SENECA ON PLATONIC *APATHEIA*

By Michael Fournier

Summary: In his *Ad Marciam*, Seneca makes use of the technique of *prosopopeia* in order to address Marcia in the guise of the philosopher Areus, Nature, and her father Cordus, who is now deified and speaking from the perspective of providence. These addresses form a series of exhortations which are involved in the project of consolation and give a philosophical structure to a text oft maligned as incoherent.

Scholars generally consider Seneca's *Ad Marciam* to be a flawed example of Stoic consolation. My own view is that Seneca's presentation of a variety of consolatory strategies is not evidence of his carelessness and inconsistency, but part of the progression which the work commends to Marcia and to the reader. The progression leads the bereaved from the human perspective, to the standpoint of Nature, and concludes with the divine perspective. This progression becomes clear when the three *prosopopeiae*, which are generally ignored or regarded by commentators such as Manning[1] or Favez[2] as mere rhetorical flourishes, are interpreted as representatives of the three levels of consolatory wisdom. The result is that the work concludes, not with a Stoic *apatheia* that is opposed to the moderation proffered at the outset, but with a distinction between worldly virtue and divine virtue. This distinction anticipates Plotinus' delineation between the moderation appropriate to civic virtue and the *apatheia* of the purified virtues in *Nous* which are above the passions.

Seneca's *Ad Marciam* is also widely regarded as a work which subordinates or abandons philosophical coherence in favor of rhetorical and generic con-

1 C.E. Manning *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam (Leiden 1981) 46.
2 Seneca *Ad Marciam De Consolatione* edited with commentary by C. Favez (Paris 1928).

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siderations.[3] There is, however, a progression in the work, and a clear movement from a lower, partial perspective, through an intermediate stage to, finally, a providential and consolatory perspective. I will show that this progression is part of the strategy employed by Seneca in order to bring Marcia to various degrees of self-knowledge.

The *prosopopeiae* which Seneca uses exhort Marcia to recollect her nature at three levels: from the perspective of human nature, the natural order itself, and finally the divine nature. Seneca uses these personifications to address Marcia directly and exhort her to know herself as she is known from these perspectives. The first two *prosopopeiae* urge Marcia to adopt an attitude of moderation of her grief (*metriopatheia*) while the final address commends the elimination of her grief (*apatheia*).

Many commentators see an unreconciled opposition in the apparent approval of both *apatheia* and *metriopatheia*. It is in the context of a progression which proposes diverse means that correspond to different degrees of self-knowledge that these two positions are reconciled. Moderation is the appropriate response from the perspectives of human nature and the natural order because there are evils beyond our control which must be endured. From the divine perspective, which the soul will share upon its release from the body, there are no longer any external evils, and an attitude of *apatheia* can be adopted. Thus, moderation is not simply a moment during the process of excoriating the emotions. The strategy is not to gain control over the emotions by first moderating them in order to extirpate them. Instead, Seneca shows that moderation is a kind of perfection at the level of the embodied soul. *Apatheia* is the perfection of the soul freed from the body.

Thus it is my contention that the *Ad Marciam de consolatione* presents a picture of consolation as a threefold movement of ascent. The first stage to be achieved is that which belongs to the perspective of human nature. By means of the philosophical treatment the patient must be returned to stability at this level, even though it is not complete consolation. The realization of this first stage consists in a moderation of the passions (*metriopatheia*)

3 See D. Steyns *Les métaphores et les comparisons dans les oeuvres en prose de Sénèque le philosophe* (Paris 1907) 35, where he argues that 'Malgré quelques passages remarquables, l'oeuvre est, dans son ensemble, gâtée par le faux brilliant des artifices de rhétorique,' and J.R.G. Wright 'Form and Content in the Moral Essays' in C.D.N. Costa (ed.) *Seneca* (London 1974) 40.

achieved through the use of Epicurean arguments. Eradicating the emotions is from this standpoint inhuman and thus is not proper to the first stage.

