senecan tragedy (e.g. Trinacty) with those that highlight the "dramatic" nature of his prose (e.g. John Schafer and Erik Gunderson) in order to show that these texts comprise different planks of his literary-pedagogical mission.[318] Every Senecan text is dramatic and lends itself to spectra of vivid *phantasiai*; indeed, the growing body of scholarship on metaphor in Senecan prose emphasizes this aspect of his writing as well.[319] My approach can help contextualize the place of the tragedies in Seneca's wider corpus and thus make it seem less problematic to juxtapose the two modes.

As one last disclaimer before the meat of this chapter, it is worth mentioning that Seneca is not a biologist. His understanding of what constitutes digestion for bees does not bear on proper apiology. Although Seneca's attempt to frame digestion in *Ep*. 84 is unique because, as

[316] Trinacty 2014: 13-6; the quotation is on p. 16. Staley 2010 also uses Senecan prose to support his argument that the dramatic form allows Seneca to work through (and teach) ideas about Stoic moral philosophy.
[317] Or, even worse, as "dramatized declamations." Ribbeck 1892 is an early proponent of this perspective: "Die Tragödien des Seneca sind eben Deklamationen in dramatischer Form, Erzeugnisse einer auf die Spitze getriebenen, überreizten Rhetorik" (72). For an earlier influential view of Senecan tragedy as an excessively violent representative of an excessively violent culture, see Schlegel 1809.
[318] For a brief overview of some connections between Senecan prose and poetry see Fischer 2014.
[319] Spearheaded by Armisen-Marchetti 1989; see also, e.g., Von Albrecht 2004, Armisen-Marchetti 2015, Gazzarri 2020.

Bartsch writes, it "provides us with a bridge between the metaphorical and the medical,"[320] the processes of digestion for humans and for bees are, of course, not all that similar biologically speaking. Furthermore, the English verb "regurgitate" generally implies the expulsion of undigested matter. I will speak of vomiting and regurgitating interchangeably, with the caveat that digestion is implied, since the proper mixing together of source elements via digestion is the most important component of literary activity for Seneca. The point is that Seneca needs to convince the reader of the efficacy of the metaphor, which loses its power if he bothers with too many technicalities.

A positive model: *Moral Epistles*

Lucilius has just begun his literary journey through the *EM*.[321] In *Ep.* 1 Seneca had exhorted him to make the best use of his time. But he already needs advice on how to *read* Seneca's advice. Luckily Seneca is happy to gratify him (and us, of course) in *Ep*. 2, a short letter in which he cautions his reader against dabbling in a number of texts and suggests they stick to an approved canon:

> Aegri animi ista iactatio est: primum argumentum compositae mentis existimo posse consistere et secum morari. Illud autem vide, ne ista lectio auctorum multorum et omnis generis voluminum habeat aliquid vagum et instabile. Certis ingeniis immorari et innutriri oportet, si velis aliquid trahere quod in animo fideliter sedeat. Nusquam est qui ubique est. Vitam in peregrinatione exigentibus hoc evenit, ut multa hospitia habeant, nullas

[320] Bartsch 2015: 43.
[321] For the *EM* as a collection of places to be alternately moved through and dwelled in during the reader's long philosophical journey, see J. Henderson 2004.

> amicitias; idem accidat necesse est iis qui nullius se ingenio familiariter applicant sed omnia cursim et properantes transmittunt. (2.1-2)
>
> That restlessness [sc. of reading too many texts] is characteristic of a sick mind: I think that the first proof of a composed mind is the ability to stand still and delay with itself. Make sure you do that, moreover, lest that reading of many authors and books of every kind has something errant and unstable to it. One should devote attention to one's sure talents and be reared by them, if you want to extract something which can sit faithfully in your soul. He who is everywhere is nowhere. This happens to those living life in a state of wandering, that they have many lodgings but no friendships; it has to be the case that the same thing befalls those who apply themselves familiarly to the talent of no individual author but pass through everything in a cursory and hasty manner.

He then uses the food metaphor to strengthen his point: food does not offer nutrients for the body if it is immediately vomited (*non prodest cibus nec corpori accedit qui statim sumptus emittitur*, 2.3), just as a *librorum multitudo*, a great number of books, (2.3) not only does not benefit the mind but actively creates conflict (*distringit*). A balanced diet of the classics—but not too many—will help heal the *aeger animus*, the Stoic soul in a state of illness, and is thus also like a form of spiritual medicine.[322]

But predictably Seneca's imagined interlocutor sometimes wants to switch between books, and to address this point Seneca invokes the stomach again:

[322] In the view of Richardson-Hay 2009: 74, the effectiveness of the metaphor is increased by its application to the theme of the *aeger animus*.

'Sed modo' inquis 'hunc librum evolvere volo, modo illum.' Fastidientis stomachi est multa degustare; quae ubi varia sunt et diversa, inquinant non alunt. Probatos itaque semper lege, et si quando ad alios deverti libuerit, ad priores redi. Aliquid cotidie adversus paupertatem, aliquid adversus mortem auxili compara, nec minus adversus ceteras pestes; et cum multa percurreris, unum excerpe quod illo die concoquas. (2.4)

"But sometimes," you say, "I want to unroll this book, and other times that one." It is characteristic of a weary appetite to taste many things; when these things are varied and diverse, they stain, they do not nourish. So always read approved authors, and if sometime it will have been pleasing to be diverted to other authors, go back to the prior ones. Every day, prepare a protection against poverty, a protection against death, no less one for the other plagues; and once you've gone through many things, take one which you can digest completely that day.

The *fastidiens* stomach is, of course, one of the key ways that Seneca reflects on the unproductivity of the excessive appetite.[323] He is more concerned with positive ways of properly digesting literature here, however: *concoquere* (literally "cook together") is a common word that means "digest." The metaphor's Latin use is similar to its contemporary English use. Clearly Seneca's goal is to offer actionable Stoic precepts, ways of positively responding to the difficult situations of poverty and death, with digestible nuggets of wisdom. Literature, including his own, is just as salubrious as food.

[323] See above, 69-72, as well as Kaster 2001.

The inspiration that Seneca will go on to detail in the final few sentences of the letter is from Epicurus—he is not chary of quoting a rival of the Stoics, as he behaves "not as a deserter but as a scout" (*non tamquam transfuga, sed tamquam explorator*, 2.5)—but *Ep*. 2, on its own, might strike us as a bit disappointing. Seneca has told us how to properly read, and since we are told to stick to an approved canon, and are already reading the *EM*, Seneca is including himself in the canon. But one quotation from Epicurus and then a sudden stop seems unsatisfying. The reader of the *EM* must, then, keep this advice in mind on their own journey through the letters. Fortunately, further into the corpus, Seneca will supplement the advice given here.

Indeed, *Ep*. 84 is a natural sequel to *Ep*. 2. Herein Seneca uses bees as a normative example for literary consumption and production. The passage is worth quoting at length for its richness and complexity:

> Itinera ista quae segnitiam mihi excutiunt et valetudini meae prodesse iudico et studiis. Quare valetudinem adiuvent vides: cum pigrum me et neglegentem corporis litterarum amor faciat, aliena opera exerceor. Studio quare prosint indicabo: a lectionibus <non> recessi. Sunt autem, ut existimo, necessariae, primum ne sim me uno contentus, deinde ut, cum ab aliis quaesita cognovero, tum et de inventis iudicem et cogitem de inveniendis. Alit lectio ingenium et studio fatigatum, non sine studio tamen, reficit. Nec scribere tantum nec tantum legere debemus: altera res contristabit vires et exhauriet (de stilo dico), altera solvet ac diluet. Invicem hoc et illo commeandum est et alterum altero temperandum, ut quidquid lectione collectum est stilus redigat in corpus. Apes, ut aiunt, debemus imitari, quae vagantur et flores ad mel faciendum idoneos carpunt, deinde quidquid attulere disponunt ac per favos digerunt et, ut Vergilius noster ait,

liquentia mella

stipant et dulci distendunt nectare cellas. (84.1-3)

Those journeys are the ones which shake off my laziness and I judge that they benefit my health and studies. You can see how they help my health: since my love of literature makes me lazy and careless of my body, I am trained by another's effort. I will show you why they benefit my study: I haven't retreated from my readings. Moreover, they are necessary, in my thinking, first so that I'm not content with myself alone, and second so that once I will have learned what's been discovered by others I can then judge about these findings and think about the things still to be found. Reading nourishes one's talent and repairs it when it's tired out from study, nevertheless not without study. We shouldn't only write and only read: the one practice will sadden our strength and drain us (writing, I mean), the other will loosen and dissolve us. These must be navigated in turns, one must be blended with the other, so that the pen reduces whatever has been collected from our reading into a body. We ought to imitate the bees, as they say, who wander and cultivate the flowers suitable for making honey, then arrange whatever they have taken and digest it throughout their honeycombs, and, as our Vergil says, "press the flowing honey and make their cells swell with sweet nectar."[324]

Seneca starts this letter, as he often does, with a reference to something Lucilius wrote about previously—Lucilius's writing does not survive, if it ever existed at all. But the therapeutic value

[324] *Aen*. 1.432-33.

of reading is the topic that leads Seneca to the bee metaphor, and there is no ambiguity that Seneca means the written word, since he writes *lectio*, a reading, three times in this passage (and again in the next one). His quotation of the *Aeneid*, which itself serves as a window to Vergil's much more famous discussion of bees in *Georgics* 4, indicates that he is nesting an example of his advice within the advice itself.[325]

But equally important is what the reader does with what they have digested:

> Sed ne ad aliud quam de quo agitur abducar, nos quoque has apes debemus imitari et quaecumque ex diversa lectione congessimus separare (melius enim distincta servantur), deinde adhibita ingenii nostri cura et facultate in unum saporem varia illa libamenta confundere, ut etiam si apparuerit unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est appareat. Quod in corpore nostro videmus sine ulla opera nostra facere naturam (alimenta quae accepimus, quamdiu in sua qualitate perdurant et solida innatant stomacho, onera sunt; at cum ex eo quod erant mutata sunt, tunc demum in vires et in sanguinem transeunt), idem in his quibus aluntur ingenia praestemus, ut quaecumque hausimus non patiamur integra esse, ne aliena sint. Concoquamus illa; alioqui in memoriam ibunt, non in ingenium. (84.5-7)

> But lest I be led off onto another topic than what we're discussing, we too should imitate these bees and separate whatever we have heaped together from a diverse selection of reading—since it is better to keep these things distinct—then, with all the resources of our natural talent painstakingly summoned, we should blend those varied nibblings into

[325] For the complexity of this reference to Vergil, see Trinacty 2014: 13-5.

> one flavor, so that even if it is obvious where it has come from, it's nonetheless obvious that it's something different than this source. What we see nature do in our body, without any effort on our part (that is, the food we have consumed, as long as it maintains its own quality and swims around our stomach whole, is a burden, but once it has been changed from what it was, then it can finally pass into our strength and our blood), let us ensure that the same thing happens in these processes by which our talent is fed, so that whatever we have consumed we may not allow to be whole, lest it be alien to us. Let us digest those things: otherwise they will go into our memory, not into our talent.

One of the most striking aspects of this digestion metaphor is its positivity: Seneca's corpus is replete with images of overstuffed bellies—indeed, as I discussed in chapter 2, perversions in culinary preparation and consumption make up some of his favorite negative exempla—but his bees provide an admirable example for his reader to follow in their own literary journey. This positivity stands in contrast with, for example, Seneca's younger contemporary (and fellow Stoic) Persius, for whom reading bad poetry is the cause of literary indigestion.[326] Persius's poetic (and philosophical) vision is, like Seneca's, filtered through metaphor, but the comparative lucidity of Senecan metaphor testifies to his desire to make his teaching tenable. (Persius, on the other hand, comes off as asocial and apathetic to the desires of his audience.[327])

Perhaps the positivity of Seneca's bee metaphor is due to the naturalness—that is, the obedience to *natura*—of the bee's activity: the consumption, digestion, and regurgitation of something new is the same process as what *natura* does in our bodies, a healthy use and breakdown of constituent elements into a new form that nourishes the body, just as *lectio* itself is

[326] Bartsch 2015: 15-7 and passim.
[327] E.g., *Sat.* 1.48-53 and passim.

a nourisher (*alit*) early on in the letter. Seneca's bees are not just responsible literary digesters but followers of Stoic *natura*, as should be his readers.