The next stage involves ascending from the limited human perspective to achieve the perspective of Nature itself. This position adopts the perspective of the cosmos itself, and locates human nature within this larger order. The image of the trip to Syracuse (*Ad Marciam* 17.2) is used in an expanded comparison between a visit to an unknown city and the entry into this world, which is a city shared by gods and men and embracing the universe. The vicissitudes of human existence are seen writ large in the cosmopolis. The mixture of goods and evils which characterize human life are seen on the scale of the cosmos. This perspective reveals that there is no cause for complaint from humankind. Accepting the conditions of life (or having your parents accept them for you) involves both the good and the ill.

This stage involves a moderation of the passions akin to the Peripatetic model presented in Cicero's *Tusculanae*. For Aristotle the mean is not a sort of compromise between the best and the worst case. For Aristotle the mean is the best, for 'as far as its essence and the account stating what it is are concerned, it is a mean, but as far as the best [condition] and the good [result] are concerned, it is an extremity' (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1107a 6-8).[4] Later Peripatetics seem to modify this understanding. Cicero interprets the Peripatetic school's position to be based on the idea that there are not only goods of the soul, but external goods. There are also, therefore, not only evils of the soul, but also external evils beyond our control. Because of this, the best possible result is a mean between goods and evils. According to Cicero, the Peripatetics 'say that souls are necessarily subject to disorders, but fix a certain limit beyond which disorders should not pass' (*qui perturbari animos necesse dicunt esse, sed adhibent modum quendam, quem ultra progredi non oporteat*, *Tusculanae* 4.38).[5] Cicero criticizes this position as an unacceptable compromise. While this is clearly not the Aristotelian position, Cicero takes it to be the argument of the Peripatetics of his own time.

The final step in consolation is to transcend even the natural perspective

4 Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* translated with introduction, notes, and glossary by Terence Irwin (Indianapolis 1999).

5 Unless otherwise noted, the Latin texts and English translations of Cicero's *Tusculanae* and Seneca's *Ad Marciam* are from the Loeb editions: Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* translated by J.E. King (Cambridge 1927); Seneca *Moral Essays* (vol. 2) translated by John Basore (Cambridge 1932).

and take on the perspective of the divine. This includes not only the gods' but divinized humans' perspective, which is the same. While this final perspective is put before Marcia in order for her to compare with her own, it is not one she can actually attain. What is important is that she can appreciate the character of this state. From this position alone is *apatheia* possible and desirable. Even the divide between good and evil which persists at the level of Nature dissolves once the vision which belongs to divinity is attained. However, this vision can only be understood, not experienced. The consolation springs not from an ecstatic union with the gods, but merely with an appreciation of the perspective. While this position appears to be simply another version of Stoic *apatheia*, it is in fact to be distinguished from the Stoic position. Seneca explicitly denies the possibility of eradicating the emotions earlier in the work. *Apatheia* is an inhuman response to grief while the soul is joined to the body and suffers under the passions. What Seneca describes is the state of the soul which has been liberated from the body and, having ascended through the aether to the stars, enjoys a divine perspective which is untouched by suffering. Thus, Seneca makes a distinction between the civic virtues and the purified virtues of the intelligible realm.

Seneca begins the consolation with a brief discussion of his method:

> Scio a praeceptis incipere omnis qui monere aliquem uolunt, 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.
>
> I am aware that all those who wish to give anyone admonition commonly begin with precepts, and end with examples. But it is desirable at times to alter this practice; for different people must be dealt with differently. Some are guided by reason; some must be confronted with famous names and an authority that does not leave a man's mind free, dazzled as he is by showy deeds. (*Ad Marciam* 2.1)