The metaphorical references to bees and honey are designed for a readership familiar with the apian bent of Latin (and Greek) literature, which helps support the resonance of Seneca's bee imagery in his reader's mind. The association of bees with the creative power of poets goes back at least as far as Plato (*Ion* 234a-b). Honey is already an image in philosophy, as the Epicurean poet Lucretius had famously described his poetry as sweet honey that masks bitter philosophy (1.936-50). Ancient writers thought of the intricate class system of apian society as an effective metaphor for human society; one thinks of the household-managing bee in the misogynistic catalog of Semonides 7 in addition to the intricacies of Vergil's bees in *Georgics* 4 (not to mention the *Aeneid* passage that Seneca quotes here). But unlike in Lucretius, for Seneca poetic honey is no mere adornment; his bees help establish a normative model for literary production.[328]

But regurgitation might seem like a strange metaphor for reproduction, especially since dinner-table vomiting in order to consume new courses is a commonplace target of attack in Roman literature, and elsewhere even in Seneca.[329] In *Ep*. 95's mixed dish the satirical lumping together of different foods is compared to vomit: "The food of people vomiting couldn't be more confused" (*non esset confusior vomentium cibus*, 95.28). This seeming incongruence has troubled scholars; Gowers, for example, seems to think that Seneca must have slipped up

[328] Horace had also described himself as a bee in his poem dedicated to Iullus Antonius (*Od*. 4.2.27-32), one of many metaphors in the poem.
[329] See, e.g., *Cons. Helv*. 10.3 (discussed above, 71-3, and on the following page), *Ep*. 108.15 (above, 10-11**,** 145-47). Elsewhere Claudius and Vitellius are vomiting emperors par excellence: Suet. *Claud*. 33.1, *Vit*. 13.1. Among contemporary literature, strangely enough, no guest at the *Cena Trimalchionis* vomits.

somewhere and "forgotten" his attitude toward the mixed dish.[330] But once again digestion is the key concept; in Seneca's thinking the inspired reader-producer completes this process, indicated by the verbs *digerere* and *concoquere*, before reproducing via regurgitation. He imagines that bees do the same and thus plays on a trope well known to his reader. The bees, certainly in marked contrast with some of Seneca's human subjects, practice proper digestion before regurgitation. This digestion enables the transformation of constituent elements into something new, not just expulsion of the same product that entered the body in the first place.

Elsewhere in Seneca eating without digesting is used in a negative exemplum. In his *consolatio* to his mother Helvia (wherein he includes Curius's positive exemplum[331]**)** Seneca uses gustatory excess to attack the excessive appetites of powerful Roman figures like the emperor Gaius:[332]

> undique convehunt omnia nota fastidienti gulae; quod dissolutus deliciis stomachus vix admittat ab ultimo portatur oceano; vomunt ut edant, edunt ut vomant, et epulas quas toto orbe conquirunt nec concoquere dignantur. (10.2-3)

> They bring in all known foods from everywhere for the weary appetite; that which the stomach, dissolute with treats, can hardly admit is carried from the furthest reaches of the ocean; they vomit so that they may eat, they eat so that they may vomit, and they do not deem it worthy to digest the feasts which they search for the whole world over.

[330] Gowers 1993: 42: "Seneca forgets his prejudice against mixed dishes when he speaks of the need to digest and absorb a whole library of books."
[331] See above, 90-95.
[332] See above, 73-4.

In isolation, this is the sort of stock complaint with which moralistic and satirical literature is filled—enough for Seneca's contemporary Petronius to compose a poem in parody of the sentiment[333]—but the cliché of the furthest reaches of the ocean takes on new meaning as a source for literary material. The same rules apply as for the *librorum multitudo*: food culled from the far corners of the empire, like literature, must be digested in order for any nutritious benefits to be gained, but at the same time one misses the point in piling up books in the library like oysters or mushrooms on the table. The *fastidienti gulae* here reminds us of the *fastidientis stomachi* in *Ep*. 2 as well.

In order to understand the importance of this imagery of digestion to the *EM* as a whole, I note Seneca's preference for exhortation in the first-person plural: "*We* should imitate these bees" (in both 84.3 and 84.5), "*Let's* digest," and so on. Seneca is certainly helping to feed his own *ingenium* (which Graver persuasively argues is the individual capacity for literary talent, not just a "natural character"), but he is also explicitly giving his reader advice on what to do with the literary material they encounter.[334] Seneca necessarily must be concerned with a *community* of readers, not just some notion of the isolated self. But he expresses this concern rather self-consciously: *Ep*. 2 saw Seneca join the ranks of the *probati*, the approved authors in the canon, perhaps fittingly given the lateness of the *EM* in his corpus and his lifetime of varied literary activity beforehand. *Ep*. 84 supplements the advice given in this earlier letter: *unum excerpe quod illo die concoquas* (2.4) now has an apian ring to it. That digested thing might be Curius, Hostius, Tubero, different exempla for different situations. This exhortation, especially so early in the *EM*, constitutes a clever move on Seneca's part. There is plenty of advice to go around.

[333] Petr. 93.

[334] E.g., Graver 2014: 291: "He sketches for them a rich notion of the *ingenium* or literary talent as a manifestation of one's intellectual capacity and force of character, and he urges them to devote themselves wholeheartedly to the work of rethinking and bringing coherence to various elements taken from earlier works."

The answers for how to read the *EM* are provided in the *EM* themselves, then, and we must thoroughly digest them before attempting to productively regurgitate. But it is worth examining how Seneca follows through on his digestion metaphor later on in the text in order to get an idea of its persistence in his philosophy of literary consumption. Here, a look at *Ep*. 108 will help close the gap between bee digestion, human gustatory habits, and Stoic moral education.

This letter is one of Seneca's most complete expositions of his own life and philosophical journey. As with *Ep*. 84, Seneca begins with a cryptic reference to a question Lucilius has asked him but does not answer the question—nor even let the reader know what exactly it is—until the following letter. He alludes to books that he is writing, which will ostensibly cover the topics in his *EM* and then some (*libros quos cum maxime ordino continentis totam moralem philosophiae partem*, 108.1), but soon abandons the topic and chides Lucilius for his desire for learning (*cupiditas discendi*) which must be digested (*digerenda sit*) lest it get in its own way (*ipsa se inpediat*, 108.1). He then instructs Lucilius not to take on more information than he can handle, which leads to an extended account of his own philosophical education, the capacity of students of philosophy to learn from their instructors, his own stint as a vegetarian, quotations from Vergil's *Georgics*, references to Cicero's *de Re Publica*, and methodological and hermeneutical differences between the pursuits of *philologi* (philologists), *grammatici* (literary scholars), and *philosophi* (philosophers).

As Erik Gunderson has argued, Seneca writes this letter in a dramatic fashion and even goes so far as to set up its sections like scenes in a play: he puts before the reader's eyes his own educational experience in order to help them visualize their own.[335] This "dramatic" reading is a

[335] Gunderson 2015: 25.

complement to that of John Schafer, who argues that the entire corpus of the *EM* is Lucilius's dramatized education, which he sometimes calls the "Lucilius drama": "The *Letters* teach teaching by example; they are a literary case-study, an articulated, carefully drawn exemplum of Stoic and Senecan pedagogy."[336] Schafer takes *Ep*. 108, which opens with Seneca considering an unnamed, unanswered question of Lucilius in a previous letter, as evidence of a "late stage in Lucilius' progress."[337]

These readings of *Ep*. 108 are examples of the recent scholarly effort to find a coherence of form and content in this letter, necessary because of its many disparate elements and the varied ground it covers. (It is, in this sense, a microcosm of Seneca's entire corpus.) Michael von Albrecht's reading of *Ep.* 108 is particularly clever, as he focuses on the letter's concern with digestion, both the physical kind (as exemplified by Seneca's discussion of his former vegetarianism) and the metaphorical digestion that results, like that of proper literary digestion, in nourishment for the mind. Lucilius is given an explicit recommendation to properly digest and distill his own eagerness for learning, after all; the *librorum multitudo* must be reduced into a positive product. Clearly Seneca is recommending the regulation of a mental desire here, but the proper regulation of desire is akin to a digestive act, one of Seneca's favorite meanings of *digerere*. Von Albrecht identifies "geistige Nahrung" ("spiritual nourishment") as Seneca's goal, and so the multifaceted *Ep*. 108, often seen as fragmented and without focus, is unified by these various kinds of nourishment.[338] Seneca's teachers nourished him in his youth and his words can now nourish his reader. *Alit lectio ingenium*.

[336] Schafer 2011: 33.
[337] Ibid.: 39.
[338] Von Albrecht 2004: 80. For criticisms of this letter see, e.g., Summers 1910. Schafer 2011, a very sympathetic reading, still considers the letter "polythematic" (40).

This recognition by Seneca of his own authority completes the insinuation that he made of his own canonicity in *Ep*. 2 and his instructions for digestion in *Ep*. 84. His own philosophy provides one flavor for his reader to mix into their own creation. This is thus an idea he turns to throughout the *EM*, from near the beginning to near the end. He models this proper digestion and regurgitation in the letters themselves, an ouroboros of digesting, producing, and repeating. We can see that this sort of literary consumption and production is a memorable part of the dramatized educational journey (ostensibly Lucilius's, but also each of our own) that Seneca shapes in the *EM*.

Thus Seneca establishes his positive model: advice for digestion planted early, supplemented later, and finally made into an exemplum—his own—near the end of the *EM*. But if digestion followed by regurgitation is positive, what is the model's negative complement? Seneca, as I have discussed in previous chapters, tends to offer both positives and negatives: good and bad uses of the belly, exempla to follow and to eschew. I argue that a version of this negative model is provided in his most gustatorily grotesque text, the *Thyestes*. The *Thyestes* is not just a text about how not to eat, however: it offers up Thyestes as a negative exemplum of an unskilled reader-consumer.

A negative model: *Thyestes*

The bees' honey may be sweet, but Thyestes's meal is anything but. In the *Thyestes*, "widely acknowledged to be one of Seneca's most powerful tragedies,"[339] the power struggle between the brothers Atreus and Thyestes for the throne of Mycenae is dramatized and reaches its denouement with Thyestes's discovery that Atreus has killed his sons and served them to him

[339] Tarrant 1985: ix.

for dinner. Indeed, for all the interest in consumption that Seneca shows in his prose corpus, the phrase "eating in Seneca" nonetheless evokes for most readers the image of Thyestes's cannibalistic feast.

I do not wish to dwell too much on the issue of the performance of Senecan tragedy in antiquity, but a brief sketch of the debate and its bearing on consuming the *Thyestes* as part of a *diversa lectio* will help the reader digest what follows. We have no evidence for the performance of Senecan tragedy in antiquity, though since the Renaissance his plays have been produced for the stage.[340] Modern scholars have sought to explain why we have no ancient performance record, especially since "the Senecan texts look remarkably like the texts of other ancient tragedies" and thus would warrant stage production.[341] G.K. Hunter and Otto Zwierlein, among others, have faulted the plays as static and without much action, although by comparison certain Greek tragedies contain less action than, e.g., the *Thyestes*.[342] On the other hand—and somewhat paradoxically—many critics have decried the extreme bloodiness of Senecan tragedy and used it as evidence for the plays' unperformability.[343] These elements of the tragedies led to Zwierlein's 1966 reading of them as "Rezitationsdramen," plays meant for recitation at private events in private spaces. This perspective was a common one until relatively recently,[344] when the tide has turned back toward arguments for the *performability* of the plays (if not their ancient *performance*, which would be an argument from silence) courtesy of scholars such as P.J. Davis and A.J. Boyle, since "Seneca's tragedies are not merely playable: they demand performance on

[340] See Davis 2003: 27-36 for a brief history of the modern performance of Senecan drama.
[341] Ibid.: 20.
[342] Hunter 1986, Zwierlein 1966, esp. 88-126. Davis 2003: 21-2 offers Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, which is mostly long speeches and choral odes, as a counterexample.
[343] See Beare 1964: 352-53 for an argument that the plays were too bloody to perform, convincingly refuted by Tanner 1985: 1101-4.
[344] Accepted by, e.g., Tarrant 1985 in his influential edition and commentary on the *Thyestes*.

the stage."[345] Seneca's plays have been performed many times over the past several hundred years, of course. But the case of those arguing in favor of, at the very least, the intention of public performance on Seneca's part has not been helped by the judgment of T.S. Eliot, who famously said that in Senecan tragedy "the drama is all in the word."[346]

Considering the complex wordplay and vivid verbal activity of Seneca's plays Eliot was at least partially correct, but there is no reason why these two perspectives on performance cannot be reconciled. The "why not both?" perspective has been steadily gaining ground as we nuance our understanding of Senecan tragedy.[347] My own reading takes the *Thyestes* as a text to be read, like the rest of Seneca's corpus, either silently or out loud, but with the eye firmly on the *lectio* so as not to miss any of the verbal fireworks—or intertextual connections—within the play.

My focus on the act of reading the *Thyestes* mirrors the metaliterary nature of the play. Indeed, recent discussions of the tragedy have explored the ways in which Seneca, through Atreus, positions himself as a competent and productive responder to the Latin literary tradition and Augustan poetry in particular.[348] Alessandro Schiesaro's reading of the play is influential: the *Thyestes* is the metaliterary, intertextual tragedy *par excellence*, with a dramatized poet, Atreus, enacting his vengeance on Thyestes as if his brother were an unwilling actor in his own tragedy. Atreus is the model of the in-control poet, while Thyestes is a hapless victim of his machinations. It matters not that Atreus's act of butchering and serving up Thyestes's sons is

[345] Davis 2003: 27. See also Boyle 2006, 2011, and 2017, Kragelund 1999, the essays in Harrison 2000, and Kohn 2013 (6-14 for the performance debate, 124-32 for a detailed dramaturgy of the *Thyestes*).
[346] Eliot 1964: 54. For the use of this quotation as a lens for an analysis of the *Oedipus*, see Mastronarde 1970.
[347] See, e.g., Dupont 1995.
[348] Scholarship on this topic is legion: see, e.g., Tarrant 1978: 261-63; Littlewood 2004: 105-6, 127-148 and passim; Hinds 2011, esp. 5-9, 49-55; Trinacty 2014: 55-9 and passim; Ker 2015: 111-12; Littlewood 2017, esp. 81-2 and 84-6. Santucci 2022 argues that Seneca realizes with the *Thyestes* a revolutionarily intertextual promise that he had earlier made in the *Apocolocyntosis*.

morally reprehensible, as this does not compromise Atreus's dramatic success (nor his skill at alluding to the Roman literary tradition throughout the play).[349] The *Thyestes* is thus held up as an example of the Senecan desire to outdo his Roman literary models, and especially the famous literary-cannibalistic precursor that is the Procne, Philomela, and Tereus episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with Atreus's even more perverse culinary preparation—two children killed and cooked instead of Ovid's one—as a site of contention. Atreus himself boasts about this in a decidedly unsubtle way: "Let the Thracian crime be done, with a larger number" (*Thracium fiat nefas / maiore numero*, 56–7); the *Thracium nefas* is, of course, the two sisters' butchering of Procne and Tereus's son Itys.[350] This is a Senecan acknowledgement of textual consumption and reproduction; as C.J. Littlewood writes, "The homologous acts of cannibalism and incest [viz. Philomela] serve as tragic metaphors for the digestion and conception of new textual bodies."[351] In this play Seneca (re)stages the ideas about literary consumption expressed in the *EM*: Atreus serves up a reheated Ovidian meal to his brother, who fails to understand what he is eating/reading.[352]

So Atreus, though he does not do so by (metaphorical) vomiting, follows Seneca's advice in *Ep.* 84 about the proper mixing and blending of one's literary influences into a new product that retains traces of the original: *ut etiam si apparuerit unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est appareat*. While many commentators on the play have analyzed

[349] See, e.g., Schiesaro 2003: 54: "Nothing in *Thyestes* suggests the notion that Atreus should be imagined as a negative model of the poet. The principles he advocates – originality, knowledge of the tradition, desire to reach the highest peaks of creation – are nowhere accompanied by a critique of the notion of good or successful poetry." But Atreus is also often held up as the negative mirror image of the Stoic *sapiens*, as well as the Stoic ideal of the good king: see Lefèvre 1997, Davis 2003: 69-74, Boyle 2017: lv-lxviii.
[350] For textual references to the *Thyestes*, as well as the other Senecan tragedies discussed later, I use Zwierlein's *OCT*. For the metaliterary significance of *maiore numero* see Schiesaro 2003: 70-2, 83-4.
[351] Littlewood 2017: 86.
[352] I am making no claims about which text comes first chronologically, although the *EM* is one of Seneca's latest texts, and the *Thy.* is likely one of his later tragedies if we follow the chronology of Fitch 1981, which uses sense-pauses in an attempt to situate Seneca's tragedies relative to each other (with no certainty about their exact dates).

Atreus's status as a brilliant metaliterary icon, as well as some ways in which *Ep*. 84 bears on Seneca's construction of his tragedies,[353] Thyestes's role opposite his brother has been comparatively less scrutinized. Atreus is the active, inspired character, Thyestes the comparatively passive, dull one.[354] Scholarship has emphasized the ways in which Thyestes is a failed Stoic but not so much a failed reader.[355] But the *cena Thyestea* brings into focus the grotesqueness of his body, which in addition to eating his children burps, rumbles, and must eventually defecate, the consequence of his inability to understand Atreus's directorial masterpiece, the very tragedy in which he unwittingly stars.

Thyestes's meal itself occurs at the beginning of the play's fourth act. As is common in both Greek and Roman tragedy, the feast is narrated by a messenger to the chorus, and thus to the audience (or to the reader). The tone is one of horror, as Atreus's gruesome killing and culinary preparation of Thyestes's sons is mirrored by the cosmos: the sun itself sets unnaturally during the day (776-78), an enactment of the Stoic idea of *sympatheia* wherein the cosmos itself responds to an inhuman crime by behaving unnaturally.[356] Interestingly enough, however, very little space (six lines, 778-83) is given to Thyestes's act of eating, narrated in terror by the messenger:

---

[353] In addition to Trinacty 2014: 13-16 (discussed above), see, e.g., Butler 2011: 80-2, who uses the bee-production to suggest a connection between the hidden grove where Atreus slaughters the children and Ovid's description of Narcissus's pool (*Met*. 3.407-12).

[354] As Knoche 1941: 66 put it, "Atreus, den Täter, und Thyestes, den Leidenden." So Davis 2003: 43: "Despite the play's title, Thyestes is not the primary focus of interest in this play; he is for the most part an unknowing and unwilling victim." For an opposing view that argues for an equivalence between Atreus and Thyestes, the preemptive argument that Thyestes would have done the same thing given the opportunity, which Atreus uses to justify his crime, see Schiesaro 2003: 139-51.

[355] For Thyestes as a failed Stoic see, e.g., Mader 2003, Schiesaro 2003: 147-51. These judgments come in opposition to some older readings that celebrated Thyestes as a model Stoic *proficiens* who does not bend even in the face of extreme horror: see, e.g., Gigon 1938, Lefèvre 1985. For an early argument *gegen* Gigon, see Steidle 1943/44.

[356] For *sympatheia* in Seneca see, e.g., Rosenmeyer 1989: 107-13 and passim, Schmitz 1993, Volk 2006: 189-91. For *sympatheia* in a wider-ranging discussion of Stoic cosmology, particularly in the Greek Stoics, see Lapidge 1978: 175-76.

Lancinat natos pater
artusque mandit ore funesto suos;
nitet fluente madidus unguento comam
gravisque vino; saepe praeclusae cibum
tenuere fauces - in malis unum hoc tuis
bonum est, Thyesta, quod mala ignoras tua.

The father tears into the sons and gnaws their limbs with his funereal mouth. He shimmers, dripping wet as to his hair with flowing perfume and heavy with wine. Often his blocked-up jaws held back his food—there is but this one good thing among your evils, Thyestes, the fact that you're unaware of your evils.

This is, of course, an exemplum for how not to eat. Even if Thyestes were eating something other than his sons his meal is nonetheless characterized by excessive gorging: he continually shoves more into his mouth than he can take (*saepe praeclusae cibum / tenuere fauces*). As P.J. Davis points out, the verbs *lancinat* and *mandit* suggest "bestial eating," beyond the bounds of the human.[357] The description is just vivid enough to capture the reader's attention, as well as to emphasize Thyestes's luxury and acceptance of royal power, for which his perfume-dripping hair serves as a sign.[358]

The *cena Thyestea* dramatizes an inverted form of the positive literary transformation of the bees. The title character has eaten his sons and thus collapsed any distinction between

[357] Davis 2003: 49.
[358] See Tarrant 1985 ad loc., Boyle 2017 ad loc.

themselves and him. He experiences abjection in the Kristevan sense, which it will now be helpful to detail.

Julia Kristeva's abject is, in name, a pun on "subject" and "object," neither "thrown under," nor "in the way," but "away from" (*ab*-). The abject is a guttural reminder of the fragility of the body that causes the collapse of subject and object or self and other. It marks the difference between signifying and showing. Kristeva writes:

> A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not *signify* death. In the presence of signified death—a flat encephalograph, for instance—I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theater, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses *show me* what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. These body fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being.[359]

The difference between being in the presence of a corpse and hearing about death (or seeing something that implies it, like a flat EEG) is the difference between abject and subject or object. The abject is commonly located in the bodily grotesque, Kristeva's blood, pus, sweat, decay, and shit. It thus seems clear, and not even just from Kristeva's "true theater," that drama, the visual presentation of human activity in all of its sweaty imperfection, is the ideal venue for the abject.

The abject is then, of course, located in horror, especially in film, literature, and drama that relies on bodily horror, because there is something cathartic about it. Indeed, Kristeva cites art, "that catharsis par excellence," as the place where religious cultures shunt the abject.[360] I do

[359] Kristeva 1982: 3 (her emphases).
[360] Ibid.: 17.

not wish to descend too far into Kristeva's Freudian and Lacanian backdrop (nor most of the literature she analyzes in abjective terms), but the relevance of the concept to Seneca *tragicus*, who embraces the bodily grotesque to a much greater degree than his Greek forebears, is clear. His Oedipus pulls out his own eyes and narrates the movements of the eye-stalks to the audience; his Theseus collects, one by one, the limbs of his dismembered son; his Thyestes shovels his son's meat into his mouth, belches, and rumbles (as will be discussed). Scholars have cited the cannibalism in the *Thyestes* for its abjective potential, though no one has yet tackled the aftermath of his dinner[361]—but doing so will help clarify the horror, both for Thyestes and for the audience/reader, of eating and evacuating one's own flesh and blood, of being unable to understand and assimilate the world around us.

Thyestes's dinner is only the beginning. The real source of emotional appeal in the play is, as often in tragedy, his anagnorisis, the self-realization that accompanies the discovery of the fateful (in this case abjective) event. After eating, Thyestes feels an unremitting dread both before and after Atreus gleefully reveals the true nature of his meat. This feeling of foreboding is mirrored by Seneca's focus on Thyestes's grotesque body, which includes several details that prepare the reader for Atreus's final mockery. I will embark upon a brief tour of these moments of bodily grotesque before an analysis of the play's punning final line, which alludes to the inevitable endpoint of Thyestes's dinner.

Thyestes has eaten his meal. Atreus, who has become the director of his own more extreme version of Ovid's Procne and Philomela episode, delightfully narrates the first of his postprandial bodily signs to the audience:

[361] See McAuley 2013, Ablett 2018 and 2020. The abject is a popular lens for early modern theater as well, which is of course quite indebted to Senecan tragedy, as well as more recent Seneca-inspired drama such as that of Sarah Kane. For a wide-ranging discussion of disgust in theater, which foregrounds Kristeva, see Ablett 2020.

Turba famularis, fores
templi relaxa, festa patefiat domus.
libet videre, capita natorum intuens
quos det colores, verba quae primus dolor
effundat aut ut spiritu expulso stupens
corpus rigescat. fructus hic operis mei est.
miserum videre nolo, sed dum fit miser.
Aperta multa tecta conlucent face.
resupinus ipse purpurae atque auro incubat,
vino gravatum fulciens laeva caput.
eructat. o me caelitum excelsissimum,
regumque regem! vota transcendi mea. (900-912)

Crowd of slaves, open the doors of the temple, let the festive home be revealed. It's pleasing to see the sorts of colors he turns when he gazes on his sons' heads, the words which his initial pain pours out, or how his body, stupefied, becomes numb as he gasps for breath. This is the fruit of my labor! I don't want to see him miserable, I want to see him in the *process* of becoming miserable. The hall, revealed, is resplendent with many torches. The man himself, lying on his back, rests on purple and gold, propping his wine-heavy head on his left hand. He is belching. Oh, I'm the most exalted of gods, the king of kings! I've surpassed my prayers.

The moment that Atreus narrates Thyestes's act of belching (*eructat*, 911) is significant: Atreus has achieved his goal and now gets to glory in it, even to the point of reveling in his godlike power of manipulation. But, as Gottfried Mader argues, the belch is much more than a crowning touch for Atreus, as it represents Thyestes's complete loss of self-control and subjugation to his brother.[362] He cannot even control his bodily functions, let alone his paternal kingdom. The grotesque pithiness of the one-word sentence *eructat* is further emphasized by the loftiness of Atreus's following words.[363] The burp, "possibly the most notorious belch in Latin literature,"[364] might also constitute an intertextual (and metaliterary, since it takes place within Atreus's narration of Thyestes's after-dinner activity) nod to Manilius's description of the myth, *ructantemque patrem natos*, "the father belching sons."[365]

A belch is not just a sign of satiety, of course, but may be a prelude to regurgitation. Here Thyestes belches but does not vomit.[366] He will not vomit at all in the remainder of the play, despite his extreme efforts to rid himself of the filial flesh in his belly. His belch then is a sign not just of fullness but of absence, the inability to produce through mixing and regurgitation. Atreus makes Thyestes the unwitting star of his own tragedy while Thyestes can only burp up empty air, incompetent at reading both his brother's intertextual clues and his own bodily signs.