While Seneca does indeed begin with examples and follow with precepts, there is another element in the text which he never addresses so directly. In addition to examples and precepts, Seneca employs *prosopopeia* three times in the work. The three faces Seneca rhetorically puts on as the author of the consolation are those of the philosopher Areus, Nature herself, and the fa-

ther of the addressee, Cremutius Cordus. They are examples in so far as they provide a model for Marcia to imitate, and they are akin to the precepts in the work in that all three present some sort of aphoristic advice on consolation. In addition to mediating between examples and precepts, the *prosopopeia* performs a crucial rhetorical and philosophical function. Areus, Nature, and Cordus each exhort Marcia via a direct address

But they are also set apart from the examples and precepts, and serve a specific purpose in the work. The three *prosopopeiae* demarcate the three levels of the ascent Marcia must undertake in order to be consoled. The first, Areus,[6] expounds and embodies the completion of a worldly, human wisdom. Areus endorses a vision of moderation as the best result possible for a human. The second, Nature,[7] transcends the perspective of human nature by locating it within a larger order, that of the cosmos. The consolation at this level consists in Nature's assertion that she 'deceives no one', and is a vindication of Nature in so far as she is akin to fortune. One must accept her on her own terms, and she makes no promises. Finally, Seneca presents Marcia with the counsel of her father, Cremutius Cordus.[8] This is not the wisdom her father displayed in life, but the newfound understanding of history and science from the perspective of the gods. Seneca adopts the imagery of Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, describing a position beyond the oppositions of the world and mortal life. Here alone real *apatheia* is realized, when the partial vision of the individual is replaced with the vision of the whole. I argue that the reconciliation of the opposed doctrines of moderation and *apatheia* in the *Ad Marciam* anticipates the Plotinian account of virtue, developed by Plotinus in response to a longstanding debate between Platonists and Stoics on the nature of virtue.

In one of the most commented upon passages in the *Ad Marciam*, Seneca announces, 'I am aware that all those who wish to give anyone admonition commonly begin with precepts, and end with examples. But it is desirable at times to alter this practice; for different people must be dealt with differently.'[9] One of the features which has proved most puzzling is the fact that

6 *Ad Marciam* 4.3-5.6.

7 *Ad Marciam* 17.6-7.

8 *Ad Marciam* 26.1-7.

9 'Scio a praeceptis incipere omnis qui monere aliquem uolunt, in exemplis desinere. Mutari hunc interim morem expedit; aliter enim cum alio agendum est' (*Ad Marciam* 2.1).

Seneca remarks on his intention to deviate from the convention. This is puzzling because his statement is one of the few pieces of evidence for the existence of such a convention. Grollios accepts that there was such a convention and sees in Seneca's flouting of it a glimpse of originality.[10] However, he also notes that Seneca does not in fact follow this stated plan in the work.[11] Manning too accepts the convention, although he points out that it is far from rigid.[12] He ascribes Seneca's deviation from the traditional structure to his method of addressing the particular needs of the addressee.[13] Presumably the examples of Livia and Octavia are adapted to Marcia as an alternative to reason (*ratio*), famous names (*nomina clara*), and authority (*auctoritas*).

This willingness to alter received forms is also used by Manning to explain the fact that Seneca appears to abandon this novel order when he employs *exempla* later, after the *praecepta*.[14] However, it is Shelton who provides the most persuasive account of the problem. As Shelton points out, like its English derivative, *example*, the Latin word *exemplum* (or in Greek *paradeigma*) has several definitions, the most important of which for Shelton

10 'The tradition of the Consolation had established that the examples should come after the "praecepta" so that their placing by Seneca before the precepts constitutes an originality of the author.' Constantine C. Grollios *Seneca's* Ad Marciam *Tradition and Originality* (Athens 1956) 26.

11 As Grollios notes, 'It is true that Seneca announced that he will reverse the accepted order and start by examples (Ad M. II, I) but he does not quite promise a rigid scheme, which would oblige him to give all the examples in this section of his work; he speaks only of two examples (*Duo tibi ponam ante oculos … exempla*). Generally speaking, Seneca usually shows little or no interest in adhering to a rigid scheme.' *Tradition and Originality* 19.