The dramatization of Thyestes's grotesque body only becomes more visceral, however. As he draws closer to his anagnorisis, Thyestes's stomach churns: "What is this disturbance that troubles my innards? What's rumbling inside? I feel an unbearable weight, and my insides groan

[362] Mader 2003: 635-36.
[363] See Meltzer 1988: 314, discussed in more detail below.
[364] Slaney 2016: 237.
[365] Man. 5.462; see Boyle 2017 ad loc. for further discussion.
[366] As Rimell 2002: 56 n. 18 observes, in the *Thyestes* "the inevitable perpetuation of tragedy is imaged in the 'pregnant' body of Thyestes, who has eaten his children as a punishment which replicates his own crime of penetration and who must now repeat the process by 'giving birth', or throwing up."

with a groan not mine" (*Quis hic tumultus viscera exagitat mea? / quid tremuit intus? sentio impatiens onus / meumque gemitu non meo pectus gemit*, 999-1001). Thyestes senses the alien groans in his stomach, which indicate that his sons, though they appeared to be cooked meat when he ate them, are somehow still whole. They have not been digested or transformed; he has still not read the situation productively, though he is finally beginning to understand.

Shortly after this bout of indigestion Atreus produces the heads and hands of Thyestes's sons:

> At.: Expedi amplexus, pater;
> venere. Natos ecquid agnoscis tuos? 1005
> Thy.: Agnosco fratrem. (1004-6)
>
> Atreus: Ready your embraces, father: they have come. Don't you recognize your sons at all?
> Thyestes: I recognize my brother.

The famous *agnosco fratrem* is ironic, as Thyestes *thinks* that he knows the extent of the horror that he faces but still has yet to learn the horrible truth about the contents of his meal. Once Atreus reveals the truth, Thyestes responds to the news by attempting to cut his semi-digested sons out of his innards:

> volvuntur intus viscera et clusum nefas
> sine exitu luctatur et quaerit fugam:

da, frater, ensem (sanguinis multum mei
habet ille): ferro liberis detur via.
negatur ensis? pectora inliso sonent
contusa planctu—sustine, infelix, manum,
parcamus umbris. (1041-47)

Their organs roll around inside me and the horror, shut inside without an exit, struggles and seeks an escape. Give me a sword, brother—it has a lot of my blood on it—and let a path be opened for my children by iron. A sword is denied? Let this beaten chest resound with a crushing blow—but hold back your hand, unfortunate one, let's spare their spirits.

Thyestes still thinks of his sons as being some degree of intact inside him, as he is reluctant to visit violence upon himself (and thus them) to free them. His children are now part of him, just as Atreus mockingly alludes to as soon as the meal is finished.[367] Thyestes's belch, rumbling, and attempts at surgery are all to no avail. This is all to Atreus's delight, but Atreus knows all too well that Thyestes will suffer one last indignity, with which he taunts him in the very last line of the play:

Thy.: Vindices aderunt dei;
his puniendum vota te tradunt mea.
At.: Te puniendum liberis trado tuis.

[367] E.g. 976-78: *Hic esse natos crede in amplexu patris; / hic sunt eruntque; nulla pars prolis tuae / tibi subtrahetur* ("Trust that your sons are here in the embrace of their father. They are and will be here. No part of your offspring will be dragged away from you"); 998: *reddam, et tibi illos nullus eripiet dies* ("I will return them and no day will snatch them away from you").

Thyestes: The gods will be present as my avengers: my prayers deliver you to them to be punished.

Atreus: I deliver you to be punished by your children.

This final line offers a triple (if not more) entendre. Atreus, at least at the surface level, means that Thyestes's memory of his meal will haunt him forever: that is how his children will punish him.[368] Here Seneca may also allude to the continuation of the family curse whereby Atreus's son Agamemnon will be murdered by his wife Clytemnestra, with her lover Aegisthus, another son of Thyestes, as accomplice.[369] But I am interested in the more physically unpleasant consequence of this meal, the sensory punishment that will haunt Thyestes sometime in the near future: his defecation of his sons' bodies, the visual reminder of his meal.

To my knowledge this reading has never been proposed. Gary Meltzer, in his influential article on black humor in the *Thyestes*, does not even go so far as to suggest defecation, although he sees in this parting shot from Atreus a reference to Thyestes's stomach churning[370]—as if it had not already churned! I take his reading a step further: not only have his attempts at evacuating the children otherwise failed, but Atreus is director and spectator of all of them. He has already gloried in the belch, the stomach-churning, and the attempts at surgery, and he knows that Thyestes will now have no choice but to see his sons come back in a debased form. The fact that he can load this final line with such a horrific jest is very much in keeping with his verbal activity throughout the play, as he has already punned on Thyestes's meal several times. These

[368] So Giancotti 1989 ad loc., Monteleone 1991: 251. Boyle 2017 ad loc. notes, concerning the line's word order, that "*te* and *tuis*, separated here, will be forever conjoined."
[369] See, e.g., Schiesaro 2003: 96-7.
[370] Meltzer 1988: 326.

puns are, as I mentioned above, usually ambiguous comments that imply that Thyestes's sons are already with him when Thyestes asks where they are. But this verbal sparring is not just fun-making at his brother's expense; as Schiesaro writes, these double entendres "are an intrinsic part of Atreus' primacy over Thyestes."[371]

Indeed, the inevitable future of the *cena Thyestea*, horrible though it is, is the only thing that will once again separate Thyestes's sons from him; hinted at by Atreus at the play's end, it has the potential to bring Thyestes, who must *see* (not to mention smell) the outcome of his meal, to previously unrealized depths of abjection. Elsewhere Seneca specifically notes his distaste for the transformation of food to feces in visual terms: "Do you want to condemn the pleasure of foods? Look at the outcome!" (*vis ciborum voluptatem contemnere? exitum specta*, *Ep*. 110.13) The endpoint of eating is a (paradoxically) monolithic hodgepodge, expressed here (as in the final line of the play) in euphemistic terms, "outcome." There are no traces of the variety of foods that one might eat contributing to an idiosyncratic product, as with the bees' transformation.[372]

For an Atreus obsessed with going ever further than his literary models, this final line is the perfect coup de grâce. But it is not *just* about one last horrific bodily movement. Thyestes is abject as soon as he eats his sons, before he fully realizes it: subject and object have literally collapsed. Atreus knows this when he says "no part of your offspring will be dragged away from you" (*nulla pars prolis tuae / tibi subtrahetur*, 977-78). As Boyle points out ad loc., *te* and *tuis*, syntactically separated in the play's final line, "will be forever conjoined." The final abjective depth of the bowel movement is the only thing that can separate Thyestes from his sons. It thus

[371] Schiesaro 2003: 112. For an exploration of some of his other double entendres see Schiesaro 2003: 111-13.
[372] It also might not be coincidental that *inquino*, "smear" or "cloy," in *inquinunt non alunt* (Ep. 2.4, discussed above) is etymologically related to *caenum*, "feces", the undesirable result of improper literary evacuation.

fulfills the purifying, cathartic function identified by Kristeva, where the abject is both a source of the grotesque and necessary for the play's closure. Subject and object return to their proper places in the end.[373] Even so, Thyestes's bowel movement underscores his incompetence in performing the apian literary activity encouraged for the reader of the *EM*. Atreus, who has mastered proper digestion and reproduction of his source text, makes one final pun on his brother's failure.

But perhaps this reading seems too extreme—as if anything in Senecan tragedy could—or generically inappropriate. I mentioned some other abjective moments in Senecan tragedy above, but it will be helpful to detail parallel passages in two of Seneca's other tragedies, the *Phaedra* and the *Oedipus*, which provide precedent for this sort of grotesque bodily reference at the very end of the play. Seneca is, of course, the director behind Atreus, and a look at these other final scenes will show that the *Thyestes* is not entirely unique in its closing focus on the grotesque, though, as a play within a play, it is the most self-consciously literary of the three tragedies.

At the end of the *Phaedra*, after Hippolytus's grisly death, his father Theseus must collect and reassemble his disembodied parts for burial:

> Disiecta, genitor, membra laceri corporis
> in ordinem dispone et errantes loco
> restitue partes: fortis hic dextrae locus,
> hic laeva frenis docta moderandis manus
> ponenda: laevi lateris agnosco notas. 1260

[373] Thyestes's excreta (not just his sons) is, properly, outside the boundaries of his body; see Douglas 1966: 121.

quam magna lacrimis pars adhuc nostris abest!
durate trepidae lugubri officio manus,
fletusque largos sistite, arentes genae,
dum membra nato genitor adnumerat suo
corpusque fingit. hoc quid est forma carens 1265
et turpe, multo vulnere abruptum undique?
quae pars tui sit dubito; sed pars est tui:
hic, hic repone, non suo, at vacuo loco. (1256-68)

Father, arrange the disembodied parts of his mangled corpse into their proper order and restore the errant parts in place: here is the place for his strong right hand, here his left hand must be placed, competent in controlling the reins—I recognize the signs of his left side. How great a part is still absent for my tears! Stand firm in your gloomy duty, my fearful hands, and stop these big tears, dry cheeks, while the father adds the limbs to his son and arranges his corpse. What is *this* thing, disgusting and lacking form, severed on all sides with much wounding? I'm not sure which part of you it is, but it *is* a part of you: put it back here, here, not in its own place, just in an empty one.

This passage, which terminates just twelve lines before the end of the play, has been widely panned as excessive and bathetic. Coffey and Mayer, in their 1990 commentary of the play, are particularly hostile: "S. lacked a sense of humour and he failed to perceive that an over-explicit description becomes funny or wearisome."[374] They decry *quae pars tui sit dubito; sed pars est*

[374] Coffey and Mayer 1990 ad loc.

tui (1267) as "arguably the worst line in Senecan drama, rivalling *Oed*. 1051," the latter of which will be discussed below.[375] Richard Jenkyns writes from a similar place of enmity: "In more talented hands such bizarreries might have a grotesque kind of power."[376] From a metaliterary perspective there is clearly much to commend about this passage; we need only look at the first line to note Seneca's response to Horace's famous *disiecti membra poetae* (*S.* 1.4.62). But I cite this passage not to pull it apart but only to point to a strand of conservatism in Senecan scholarship that shies away from the bodily grotesque, the same tradition that would reject a pun about defecation at the end of the *Thyestes*. At any rate Charles Segal had a more positive and nuanced reading of this scene, which he saw as a manifestation of the Senecan "baroque."[377]

The bodily horror of Hippolytus's *disiecta membra* at the very end of this play is not an isolated incident. Seneca's newly-blinded Oedipus, in his eponymous tragedy, stumbles around while attempting to fulfill his exile and leave Thebes: "Walk headfirst, moving your slipping feet. Go, flee, get out of here—stop! Don't fall onto mother" (*ingredere praeceps, lubricos ponens gradus, / i profuge vade—siste, ne in matrem incidas*, 1050-51). In his blindness, Oedipus must avoid tripping over Jocasta's corpse: *ne in matrem incidas* is a sexual pun, since *incido*, "fall onto," can connote sexual activity. It is unclear whether this sexual pun or merely the image of Oedipus tripping on his dead mother invited Coffey and Mayer's charge of bathos, but this pun appears ten lines before the very end of the play and clearly has a similar affinity for the Senecan "baroque" as does Theseus's reassembly. As in that passage, not all criticism has been negative: A.J. Boyle, in his 2011 edition and commentary of the *Oedipus*, is far more receptive and sympathetic to this pun, as he recognizes its thematic and textual complexity.

[375] Ibid.
[376] Jenkyns 1986: 684.
[377] Segal 1984.

Oedipus stumbles onto his mother "as he had 'stumbled on a kingdom'" at the beginning of the play.[378]

Given Meltzer's suggestion of a "stomach-churning" pun, as well as these parallel passages at the conclusions of the *Phaedra* and *Oedipus*, a similar instance of dark bodily humor fits the conclusion of the *Thyestes*. Thyestes's next bowel movement will force him to relive his horrific feast through sight and smell, a far greater punishment at the hands of an Atreus who always endeavors to outdo his gruesome literary models. But we can find the abject not just in the *Thyestes* but in all of these plays.

Seneca's dramatization of the grotesque body is not limited to tragedy, however. As discussed in chapter 2, the *Apocolocyntosis* offers the defecatory Claudius to its reader (and/or viewer, if the text were performed at the Saturnalia in 54) to criticize.[379] Among contemporary Roman emperors, the role of Thyestes tends to be connected with Nero, since Nero, the *imperator scaenicus*, enjoyed playing him.[380] But in Thyestes's disgusting embodiment he is closer to the vision of Claudius advanced in the *Apoc.*: his bodily signs provide a loathsome experience for all five senses.[381]

Connections such as this between Senecan tragedy and his prose texts (or prosimetric in the case of the *Apoc*.) suggest that we are better served by looking at the Senecan literary project as unitary rather than fragmented, all the consumption and regurgitation of Roman literature (including his own). Seneca can thus make his Hippolytus a reification of Horace's *disiectus poeta*, his Oedipus an intratextual stumbler over his own kingdom and mother/wife, his Thyestes

[378] Boyle 2011 ad loc.
[379] See above, 107-9.
[380] See Dio 63.9
[381] But note that Nero's body, while alive, is also painted in disgusting terms by ancient biographers: see Suet. *Ner.* 51 for his bad smell. Skotheim 2017 draws connections between Nero's smelly body and the sweatiness of his stage acting.

a debased version of the regurgitating bees and the mirror image of his own literarily productive brother, as well as a sort of sequel to the defecatory Claudius.

Indeed, a holistic treatment of the Senecan literary project will also help us to outgrow the vestiges of scholarly conservatism that cling to notions of tragedy as a "high" genre that does not allow for the sorts of bodily transgressions at the end of the *Phaedra*, *Oedipus*, or *Thyestes*, let alone the vivid depiction of a meal at all, even if it were not the *cena Thyestea*. These are only impediments to our understanding of Seneca: clearly Senecan tragedy does not play by the same rules as its Greek forebears and tends to complicate essentialist definitions of tragedy, which are themselves vitiated by differences in tone, theme, and content even within the works of the fifth-century Attic tragedians.[382] Thanks to Bakhtin we associate the lower bodily with the comic, the satirical, or the unserious, so Claudius's final words in the *Apocolocyntosis*, "oh no, I think I've shit myself!" (*vae me, puto, concacavi me*) followed by the narrator's pun that he may or may not have, but at any rate he "certainly shat up everything else" (*omnia certe concacavit*, 4.3) are generically appropriate, but not Thyestes's future excretion.[383]

Reading Seneca's prose texts as different planks of a dramatic mission (and, following Schafer, form of education) should help to eliminate some of the possible unease in thinking (or overthinking) about the question of genre, particularly considering the great generic variety of Seneca's corpus. The non-tragic texts discussed throughout this dissertation are designed to appeal to his reader's imagination and generate mental pictures just as much as the outwardly visual and spectatorial genres of tragedy and (perhaps) Menippean satire. The *phantasiai* brought

[382] Case in point are Euripides's "problem" plays, which of course would have presented no problem to their original viewers. But there are off-color jokes even in Attic tragedy; see the famous joke about Helen's weight at *Trojan Women* 1050. For a polemical survey of the tight-rope walk of inclusive and exclusive definitions of tragedy, see Eagleton 2003: 1-22.

[383] Articulated most clearly in Bakhtin 1984, which looks to Menippean satire, including the *Apocolocyntosis*, in its exploration of the "carnivalesque."

on by, for example, his exemplary eaters enchant his readers' minds, as if on a stage *ante oculos*; the *nobilis patina* and slimy oysters are no less vivid and disgusting than Thyestes's body. Indeed, studies that seek to reconcile Seneca's tragedies with his prose often put the burden on the tragedies: they must be classified, sense must be made of their relation to (and coherence within) a Stoic worldview. These studies often end up, with varying levels of success, hammering square tragedy-pegs in order to fit round philosophy-holes.[384] That the tragedies deal with Stoic themes is obvious, but *how* they do so remains a point of great contention. Moreover, Seneca's tragedies are not a monolith, as different plays seem to take different perspectives on cosmological or moral issues. Boyle puts it well when he writes "The world of the tragedies,though in part articulated through Stoic language and thought, is neither Stoic nor simple. There are conspicuous ideological differences between play and play."[385]

The much simpler perspective therefore is the one that instead takes Seneca's prose as the starting point: the literary journey that he sets forth in the *EM*, as I discussed above, filled with a multitude of voices and imagined interlocutors, suggests a correspondence between the two genres without our bending over backward to overanalyze a mode as complex as "Senecan tragedy."

Conclusion

As a Stoic pedagogue Seneca wants his readers to be as productive as he. This is why he is so interested in the literature-as-food image: not only can different sources be consumed and

[384] See, for example, the competing views of Thyestes as incompetent interpreter and *proficiens* discussed at the beginning of this section. Staley 2010 is a recent and more nuanced look at Senecan tragedy, which he sees as "not Stoic because of its content…. It is Stoic because of its form, which in a variety of senses embodies Stoic ways of thinking" (136). But studies such as that of Rosenmeyer 1989, which reads Senecan tragedy through a Stoic cosmological lens instead of a moral one, remain compelling.
[385] Boyle 2017: lxxix.

regurgitated with *Ep*. 84's bees in mind, but so can his own text by his reader. The positive and negative gustatory exempla that he details throughout his corpus, not to mention the epistemic and satiric mess of the *nobilis patina* and the literary mullets discussed in the previous chapter, are all potential fodder for consumption and regurgitation, while the *Thyestes* dramatizes the horrors that can result from eating improper food in an improper manner followed by an improper mode of evacuation.

Seneca thus looks both backward, at his own digestion and regurgitation of his influences, as well as forward, to his reader's positive reproduction of his text. Perhaps this concern with his own gustatory reception, a then-unrealized version of his own adaptation of the Roman edible literary tradition, is more poignant due to the sure lateness of the *EM* and the probable lateness of the *Thyestes* in his corpus, as the former is his masterwork and the latter probably among his later tragedies. Would a lifetime of digesting literature allow Seneca to join the canon, to be himself digested and regurgitated by his readers? The popularity of his bees suggests so.

Conclusion and Further Questions

At the risk of falling into a post hoc propter hoc fallacy, Seneca's pedagogical strategy seems to have worked. His writings were immensely popular after his death, as is evident both from the judgment of Quintilian, much to his chagrin, that the youth were copying Seneca's style, as well as in his influence on poets of the Flavian era and beyond.[386] Indeed, Quintilian's comment, meant in an unabashedly negative way, that if not for his love of brevity and *sententiae* Seneca would have won the approval of the learned and not just that of the youth seems like a response to Seneca's complaint that no one cares about philosophy (*philosophiae nulla cura est*, *NQ* 7.32.4).[387] Seneca, by engaging fervently with a uniquely Roman literary and cultural brand of eating, might have helped make a connection that inspired the "sober youth" (*iuventus sobria*) he had hoped for in the same passage at the end of the *NQ* in which he despairs of the current state of philosophy.

At any rate, Stoicism continued to be the philosophy in vogue among aristocratic Romans, as the careers of Epictetus, Musonius Rufus, and of course the philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius attest. But all of these authors revert to the pre-Senecan practice of writing Stoic philosophy in Greek, the philosophical language with a longer, more storied history. This return to Greek need not imply that the later Stoics cast aspersions on Seneca for writing in Latin. If anything, we receive an even greater impression of Seneca's singularity, his

[386] For Quintilian on Seneca, see *Inst.* X.I.125-31. For Seneca's influence on Flavian poets see Hutchinson 1993: 216 and 312 n. 40 (in Statius), Boyle 2017: cxiv-cxviii (of the *Thyestes* on Statius, Silius Italicus, Curiatius Maternus, and Martial).

[387] *Inst.* X.1.130: "he would have been approved by the consensus of learned people rather than by the love of boys" (*consensu potius eruditorum quam puerorum amore comprobaretur*).

willingness—indeed, enthusiasm—for teaching a Latin-speaking Roman elite in its own language. A secondary "language" of Rome, to return to Richardson-Hay's metaphor, is eating. Just as these later authors do not follow Seneca in writing Latin, they revive the older reluctance to detail bodily activity, as the Epictetus quotation in the introduction so memorably illustrates.[388] Something about the Latin language seems to lend itself to food and eating, vomiting and excreting. These later Roman Stoics seem to recognize this no less than Seneca does, but while he embraces Latin for its gustatory tradition, they run the other way.

Even still, Seneca's approach to the Roman gastro-literary tradition is reflected in over two thousand years of literary activity, from Fronto's metaphors about the experience of reading Seneca all the way to the food-writing of M.F.K. Fisher. Seneca *escarius* has stood the test of time, and I hope to have shown the reader that this aspect of Seneca provides a missing link between Hellenistic philosopher and Roman author, as well as *philosophus* and *tragicus*.

Some questions come to mind for the future directions of this research. I have explored eating in Seneca's text from several different angles. But what about drinking? The negative exemplum par excellence for drunkenness in Seneca is Marcus Antonius the *triumvir*, whose notorious sloppiness and lack of self-control Seneca attacks in *Ep*. 83. Seneca here builds upon a late Republican literary tradition that had exploited Antony's drunkenness as a target of invective: one of the most enduring images in Cicero's second *Philippic* is, after all, Antony vomiting during a speech at the rostra in the Roman Forum, in full view of the Roman people (*Phil*. 2.63). Could Antony's drunkenness pave the way for a sort of Veblenian "conspicuous regurgitation?" Surely this is not what Seneca means when he says that we need to imitate the regurgitation of the bees—and in the very next letter in the collection, for that matter. Instead of

[388] See above, 5-6.

the positive transformation that readers and writers make by mixing and regurgitating their source material, alcohol enacts a negative transformation within the drinker himself.

A theme of this dissertation has been reception—namely, Seneca's reception of earlier Latin authors and genres. But what can a deeper dive into the reception of Seneca tell us about his gastro-pedagogical project? A natural place to begin would be with the way that Seneca is read by Christian authors beginning in the late second century. Christianity uses eating and drinking among its metaphors of incorporation, of course, and Seneca was popular reading amongst early Christians, who saw many points of intersection between Seneca's Stoicism and their own beliefs.[389] An analysis of the Christian reception of Seneca could provide fruitful material for our understanding of the ways in which Seneca's gastro-pedagogy is taken in and transformed by adherents to a later, but in some ways similar, philosophical system.

The final message which I would like the reader to take away is that creative engagement with one's sources does not end with Seneca. This is the entire point of his project: to find a way to reach his reader, to inspire them, and to connect with what they know, what they find meaningful. Writing about eating can help achieve this connection, but it is up to the reader to continue the process, to give their own reader something memorable to digest, transform, and reproduce.

[389] In Tertullian, for example, who calls Seneca "often our Seneca" (*Anim*. 20.1), and later Jerome (*Adv. Iovin*. 1.49). The fictional correspondence between Seneca and St. Paul also suggests an interest in establishing a dialogue between Stoicism and Christianity.

Bibliography

Ablett, Sarah J. 2018. "Disgust in Samuel Beckett's *Molloy*." In *Embodied Narration: Illness, Death and Dying in Modern Culture*, ed. Heike Hartung. Bielefeld. 85-101.

—. 2020. *Dramatic Disgust: Aesthetic Theory and Practice from Sophocles to Sarah Kane*. Bielefeld.

Andrews, Alfred C. 1949. "The Roman Craze for Surmullets." *CW* 42.12: 186-88.

Armisen-Marchetti, Mireille. 1989. *Sapientiae facies: Étude sur les images de Sénèque.* Paris.

—. 2015. "Seneca's Images and Metaphors." In Bartsch and Schiesaro eds. 150-60.

Astin, Alan E. 1978. *Cato the Censor*. Oxford.

Avramescu, Cătălin. 2009. *An Intellectual History of Cannibalism*. Trans. Alistair Ian Blyth. Princeton.

Backhaus, Maria. 2019. *Mord(s)bilder – Aufzählungen von Gewalt bei Seneca und Lucan*. Berlin.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1984. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington.

Bakker, Egbert. 2013. *The Meaning of Meat and the Structure of the* Odyssey. Cambridge.

Bartlett, Jennifer. 2016. "Arthur's Dinner; Or, Robert Thornton Goes Shopping." *Arthuriana* 26.1: 165-79.

Bartsch, Shadi. 2006. *The Mirror of the Self: Sexuality, Self-Knowledge, and the Gaze in the Early Roman Empire*. Chicago.

—. 2015. *Persius: A Study in Food, Philosophy, and the Figural.* Chicago.

Bartsch, Shadi and Wray, David eds. 2009. *Seneca and the Self*. Cambridge.

Bartsch, Shadi and Schiesaro, Alessandro eds. 2015. *The Cambridge Companion to Seneca*. Cambridge.

Beare, William. 1964. *The Roman Stage*. London.

Beer, Michael. 2010. *Taste or Taboo: Dietary Choices in Antiquity*. Blackawton, UK.

Bell, David and Valentine, Gill. 1997. *Consuming Geographies: We Are Where We Eat*. New York.

Berno, Francesca. 2002. "Ostio Quadra allo specchio: riflessioni speculari e speculative su *Nat. Quaest.* 1, 16-17." *Athenaeum* 90.1: 214-28.

—. 2008. "Seneca e la semantica della pienezza." *Bolletino di Studi Latini* 38.2: 549-66.