12 As Manning points out, 'The extent to which [the convention] was binding is however uncertain because so many of the consolationes written in antiquity have failed to survive.' *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam 35.

13 'For while tradition prescribed praecepta before exempla, in Marcia's case Seneca was willing to dispense with the traditional order because he felt that therby he would have more effect on the recipient of the treatise.' C.E. Manning 'The Consolatory Tradition and Seneca's Attitude to the Emotions' *G&R* 21 (1974) 76.

14 'To understand the place of the various precepts, and the occasional semblance of inconsistency with other parts of Seneca's work, it will be necessary to consider both Seneca's aims in his philosophical works, and the nature of the consolatory genre as such.' Manning *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam 50.

are 'illustration' and 'model'.[15] She argues that 'models' are employed with a view to their philosophical import, while 'illustrations' are rhetorical ornaments. The first *exempla*, Livia and Octavia,[16] are models, the later litany of *exempla* are illustrations.[17] Livia and Octavia are not only contemporaries but friends of Marcia. In a sense they are just like her, and their example is attainable, unlike the later examples, which are evidently inimitable not only for Marcia but for anyone in her day. The Caesars and the Scipios belong to the greatness of the past.

As Shelton shows, the first *exempla* are not adduced so that Marcia might passively gaze upon them. Rather, she is asked to choose between them.

> The request that she choose is a demand that she take an active role in the process of moving from an irrational to a rational response, that she agree to abandon the pattern of Octavia and adopt the pattern of Livia. In addition, the unusual selection of *exempla* who were not only contemporaries, but even acquaintances of the addressee creates a situation where the addressee can make judgments based on personal knowledge.[18]

I agree with Shelton's distinction between the possible use of *exempla* as examples and illustrations. Not only does it resolve the appearance of inconsistency created when Seneca continues to enumerate examples later in the work after promising to give only two, but it also supports my contention

15 Jo-Ann Shelton 'Persuasion and Paradigm in Seneca's *Consolatio Ad Marciam* 1-6' *C&M* 46 (1995) 158.

16 As Manning notes, 'Seneca's use of almost contemporary exempla is again unusual but part of his normal practice', as 'Seneca shows similar originality in his citation of the courage of Iulius Canus, whose resistance under Caligula cost him his life (*De Tranq. Animi* 14.4-10).' *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam 36.

17 This distinction between 'model' and 'illustration' is echoed by R.G. Mayer, who writes that Seneca, 'is not citing *exempla* simply because it was the approved method applied by rhetorical training (but of course it was that too); the imitation of models was central to an ordinary Roman's moral experience. Secondly, the choice of exemplary material is found to be inexhaustable, and even provided by one's contemporaries. This makes a difference when we compare Seneca to the later Greek moralists. Their *exempla* tend to be fossils, museum exhibits lovingly preserved … Thirdly, the Roman tradition encouraged not just learning from *exempla* but setting an example oneself.' 'Roman Historical Exempla in Seneca' *Sénèque et la prose latine* (Geneva 1991) 147.

18 Shelton 'Persuasion and Paradigm' 175.

that the later examples present an ideal human nature which is beyond Marcia's ability to achieve. The second set of examples delineate the limits of human nature. This limit is placed before Marcia in order for her to contemplate, not to imitate.

Another perennial question about the *Ad Marciam* centers around the coincidence of the doctrines of *metriopatheia* and *apatheia*. This is of interest because the presence of the doctrine of moderation of the emotions in the consolations (the *Ad Marciam* as well as the *Ad Helviam*) appears to distinguish Seneca's consolatory writing from the rest of his work, which tends to advocate extirpation rather than moderation of the emotions.[19] As Manning argues, 'The ancients had no more difficulty than the modern commentator in distinguishing the attitude of the Stoics and the Peripatetics to men's emotions'.[20] Thus, regarding Seneca's endorsement of these two opposed positions, Manning contends that the three possible explanations of the inconsistency – (1) philosophic ignorance, (2) the idea that Seneca changed his mind, and (3) that his 'real self' urged moderation while he affected stoicism in his writings – must be rejected. Manning points to the *Epistulae morales* to refute all three. That Seneca was not unaware of the distinction is clear in *Ep. Mor.* 116. That Seneca did not change his mind after composing the *Ad Marciam* early in his career is shown by the presence of both standpoints in the letters (cf. *Ep. Mor*. 63 and 24). That Seneca was in fact in favour of the Peripatetic view but played the Stoic in his writings, Manning doubts on the basis of his defence of Stoicism and his critiques of Peripatetic arguments. Manning points out that Seneca's Stoicism is not marked by the sort of clichés that would give away a pretender.[21]

The examples of Livia and Octavia exhort moderation.[22] The later, illus-

19 As Manning notes, 'It is perhaps significant that Seneca appears most to favour the mean in the *Consolationes* (cf. *Ad Marciam* 7, *Ad Polybium* 18.5-6, and letters in the consolatory tradition; e.g., *Ep. Mor*. 63.1) where he is bringing forward the arguments of all the philosophers designed to curb grief in the hope that some would succeed.' *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam 34.

20 Manning 'The Consolatory Tradition' 71.

21 Ibid. 71-72.

22 Shelton shows that 'The contrast here is between unending grief (2.4: *nullem finem flendi*) and limited grief (3.4: *dolendi modestia*). At this point in the essay, there is no mention of the Stoic *apatheia* which would demand no loss of rationality, however temporary, and therefore no grief.' 'Persuasion and Paradigm' 172.

trative examples, present multiple portraits which are paradigms of *apatheia*.[23] Yet this does not mean that Seneca equally endorsed both views. The use of moderation seems to be provisional, employed as a means but not an end as far as consolation.[24] In the case of Marcia, her situation demands that Seneca begin with moderation. 'But', argues Manning, 'peripatetic moderation of the emotions is not Seneca's final goal for Marcia, but a step on the way to the Stoic ideal of *apatheia*, a necessary step for one who has been grieving with such vehemence for so long.'[25] My own view is that moderation is in a way a final goal. It is the best state attainable by Marcia. Moderation is not the mid-point between overwhelming grief and the abolition of

23 In his commentary on the *exempla*, Manning writes: 'The example of Livia who showed resolution, but nevertheless needed the help of Areius can encourage Marcia towards moderation of grief (*metriopatheia*). However after a number of general precepts have been given, the second group of examples (12.6-16.4), drawn from the traditional lists, can encourage her to take one step further. Those who gave little or no time to mourning can assist a person already strengthened by *praecepta* to strive for the Stoic ideal of a complete absence of grief (*apatheia*)', *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam 35. Manning goes on to argue that 'At first sight the subsequent examples seem to have the same purpose as those of Livia and Octavia, simply to show that bereavement can be and should be endured, and their seeming repetition has been judged a fault in composition (Favez, op.cit., lii; Albertini, op.cit. 54.). However K. Abel (op.cit. 22) has suggested that while the earlier examples show the desirability of grief kept within moderation, the examples of those who have shed no tears at all, or only for the shortest possible time, are those used in this section, and they therefore approach more closely to the Stoic ideal of "apatheia".' Ibid. 74. I would suggest that the latter examples do depict an ideal, but not a Stoic ideal. Moderation must be urged upon Marcia and Livia. It is already possessed by these great men and women.

24 Manning describes the use of moderation as purely pragmatic. 'He was well aware that arguments which might not be absolutely true could still be useful in producing improved attitudes, and both his rhetorical training – he was after all his father's son – and his aim in writing makes it likely that, in deciding whether to use an argument, Seneca's ultimate criterion would be its effectiveness.' *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam 19. Manning and Shelton both argue that particular exigencies prevailed over dogmatic consistency. 'The evidence of the consolatory writings seems to indicate that Seneca made use of the majority of theories developed by the ancients, provided they suited his purpose at a particular time.' Manning 'The Consolatory Tradition' 78. Shelton notes that 'In the *Consolatio ad Marciam*, Seneca introduces elements of form and content which indicate that his choice of material was governed by the particular needs of his addressee, Marcia.' 'Persuasion and Paradigm' 158.