—. 2014. "In Praise of Tubero's Pottery: A Note on Seneca, *Ep*. 95.72–73 and 98.13." In Wildberger and Colish eds. 369-92.

—. 2017. "Nurses' Prayers, Philosophical *Otium*, and Fat Pigs: Seneca *Ep.* 60 versus Horace *Ep.* 1.4." In Stöckinger et al. eds. 53-71.

Berrendonner, Clara. 2001. "La formation de la tradition sur M'. Curius Dentatus et C. Fabricius Luscinus: un homme nouveau peut-il être un grand homme?" In Coudry and Späth eds. 97-116.

Blänsdorf, Jürgen. 1986. "Senecas *Apocolocyntosis* und die Intertextualitätstheorie." *Poetica* 18: 1-26.

Bobzien, Suzanne. 1998. *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy*. Oxford.

Bogel, Fredric V. 2001. *The Difference Satire Makes: Rhetoric and Reading from Jonson to Byron*. Ithaca.

Bowie, A.M. 2003. "Fate May Harm Me, I Have Dined Today: Near-Eastern Banquets and Greek Symposia in Herodotus." *Pallas* 61: 99-109.

Boyle, A.J. 1997. “Seneca and Renaissance Drama: Ideology and Meaning.” In *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition*. New York. 167-92.

—. 2006. *Roman Tragedy*. New York.

Boyle, A.J. ed. 2011. *Seneca:* Oedipus. Oxford.

—. 2017. *Seneca:* Thyestes. Oxford.

Braden, Gordon. 1985. *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition: Anger’s Privilege*. New Haven.

Bradley, K.R. 1986. “Seneca and Slavery.” *C&M* 37: 161-72. Reprinted in Fitch ed. 2008. 335-47.

Bramble, J.C. 1974. *Persius and the Programmatic Satire: A Study in Form and Imagery*. Cambridge.

Brillat-Savarin, Jean Anthelme. 2002. *The Physiology of Taste*. Orig. published 1825. Trans. Fayette Robinson. Blackmask online.

Brown, Truesdell S. 1982. “Herodotus’ Portrait of Cambyses.” *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 31.4: 387-403.

Büchner, Karl. 1960. *Sallust*. Heidelberg.

Butler, Shane. 2011. “The Surface of the Page.” In *The Matter of the Page: Essays in Search of Ancient and Medieval Authors*. Madison. 75-86.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. 1987. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley, CA.

Campbell, Jonah. 2011. *Food & Trembling: An Entertainment*. Picton, ON.

—. 2017. *Eaten Back to Life: Essays*. Picton, ON.

Carbonero, Orestes. 1993. “De Vedio Pollione apud Senecam et Tertullinam.” *Latinitas* 41: 3-5.

Carlin, Martha and Rosenthal, Joel Thomas eds. 1998. *Food and Eating in Medieval Europe*. London.

Charlton, H.B. 1946. *The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy*. Manchester.

Codoñer, Carmen ed. 1979. *L. Annaei Senecae*: Naturales Quaestiones. 2 vols. Madrid.

—. 1989. "La physique de Sénèque: Ordonnonce et structure des *Naturales Quaestiones*." *ANRW* 2.36.3: 1779-1822.

—. 2005. "Seneca: *Exemplum, Simulitudo*." *Pallas* 69: 143-56.

Coffey, Michael and Mayer, Roland eds. 1990. *Seneca*: Phaedra. Cambridge.

Connery, Brian A. and Combe, Kirk. 1995. "Theorizing Satire: A Retrospective and Introduction." In *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism*, eds. Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe. New York. 1-15.

Connors, Catherine. 1998. *Petronius the Poet: Verse and Literary Tradition in the* Satyricon. Cambridge.

Conte, Gian Biagio. 1994. *Latin Literature: A History*. Trans. Joseph B. Solodow. Baltimore.

Costa, Stefano. 2013. Quod olim fuerat: *La rappresentazione del passato in Seneca prosatore*. Hildesheim.

Coudry, Marianne and Späth, Thomas eds. 2001. *L'invention des Grands Hommes de la Rome Antique = Die Konstruktion der Grossen Männer Altroms: Actes du Colloque du Collegium Beatus Rhenanus*, *August 16-18 Septembre 1999*. Paris.

D'Arms, John H. 1970. *Romans on the Bay of Naples: A Social and Cultural Study of the Villas and Their Owners from 150 B.C. to A.D. 400*. Cambridge, MA.

Dalby, Andrew. 2000. *Empire of Pleasures: Luxury and Indulgence in the Roman World*. London and New York.

Davidson, James. 1997. *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens.* New York.

Davis, P.J. 2003. *Seneca:* Thyestes. London.

De Vreese, J. 1927. *Petron 39 und die Astrologie*. Amsterdam.

Degl'Innocenti Pierini, Rita. 2013. "Seneca, Mecenate e il 'ritratto in movimento' (a proposito dell'*epistola* 114)." In *Seneca e la letteratura greca e latina: Per i settant'anni di Giancarlo Mazzoli*, ed. Fabio Gasti. Pavia. 45-65.

Déry, Carol A. 1998. "Fish as Food and Symbol in Ancient Rome." In Walker ed. 94-115.

Dickison, Sheila K. 1977. "Claudius: *Saturnalicius Princeps*." *Latomus* 36: 634-47.

Donahue, John F. 2017. *The Roman Community at Table during the Principate: New and Expanded Edition.* Ann Arbor.

Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo.* New York.

Dupont, Florence. 1995. *Les monstres de Sénèque.* Paris.

Eagleton, Terry. 2003. *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*. Malden, MA.

—. 2008. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Anniversary edition. Minneapolis.

Earl, D.C. 1961. *The Political Thought of Sallust*. Cambridge.

Eden, P.T. ed. 1984. *Seneca:* Apocolocyntosis. Cambridge.

Edwards, Catharine. 1993. *The Politics of Immorality in Ancient Rome.* Cambridge.

—. 2009. "Free Yourself! Slavery, Freedom, and the Self in Seneca's *Letters*." In Bartsch and Wray eds. 139-59.

—. 2017. "Saturnalian Exchanges: Seneca, Horace, and Satiric Advice." In Stöckinger et al. eds. 73-89.

— ed. 2019. *Seneca: Selected Letters*. Cambridge.

Eliot, T.S. 1964. *Selected Essays*. New York.

Engberg-Pedersen, Troels. 1986. "Discovering the Good: *Oikeiosis* and *Kathekonta* in Stoic Ethics." In *The Norms of Nature: Studies in Hellenistic Ethics*, eds. Malcolm Schofield and Gisela Striker. Cambridge. 145-84.

—. 1990. *The Stoic Theory of* Oikeiosis*: Moral Development and Social Interaction in Early Stoic Philosophy*. Aarhus.

Faber, Eike. 2020. "Antiker Kannibalismus: Zwischen Mythos und Historie." In *Zwischen Hunger und Überfluss: Antike Diskurse über die Ernährung*, eds. Eike Faber and Timo Klär. Stuttgart. 217-44.

Fantham, Elaine. 1996. *Roman Literary Culture*. Baltimore.

Fantham, Elaine, Hine, Harry M., Ker, James, and Williams, Gareth D. trans. 2014. *Lucius Annaeus Seneca: Hardship and Happiness*. Chicago.

Farrier, Susan E. 1995. "Hungry Heroes in Medieval Literature." In *Food in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*, ed. Melitta Weiss Adamson. New York. 145-59.

Fern, Mary Edmond. 1941. *The Latin* Consolatio *as a Literary Type*. Meinrad, IN.

Fertik, Harriet. 2019. *The Ruler's House: Contesting Power and Privacy in Julio-Claudian Rome*. Baltimore.

Ficca, Flaviana. 1995. "Socrate, Catone e Lelio nell'*Ep*. 7a a Lucilio: « exempla » filosofici e linguistici." *Bollettino di Studi Latini: Periodico Semestrale d'Informazione Bibliografica* 25.2: 489-500.

Fischer, Susanna E. 2014. “Systematic Connections between Seneca’s Philosophical Works and Tragedies.” In *Brill’s Companion to Seneca*, eds. Gregor Damschen and Andreas Heil. Leiden. 745-68.

Fisher, M.F.K. 2004. *The Art of Eating*. 50th anniversary edition. Hoboken, NJ.

Fitch, J.G. 1981. “Sense-Pauses and Relative Dating in Seneca, Sophocles and Shakespeare.” *AJP* 102: 289-307.

— ed. 2008. *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Seneca*. Oxford.

Fitzgerald, William. 2000. *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*. Cambridge.

Foucault, Michel. 1994. *Dits et écrits, 1954-1988*. 4 vols. Paris.

—. 2001. *L’herméneutique du sujet: Cours au Collège de France (1981–1982)*. Paris.

Freudenburg, Kirk. 2001. *Satires of Rome: Threatening Poses from Lucilius to Juvenal*. Cambridge.

—. 2015. “Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis*: Censors in the Afterworld.” In Bartsch and Schiesaro eds. 93-105.

— ed. 2005. *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Satire*. Cambridge.

Frye, Northrop. 1957. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton.

Garani, Myrto, Michalopoulos, Andreas N., and Papaioannou, Sophia eds. 2020. *Intertextuality in Seneca’s Philosophical Writings*. Abingdon-on-Thames.

Garnsey, Peter. 1988. *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World*: *Responses to Risk and Crisis*. Cambridge.

Gazzarri, Tommaso. 2014. “Gender-Based Differential Morbidity and Moral Teaching in Seneca’s *Epistulae Morales*.” In Wildberger and Colish eds. 209-27.

—. 2020. *The Stylus and the Scalpel: Theory and Practice of Metaphors in Seneca's Prose*. Berlin.

Gervais, Kyle. 2013. "Viewing Violence in Statius' *Thebaid* and the Films of Quentin Tarantino." In *Epic Visions: Visuality in Greek and Latin Epic and Its Reception*, eds. Helen Lovatt and Caroline Vout. Cambridge. 139-67.

Giancotti, Francesco ed. 1989. *Seneca:* Tieste. *Volume II: Atti IV e V*. Turin.

Gigon, Olof. 1938. "Bemerkungen zu Senecas Thyestes." *Philologus* 93: 176-83.

Gildenhard, Ingo. 2020. "*Frugalitas*, or: The Invention of a Roman Virtue." In Gildenhard and Viglietti eds. 237-346.

Gildenhard, Ingo, and Viglietti, Cristiano eds. 2020. *Roman Frugality: Modes of Moderation from the Archaic Age to the Early Empire and Beyond*. Cambridge.

Gilmore, John T. 2018. *Satire*. Abingdon and New York.

Girard, René. 2013. *Anorexia and Mimetic Desire*. East Lansing, MI.

Gold, Barbara K. and Donahue, John F. eds. 2005. *Roman Dining: A Special Issue of* American Journal of Philology. Baltimore.

Gourévitch, Danielle. 1974. "Le menu de l'homme libre: recherches sur l'alimentation et la digestion dans les oeuvres en prose de Sénèque le philosophe." In *Mélanges de philosophie, de littérature et d'histoire ancienne offerts à Pierre Boyancé*. *Publications de l'École française de Rome* 22. Rome. 311-44.

Gowers, Emily. 1993. *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature*. Oxford.

—. 2021. "Pun-Fried Concoctions: Wor(l)d-Blending in the Roman Kitchen." In *Reception in the Greco-Roman World: Literary Studies in Theory and Practice*, eds. Marco Fantuzzi, Helen Morales, and Tim Whitmarsh. Cambridge. 241-65.

Grainger, Sally. 2014. "*Garum*, *Liquamen* and *Muria*: A New Approach to the Problem of Definition." In *Fish & Ships: Production et commerce des salsamenta durant l'antiquité*, eds. Emmanuel Botte and Victoria Leitch. Aix-en-Provence. 37-45.

—. 2020. *The Story of Garum: Fermented Fish Sauce and Salted Fish in the Ancient World*. Abingdon-on-Thames.

Graver, Margaret. 2007. *Stoicism and Emotion*. Chicago.

—. 2014. "Honeybee Reading and Self-Scripting: *Epistulae Morales* 84." In Wildberger and Colish. eds. 269-93.

Griffin, Dustin. 1994. *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*. Lexington, KY.

Griffin, Miriam. 1976. *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics*. Oxford.

—. 2007. "Seneca's Pedagogic Strategy: *Letters* and *de Beneficiis*." *BICS* 94: 89-113.

—. 2013. *Seneca on Society: A Guide to* de Beneficiis. Oxford.

Grimal, Pierre. 1978. *Sénèque ou la conscience de l'Empire*. Paris.

Gunderson, Erik. 2015. *The Sublime Seneca: Ethics, Literature, Metaphysics*. Cambridge.

Hadas, Moses ed. 1958. *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca: Essays and Letters of Seneca*. New York.