25 Manning *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam 10.

grief. It is rather a state appropriate to the worldly, embodied condition of Marcia.

The presence of a teaching of *metriopatheia* in the *Ad Marciam* and other consolatory writings,[26] as well as other eclectic features of Seneca's thought,[27] have led some scholars to call into question Seneca's allegiance to the Stoic school. There is even a longstanding belief that Seneca was not in fact a philosopher. Veyne rejects the idea that Seneca's style is evidence of the truth of this belief. Veyne argues,

> Seneca still must be taken seriously as a philosopher. The time is past when he was regarded as a belletrist lightly brushed with philosophy, studied only by specialists in Latin literature. 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.[28]

Despite his apparent eclecticism, 'Les éléments qu'il emprunte aux différentes écoles rentrent chez lui dans la logique du système stoïcien.'[29] Thus while his stoicism is not without admixture,[30] there are reasons why his

26 For an unyielding defense of the view that moderation is never advocated by Seneca in the *Ad Marciam*, see M.C. Stowell *Stoic Therapy of Grief: A Prolegomenon to Seneca's* 'Ad Marciam de Consolatione' Unpublished dissertation Cornell University 1999.

27 For example, S. Gersh treats Seneca in his study *Middle and Neoplatonism: The Latin Tradition* (Notre Dame 1986) 155-95. There is good reason to countenance the idea that Seneca was more eclectic than Stoic. As Motto tells us, 'In his prose writings there are ninety-nine references to ten philosophical sects. There are 545 references to seventy-five different philosophers. Combining the number of references to philosophical sects with those to philosophers, we obtain a total of 644 such allusions.' A.L. Motto *Seneca Sourcebook: Guide to the Thought of Lucius Annaeus Seneca* (Amsterdam 1970) xiii.

28 Veyne *Seneca, the Life of a Stoic* ix.

29 A. Michel 'Dialogue philosophique et vie intérieure: Cicéron, Sénèque, Saint Augustin' *Helmantica* 28 (1977) 366. As Waltz writes, 'S'il goûta dans sa jeunesse non seulement au pythagorisme, mais à mainte autre doctrine, s'il devint plus tard une manière d'éclectique, invoquant aussi volontiers Épicure et Métrodore que Zénon ou Démétrius, Sénèque n'en fut pas moins, dans ses convictions essentielles, un fidèle et fervent Stoïcien.' R. Waltz *Vie de Sénèque* (Paris 1909) 38.

30 P. Benoit points out regarding the *Ad Marciam* and the *Ad Polybium* 'Pourtant, examiné de plus près, le stoïcisme de Sénèque n'apparait ici ni sans lacunes ni sans mélanges.' Benoit cites Seneca's presentation of the doctrine of ekpyrosis, as well as the obviously Pla-

writing is characterized by this kind of mixing. For the specific purpose of a particular work, especially in the light of the individual case of different addressees, Seneca would find it useful to adopt the appropriate language.[31] There is also the inevitable conflict between the philosopher and the school. The Stoa was far from homogenous before Seneca, and he made his own innovations.[32]

But there are Epicurean elements in the *Ad Marciam* as well. Areus' *prosopopeia* exhorts Marcia to recall past goods and to turn her attention to the goods which remain. This technique is characteristic of the Epicurean consolatory strategy. While Seneca's use of *exempla* has been noted above, there is an aspect of this feature of his work which must be further examined. The *exempla* are not simply adduced as the end to be sought, but play a greater role in the movement towards that end. As Shelton puts it, 'The *exempla* which Seneca urges his reader to call up as mental images are persons who can serve well as mentors and witnesses because the reader regards them as figures of considerable moral authority.'[33] This idea of the *exempla* as mentor and witness is an Epicurean tactic,[34] although it is not unknown in other

tonic discussion of the soul's contemplation after its release from the tomb of the body. 'Les idées de Sénèque sur l'au-delà' *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 32 (1948) 39.