Hadot, Ilsetraut. 1969. *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung*. Berlin.

Hadot, Pierre. 1995. *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Trans. Michael Chase. Oxford.

Hallett, Judith P. 2021. "*Vilicus* and *Vilica* in the *de Agri Cultura*: The Elder Cato's Script for a Farming Couple." In *Married Life in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Claude-Emmanuelle Centlivres Challet. London. 59-75.

Hanna, Ralph. 2000. “Feasting in Middle English Alliterative Poetry.” In *New Perspectives on Middle English Texts: A Festschrift for R.A. Waldron*, eds. Ronald A. Waldron, Susan Powell, Jeremy J. Smith. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK. 31-42.

Harrison, George W.M. ed. 2000. *Seneca in Performance*. London.

Hartog, Francois. 1988. *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History.* Trans. Janet Lloyd. Berkeley.

Heath, Malcolm. 2000. “Do Heroes Eat Fish? Athenaeus on the Homeric Lifestyle.” In *Athenaeus and His World: Reading Greek Culture in the Roman Empire*, eds. David Braund and John Wilkins. Exeter. 342-52.

Hemelrijk, Emily A. 1999. Matrona Docta: *Educated Women in the Roman Élite from Cornelia to Julia Domna*. London and New York.

Henderson, Fergus. 2004. *The Whole Beast: Nose to Tail Eating*. New York.

Henderson, John. 2004. *Morals and Villas in Seneca’s* Letters*: Places to Dwell.* Cambridge.

Hinds, Stephen. 2011. “Seneca’s Ovidian *Loci*.” *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica*, quarta serie 9: 5-63.

Hine, Harry M. ed. 1996a. *L. Annaei Senecae* Naturalium quaestionum libros. Stuttgart and Leipzig.

—. 1996b. *Studies in the Text of Seneca’s* Natural Questions. Stuttgart and Leipzig.

Hine, Harry M. 2010a. *Seneca:* Natural Questions. Chicago.

—. 2010b. “Form and Function of Speech in the Prose Works of the Younger Seneca.” In *Form and Function in Roman Oratory*, eds. D.H. Berry and Andrew Erskine. Cambridge. 208-24.

Hock, Rudolph Paul. 1988. “Servile Behavior in Sallust’s *Bellum Catilinae*.” *CW* 82.1: 13-24.

Holmes, Brooke. 2010. *The Symptom and the Subject: The Emergence of the Physical Body in Ancient Greece*. Princeton.

Hopkins, Keith. 1978. *Conquerors and Slaves*. Cambridge.

Hostetter, Aaron. 2017. *Political Appetites: Food in Medieval English Romance*. Columbus, OH.

Hudson, Nicola A. 1989. "Food in Roman Satire." In *Satire and Society in Ancient Rome*, ed. Susan H. Braund. Exeter. 69-87.

Hunter, G.K. 1986. "Shakespeare and the Traditions of Tragedy." In *Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, ed. Stanley Wells. Cambridge. 123-41.

Hutchinson, G.O. 1993. *Latin Literature from Seneca to Juvenal*. Oxford.

Inwood, Brad. 2005. *Reading Seneca: Stoic Philosophy at Rome*. Oxford.

—. 2007a. "The Importance of Form in Seneca's Philosophical Letters." In *Ancient Letters: Classical and Late Antique Epistolography*, eds. Ruth Morello and A. D. Morrison. Oxford. 133-48.

—. 2009. "Seneca and Self-Assertion." In Bartsch and Wray eds. 39-64.

Inwood, Brad ed. 2007b. *Seneca: Selected Philosophical Letters*. Oxford.

Jenkyns, Richard. 1986. "Silver Latin Poetry and the Latin Novel." In *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, eds. John Boardman, Jasper Griffin, and Oswyn Murray. New York. 677-697.

Jonson, Ben. 1640. *Timber: or, Discoveries; Made upon Men and Matter in The Workes of Benjamin Jonson.* Vol. 3. London.

Kaster, Robert A. 2001. "The Dynamics of *Fastidium* and the Ideology of Disgust." *TAPA* 131: 143-89.

—. 2002. "The Taxonomy of Patience, or When Is *Patientia* Not a Virtue?" *CP* 97.2: 133-44.

—. 2010. "*On Anger*: Introduction." In Kaster and Nussbaum eds. 3-13.

Kaster, Robert A. and Nussbaum, Martha C. trans. 2010. *Lucius Annaeus Seneca: Anger, Mercy, Revenge*. Chicago.

Keane, Catherine. 2015. *Juvenal and the Satiric Emotions*. Oxford.

—. 2018. "Conversations about *Sermo*." In *Lucilius and Satire in Second-Century BC Rome*, eds. Brian W. Breed, Elizabeth Keitel, and Rex Wallace. Cambridge. 217-35.

Keith, Alison. 2018. "Philosophical Currents in Flavian Literature: An Introduction." *Phoenix* 72.3-4: 211-17.

Ker, James. 2009. *The Deaths of Seneca*. Oxford.

—. 2015. "Seneca and Augustan Culture." In Bartsch and Schiesaro eds 2015. Cambridge. 109-21.

Kilgour, Maggie. 1990. *From Communion to Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation.* Princeton.

Knight, Charles A. 2004. *The Literature of Satire*. Cambridge.

Knoche, Ulrich. 1941. "Senecas Atreus. Ein Beispiel." *Antike* 17: 66-76. Reprinted in Lefèvre ed. 1972. 477-89.

Kohn, Thomas D. 2013. *The Dramaturgy of Senecan Tragedy*. Ann Arbor.

König, Jason. 2012. *Saints and Symposiasts: The Literature of Food and the Symposium in Greco-Roman and Early Christian Culture*. Cambridge.

Kontokosta, Anne Hrychuk. 2019. "Building the Thermae Agrippae: Private Life, Public Space and the Politics of Bathing in Early Imperial Rome." *American Journal of Archaeology* 123.1: 45-77.

Kragelund, Patrick. 1999. “Senecan Tragedy: Back on Stage?” *C&M* 50: 235-47. Reprinted in Fitch ed. 2008. 181-94.

Kristeva, Julia. 1982. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York.

La Penna, Antonio. 1968. *Sallustio e la rivoluzione romana.* Milan.

—. 1970. “Die Bedeutung der Proömien Sallusts.” In *Sallust*, ed. Viktor Pöschl. Darmstadt. 296-324.

—. 1989. “La legittimazione del lusso privato da Ennio a Vitruvio.” *Maia* 41: 3-34.

Langlands, Rebecca. 2018. *Exemplary Ethics in Ancient Rome.* Cambridge.

Lapidge, Michael. 1978. “Stoic Cosmology.” In Rist ed. 161-85.

Larmour, David H.J. 2016. *The Arena of Satire: Juvenal’s Search for Rome*. Norman.

Lavery, Gerard B. 1987. “Sons and Rulers: Paradox in Seneca’s *de Ira*.” *L'Antiquité Classique* 56: 279-83.

Le Blay, Frédéric. 2013. “Une version pervertie de la connaissance de soi: Le cas d'Hostius Quadra.” *Pallas* 92: 305-13.

Leeman, A.D. 1954. “Sallusts Prologe und seine Auffassung von der Historiographie. I. Das Catilina-proömium.” *Mnemosyne* 7.4: 323-39.

Lefèvre, Eckard ed. 1972. *Senecas Tragodien*. Darmstadt.

Lefèvre, Eckard. 1985. “Die philosophische Bedeutung der Seneca-Tragödie am Beispiel des ‘Thyestes.’” *ANRW* II.32.2: 1263-83.

—. 1997. “Senecas Atreus—die Negation des stoischen Weisen?” In *Scaenica Saravi-Varsoviensia: Beiträge zum antiken Theater und zu seinem Nachleben*, eds. Jerzy Axer and Woldemar Görler. Warsaw. 57-74.

Leigh, Matthew. 2015. "Food in Latin Literature." In *A Companion to Food in the Ancient World*, eds. John Wilkins and Robin Nadeau. Hoboken, NJ. 43-52.

Leitão, David D. 1998. “Senecan Catoptrics and the Passion of Hostius Quadra (Sen. *Nat*. 1).” *MD* 41: 127-60.

Leiverkus, Peggy. 2021. *Essensdarstellungen in Ovids* Metamorphosen. Wuppertal.

Levene, D.S. 2000. “Sallust’s *Catiline* and Cato the Censor.” *CQ* 50.1: 170-91.

Levick, Barbara. 1982. “Morals, Politics, and the Fall of the Roman Republic.” *G&R* 29.1: 53-62.

Lintott, A.W. 1972. “Imperial Expansion and Moral Decline in the Roman Republic.” *Historia* 21.4: 626-38.

Littlewood, C.J. 2004. *Self-Representation and Illusion in Senecan Tragedy*. Oxford.

—. 2017. “Post-Augustan Revisionism.” In *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Nero*, eds. Shadi Bartsch, Kirk Freudenburg, and C.J. Littlewood. Cambridge. 79-92.

Long, A.A. 1996. *Stoic Studies*. Cambridge.

Lupton, Deborah. 1996. *Food, the Body and the Self*. London.

MacMullen, Ramsay. 1966. *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire.* Cambridge, MA.

Mader, Gottfried. 2003. “Thyestes’ Belch (Seneca, *Thy*. 911–12).” *CQ* 53.2: 634-36.

Malcovati, Enrica ed. 1953. Oratorum Romanorum Fragmenta. Turin.

Martin, Paul M. 2019. “Dentatus et Fabricius: Couplage, surimpression, utilisation.” *Revue des Etudies Anciennes* 121.1: 93-113.

Master, Jonathan. 2015. “The Shade of Sallust: History-writing in the *Natural Questions* of Seneca.” *CP* 110.4: 333-52.

Mastronarde, Donald J. 1970. “Seneca’s *Oedipus*: The Drama in the Word.” *TAPA* 101: 291-315.

Matthews, P. n.d. *The Cooking of Ancient Rome*.

Mattingly, David J. and Aldrete, Gregory S. 2000. “The Feeding of Imperial Rome: The Mechanics of the Food Supply System.” In *Ancient Rome: The Archaeology of the Eternal City*, eds. Hazel Dodge and J.C. Coulston. Oxford. 142-65.

Maurach, Gregor. 1970. *Der Bau von Senecas* Epistulae Morales. Heidelberg.

Mayer, Roland G. 2005. “Sleeping with the Enemy: Satire and Philosophy.” In Freudenburg ed. 146-59.

—. 2008. “Roman Historical *Exempla* in Seneca.” In Fitch ed. 299-315.

Mayer, Wendy and Trzcionka, Silke eds. 2017. *Feast, Fast or Famine: Food and Drink in Byzantium*. Leiden.

McAuley, Mairéad. 2013. “Breaking Apart Like the World: Seneca and Psychoanalysis.” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 40.1: 71-87.

McGushin, Patrick ed. 1977. *C. Sallustius Crispus:* Bellum Catilinae: *A Commentary.* Leiden.

Meltzer, Gary. 1988. “Dark Wit and Black Humor in Seneca’s *Thyestes*.” *TAPA* 118: 309-30.

Miola, Robert S. 1992. *Shakespeare and Classical Tragedy: The Influence of Seneca*. Oxford.

Monteleone, Ciro ed. 1991. *Il* Thyestes *di Seneca: Sentieri hermeneutici*. Fasano.

Motto, A.L. 2001. “Seneca's Culinary Satire.” In *Further Essays on Seneca*. Bern. 169-83.

Muse, Kevin. 2012. “Sallust's Imitation of Greek Models at *Catiline* 14.2-3.” *Mnemosyne* 65.1: 40-61.

Nauta, R.R. 1987. “Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis* as Saturnalian Literature.” *Mnemosyne* 40.1/2: 69-96.

Nussbaum, Martha C. 1994. *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton.

—. 2010. "*The Pumpkinification of Claudius the God*: Introduction." In Kaster and Nussbaum eds. 197-214.

O'Connor, Kaori. 2015. *The Never-Ending Feast: The Anthropology and Archaeology of Feasting*. London and New York.

Passet, Laure. 2020. "Frugality as a Political Language in the Second Century BCE: The Strategies of Cato the Elder and Scipio Aemilianus." In Gildenhard and Viglietti eds. 192-212.

Pollard, Arthur. 1970. *Satire*. London.

Polzonetti, Pierpaolo. 2021. *Feasting & Fasting in Opera: From Renaissance Banquets to the Callas Diet*. Chicago.

Purcell, Nicholas. 1995. "Eating Fish: The Paradoxes of Seafood." In *Food in Antiquity*, eds. John Wilkins, David Harvey, and Mike Dobson. Exeter. 132-49.

—. 2005. "The Way We Used to Eat: Diet, Community, and History at Rome." In Gold and Donahue eds. 1-30.

Ramsey, J.T. ed. 2007. *Sallust's* Bellum Catilinae: *Second Edition*. Oxford.