31 In the case of Romans notoriously suspicious of philosophy, Shelton suggests that 'the success of these *exempla* as persuasive devices depends upon the close correspondence between traditional Roman morality and Stoic ethics. Roman readers ignorant of or uninterested in Stoic doctrine might nevertheless respond to moral instruction which seemed to exhort them to act in accordance with the *mos maiorum*.' 'Persuasion and Paradigm' 161-62.

32 P. Grimal accounts for certain deviations from Stoic teachings thus: 'Lui-même revendique le mérite d'avoir pensé librement, sans se contenter d'aquiescer à l'opinion des maîtres. Et, là, nous rencontrons l'un des problèmes les plus délicats qui se posent à l'historien de la pensée romaine: comprendre et saisir, dans une ouevre latine donnée, ce qui est ajouté par le Romain qui l'a écrite, ce qu'il y a, en elle, qui n'était pas dans ses sources.' *Sénèque, ou la conscience de l'Empire* 41-42.

33 Shelton 'Persuasion and Paradigm' 166.

34 'The approach may be connected with Epicurus' advice to his pupils that for a time they should always think some great model of behaviour were watching their own performance (*Ep. Mor.* 11.8-9; 25.5) and certainly in the context of the whole consolatio that approach is relevant, for in the closing *prosopopeia* Marcia is urged "Respice patrem atque avum tuum." (26.3).' Manning *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam 47.

schools.[35] Shelton speculates that Seneca's purpose was to use these images in a way that has them take an active role.

> Seneca does not specify what exactly would motivate us to modify our behaviour when confronted by the image of a *vir bonus*, but shame seems to be an essential element of this plan in which the *exemplum* acts as a *peccaturis testis*. Surely it is the shame of being 'caught' by a moral authority we revere which prompts us (who have not yet reached the highest level) to refrain from unethical actions.[36]

Of the competing schools which Seneca drew upon in his writing, Epicureanism appears to be the most difficult to reconcile with Stoic thought. However, as Grimal points out, where Seneca follows Epicurean teaching, it is never in opposition to his stoicism.[37] The most prominent use of Epicurean teaching is found in the letters to Lucilius. This is recognized as a pedagogical manoeuvre, as Lucilius was an Epicurean.[38]

In addition to the Epicurean consolations, there are also the apparently

35 Constantine C. Grollios writes, 'The student of philosophy, Plutarch observes, whenever any passion disturbs the mind or any perplexity arrives, pictures to himself some of those men who have been celebrated for their virtue, and the recollection sustains him and prevents his fall.' *Tradition and Originality* 25. He goes on to note: 'For a similar idea of "living as if you were before the eyes of all" '; Sen. *Ep*. 43.3 sq. and cfr. Epictetus applying the idea to the Cynic philosopher in *Diss*. III.22.14.' Ibid. 27.

36 Shelton 'Persuasion and Paradigm' 164-65. 'Abel suggests, moreover, that shame (*pudor*) would provoke in Marcia a willingness to correct her behavior, the shame of knowing that her friend is a witness to her lack of emotional control.' Ibid. 178.

37 'On voit que Sénèque choisit parmi les arguments épicuriens en vertu d'un critère bien déterminé; il ne retient que ceux qui s'accordent avec les thèses stoïciennes, les postulats fondamentaux du système; il refuse les autres – et c'est bien là ce qu'il fera dans toute son oeuvre.' Grimal *Sénèque, ou la conscience de l'Empire* 339.