Relihan, Joel. 1993. *Ancient Menippean Satire*. Baltimore.

Reynolds, L.D. ed. 1965. *L. Annaei Senecae* ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales. 2 vols. Oxford.

—. 1977. *L. Annaei Senecae* Dialogorum Libri Duodecim. Oxford.

—. 1983. *Texts and Transmission*: *A Survey of the Latin Classics*. Oxford.

—. 1991. *C. Sallusti Crispi:* Catilina, Iugurthina, Historiarum Fragmenta Selecta, Appendix Sallustiana. Oxford.

Ribbeck, Otto. 1892. *Geschichte der Römischen Dichtung*. *Band III: Dichtung der Kaiserherrschaft*. Stuttgart. Reprinted in Lefèvre ed. 1972. 15-7.

Richardson-Hay, Christine. 2009. "Dinner at Seneca's Table: The Philosophy of Food." *G&R* 56.1: 71-96.

Rimell, Victoria. 2002. *Petronius and the Anatomy of Fiction*. Cambridge.

Rist, John M. ed. 1978. *The Stoics*. Berkeley.

Rodríguez Herrera, Gregorio. 1997. "«Exempla mythologica» en las tragedias de Séneca." In *Séneca dos mil años después: Actas del congreso internacional conmemorativo del bimilenario de su nacimiento*, ed. Miguel Rodríguez-Pantoja. Córdoba. 211-21.

Roller, Matthew. 2010. "Demolished Houses, Monumentality, and Memory in Roman Culture." *Classical Antiquity* 29.1: 117-80.

—. 2015a. "Between Unique and Typical: Senecan *Exempla* in a List." In *Exemplarity and Singularity: Thinking through Particulars in Philosophy, Literature, and Law*, eds. Michèle Lowrie and Susanne Lüdemann. Abingdon-on-Thames. 81-95.

—. 2015b. "The Dialogue in Seneca's *Dialogues* (and Other Moral Essays)." In Bartsch and Schiesaro eds. 54-67.

—. 2017. *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome: Bodies, Values, and Status*. Princeton.

—. 2018. *Models from the Past in Roman Culture: A World of* Exempla. Cambridge.

Rose, H.J. 1961. *A Handbook of Latin Literature: From the Earliest Times to the Death of St. Augustine*. 3rd ed. London.

Rose, K.F.C. and Sullivan, J.P. 1968. "Trimalchio's Zodiac Dish (Petronius, *Sat*. 35.1-5)." *CQ* 18.1: 180-84.

Rosenmeyer, Thomas. 1989. *Senecan Drama and Stoic Cosmology*. Berkeley.

Rudich, Vasily. 1997. *Dissidence and Literature Under Nero: The Price of Rhetoricization*. London and New York

Santucci, Robert S. 2020. “Eating up Time in Ovid’s Erysichthon Episode (*Metamorphoses* 8.738-878).” In *Narratives of Time and Gender in Antiquity*, eds. Esther Eidinow and Lisa Maurizio. 136-49.

—. 2021. “Erysichthon Gets Fed: A Menu in Mary Zimmerman’s *Metamorphoses*.” *IJCT* 28.4: 502-9.

—. 2022. “Putting the 'I' into 'Ovid': Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* as Fan Fiction.” *CW* 115.4: 385-97.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1943. *L'Être et le néant*: *Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*. Paris.

Sauer, Jochen. 2018. “Römische Exempla-Ethik und Konsenskultur?: Philosophie und « mos maiorum » bei Cicero und Seneca.” In *Philosophie in Rom - Römische Philosophie? Kultur-, literatur- und philosophiegeschichtliche Perspektiven*, eds. Fosca Mariani Zini and Gernot Michael Müller. Berlin. 67-95.

Schafer, John. 2009. Ars Didactica*: Seneca's 94th and 95th* Letters. Göttingen.

—. 2011. “Seneca’s *Epistulae Morales* as Dramatized Education.” *CP* 106.1: 32-52.

Schiesaro, Alessandro. 2003. *The Passions in Play:* Thyestes *and the Dynamics of Senecan Drama*. Cambridge.

Schlegel, August Wilhelm. 1809. “Senecas Tragodien.” In *Vorlesungen uber dramatische Kunst und Litteratur.* Stuttgart, 233-35. Reprinted in Lefèvre ed. 1972. 13-4.

Schmal, Stephan. 2001. *Sallust*. *Studienbücher Antike, Bd. 8.* Hildesheim.

Schmitz, Christine. 1993. *Die kosmische Dimension in den Tragödien Senecas*. Berlin.

Schoenfeldt, Michael C. 2000. *Bodies and Selves in Early Modern England: Physiology and Inwardness in Spenser, Shakespeare, Herbert, and Milton.* Cambridge.

Scott-Warren, Jason and Zurcher, Andrew eds. 2019. *Text, Food and the Early Modern Reader: Eating Words*. London.

Scott-Warren, Jason and Zurcher, Andrew. 2019. "Introduction." In Scott-Warren and Zurcher eds. 1-16.

Seal, Carey. 2021. *Philosophy and Community in Seneca's Prose*. Oxford.

Segal, Charles. 1984. "Senecan Baroque: The Death of Hippolytus in Seneca, Ovid, and Euripides." *TAPA* 114: 311-25.

Shatzman, Israel. 1973. "Patricians and Plebeians: The Case of the Veturii." *CQ* 23.1: 65-77.

Shaw, Brent D. 1983. "'Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk:' The Ancient Mediterranean Ideology of the Pastoral Nomad." *Ancient Society* 13/14: 5-31.

Skotheim, Mali. 2017. "Smelly Bodies on Stage: Disgusting Actors of the Roman Imperial Period." In *The Ancient Emotion of Disgust*, eds. Donald Lateiner and Dimos Spatharas. Oxford. 267-76.

Skutsch, Otto. 1968. *Studia Enniana*. London.

Slaney, Helen. 2016. *The Senecan Aesthetic: A Performance History*. Oxford.

Smith, Andrew F. 1998. "From Garum to Ketchup: A Spicy Tale of Two Fish Sauces." In Walker ed. 299-306.

Sosin, Joshua D. 1999. "Lucretius, Seneca and Persius 1.1-2." *TAPA* 129: 281-99.

Stahl, Gisela. 1960. *Aufbau, Darstellungsform und philosophischer Gehalt der* Nat. Quaest. *des L. Annaeus Seneca*. Kiel, diss.

Staley, Gregory A. 2010. *Seneca and the Idea of Tragedy*. Oxford.

Steidle, Wolf. 1943/44. “Die Gestalt die Thyest.” *Philologus* 96: 250-59. Reprinted in Lefèvre ed. 1972. 490-99.

Stöckinger, Martin, Winter, Kathrin, and Zanker, Andreas T. eds. 2017. *Horace and Seneca: Interactions, Intertexts, Interpretations*. Berlin.

Stough, Charlotte. 1978. “Stoic Determinism and Moral Responsibility.” In Rist ed. 203-31.

Striker, Gisela. 1983. “The Role of *Oikeiosis* in Stoic Ethics.” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 1: 145-68.

Summers, Walter C. ed. 1910. *Select* Letters *of Seneca*. London.

Swann, Elizabeth. 2019. “‘To Dream to Eat Books’: Bibliophagy, Bees and Literary Taste in Early Modern Commonplace Culture.” In Scott-Warren and Zurcher eds. 69-88.

Syme, Ronald. 1961. “Who Was Vedius Pollio?” *JRS* 51.1-2: 23-30.

Tanner, R.G. 1985. “Stoic Philosophy and Roman Tradition in Senecan Tragedy.” *ANRW* II.32.2: 1100-33.

Tarrant, R.J. 1978. “Senecan Drama and Its Antecedents.” *HSCP* 82: 213-63.

Tarrant, R.J. ed. 1985. *Seneca’s* Thyestes. Atlanta.

Thompson, Craig R. ed. 1978. *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings 2.* Toronto.

Tietz, Werner. 2013. Dilectus Ciborum: *Essen im Diskurs der Römischen Antike*. Göttingen.

Tiffou, Etienne. 1973. *Essai sur la pensée morale de Salluste à la lumière de ses prologues*. Paris.

Todd, Robert B. 1978. “Monism and Immanence: The Foundations of Stoic Physics.” In Rist ed. 137-160.

Toohey, Peter. 2004. *Melancholy, Love, and Time: Boundaries of the Self in Ancient Literature.* Ann Arbor.

Trinacty, Christopher. 2012. "Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and Horace's *Belua Centiceps* (*Carm*. 2.13.34)." *CP* 107.2: 156-60.

—. 2014. *Senecan Tragedy and the Reception of Augustan Poetry*. Oxford.

Umurhan, Osman. 2018. *Juvenal's Global Awareness: Circulation, Connectivity, and Empire*. Abingdon-on-Thames.

Van Rooy, C.A. 1965. *Studies in Classical Satire and Related Literary Theory*. Leiden.

Veblen, Thorstein. 1899. *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. New York.

Veyne, Paul. 2003. *Seneca: The Life of a Stoic*. Trans. David Sullivan. Abingdon-on-Thames.

Viansino, Giovanni. 2005. "Seneca *Felix*, *Infelix*, *Beatus*." *Aevum* 79.1: 49-59.

Vigourt, Annie. 2001. "M'. Curius Dentatus et C. Fabricius Luscinus: Les grands hommes ne sont pas exceptionnels." In Coudry and Späth eds. 117-29.

Visser, Margaret. 1991. *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities and Meaning of Table Manners*. London.

Volk, Katharina. 2006. "Cosmic Disruption in Seneca's *Thyestes*: Two Ways of Looking at an Eclipse." In Volk and Williams eds. Leiden. 183-200.

Volk, Katharina and Williams, Gareth D. eds. 2006. *Seeing Seneca Whole: Perspectives on Philosophy, Poetry and Politics*. Leiden.

Von Albrecht, Michael. 2004. *Wort und Wandlung: Senecas Lebenskunst*. Leiden.

Von Armin, Hans Friedrich August ed. 1964. Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta. 4 vols. Leipzig.

Waiblinger, F.P. 1977. *Senecas* Naturales Quaestiones: *Griechische Wissenschaft und römische Form.* Munich.

Walker, Harlan ed. 1998. *Fish: Food from the Waters. Proceedings from the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 1997*. London.

Walters, Jonathan. 1998. "Making a Spectacle: Deviant Men, Invective, and Pleasure." *Arethusa* 31.3: 355-67.

Wilcox, Amanda. 2006. "Exemplary Grief: Gender and Virtue in Seneca's Consolations to Women." *Helios* 33.1: 73-100.

Wildberger, Jula. 2006. *Seneca und die Stoa: Der Platz des Menschen in der Welt*. Berlin.

—. 2018. *The Stoics and the State: Theory–Practice–Context*. Baden-Baden.

Wildberger, Jula and Colish, Marcia L. eds. 2014. *Seneca Philosophus*. Berlin.

Wilkins, John. 2005. "Land and Sea: Italy and the Mediterranean in the Roman Discourse of Dining." In Gold and Donahue eds. 31-47.

Wilkins, John M. and Hill, Shaun. 2006. *Food in the Ancient World*. Malden, MA.

Wilkinson, Sam. 2012. *Republicanism during the Early Roman Empire.* London and New York.

Williams, Gareth D. ed. 2003. *Seneca:* De Otio, De Brevitate Vitae. Cambridge.

Williams, Gareth D. 2005. "Physics, Morality, and Narrative in Seneca *Natural Questions* 1." *CP* 100.2: 142-65.

—. 2008. "Reading the Waters: Seneca on the Nile in *Natural Questions*, Book 4A." *CQ* 58.1: 218-42.

—. 2012. *The Cosmic Viewpoint: A Study of Seneca's* Natural Questions. Oxford.

—. 2015. "Style and Form in Seneca's Writing." In Bartsch and Schiesaro eds. 135-49.

Williams, Gareth D. trans. 2014. "*Consolation to Helvia.*" In Fantham, Hine, Ker, and Williams eds. 45-76.

Williams, Gordon. 1978. *Change and Decline: Roman Literature in the Early Empire*. Berkeley, CA.

Wilson, Marcus. 1987. "Seneca's *Epistles to Lucilius*: A Revaluation." *Ramus* 16: 102-21. Reprinted as "Seneca's *Epistles to Lucilius*" in Fitch ed. 2008. 59-83.

Zanda, Emanuela. 2011. *Fighting Hydra-like Luxury: Sumptuary Regulation in the Roman Republic*. London.

Zanker, Paul. 1988. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. Trans. Alan Shapiro. Ann Arbor.

Zwierlein, Otto. 1966. *Die Rezitationsdramen Senecas*. Meisenheim-am-Glan.

Zwierlein, Otto ed. 1986. *L. Annaei Senecae Tragoediae*. Oxford.