38 'Nous le comprenons en constatant qu'à partir d'un certain moment, Sénèque cesse de citer Épicure. S'il en a d'abord utilisé les formules, c'est qu'elles avaient un caractère simple et frappant qui pouvait persuader Lucilius: en effet, celui-ci débutait dans la practique de la philosophe: il n'était pas capable de saisir dans sa sévérité ou sa complexité l'enseignement du Portique. Mais Épicure prêchait aussi la vertu, les éclectiques l'avaient signalé. Naturellement, ses arguments étaient faibles et sommaires. Mais ils étaient séduisants, ils offraient l'apparence de la facilité. On s'en sert donc dans une intention propédeutique, pour convertir à la moralité Lucilius, ce débutant.' Michel 'Dialogue philosophique et vie intérieure' 366.

incongruous digressions from traditional consolation *topoi*. It has been said of the two digressions[39] (the mental experiment of a trip to Syracuse and the related image of the cosmopolis) at the end of the *Ad Marciam* that 'They bear no close relation to the main argument and destroy the balance of the whole.'[40] In particular, some have conjectured that Seneca simply transcribed them from a work by Posidonius.[41] Manning argues against this view for a more purposeful role for the digressions, that is, to move Marcia to a new point a view.

> Until this point Seneca has been dealing with Marcia's feelings and her situation, and even the *exempla* are dealing with the immediate context of an individual and his or her bereavement. In the final section of the work, 19.3-25, Seneca will be much concerned with the place of death in the world-picture and the world process and will try to involve Marcia in looking at her situation from a perspective other than her own.[42]

Costa agrees, pointing out that in other works, these *descriptiones* 'tend to occur in contexts where he is encouraging a philosophical attitude by widening our view in comparing the majesty of nature with trivial human existence.'[43] Thus, Grimal argues that while these digressions are difficult to account for rhetorically, they play a central part in the philosophical movement which provides consolation.[44]

39 Seneca himself speaks of a 'return to consolation' (*ad solacium veniam*) at 19.1.

40 Grollios '*Tradition and Originality*' 55.

41 Ibid.

42 Manning *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam 96. As Costa observes, 'The dominant image of this last section of our extract is of the mind soaring up to the heights of the cosmos, where it can absorb the profound secrets of the world and learn to despise trivial frippery which preoccupies mortals. Only in this way will it realize the fullest potential of its human existence.' 'Rhetoric as a Protreptic Force in Seneca's Prose Works' *Ethics and Rhetoric* (Oxford 1995) 111.

43 Ibid. 113.

44 'Au terme de ce long poème, il ne peut se faire que l'âme de Marcia elle-même ne retrouve, elle aussi, la sérénité. Le schéma traditionnel de la consolation est rénové, dépassé, grâce à la double digression qui en occupe toute la dernière partie et forme environ le tiers de l'ouvrage entier, ici, la tradition des rhéteurs paraît avoir joué un moindre rôle que celle du dialogue philosophique.' Grimal 'Nature et fonction de la digression dans les oeuvres en prose de Sénèque' 222-23.

In general I agree with Manning, Costa, and Grimal. The digressions are philosophically important and serve the purpose of expanding Marcia's point of view. My own view is that these digressions must be clearly distinguished from the final perspective. The view from what Manning calls the 'world process' is not the same as that presented in the *prosopopeia* of Cordus. Rather, the 'digressions' must be read along with the *prosopopeia* of Nature. They illuminate this larger perspective, but do not encompass the same perspective as that found in the work's conclusion. This is clear when the violence and discord of the Natural order is contrasted with the unity and serenity of Cordus, Metilius and the Scipios.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE *AD MARCIAM*

The *Ad Marciam* begins with Seneca presenting Marcia herself as a 'model of ancient virtue.'[45] She acquired this distinction for the manner in which she dealt with the loss of her father.[46] The rationale here is that while the loss of a child is generally regarded as the most serious, because Marcia had a preternaturally strong affection for her father, equal to or greater than that for her children,[47] there is a basis for believing that this loss too can be endured.

By establishing an identity between father and son, Seneca will also deepen the degree to which Marcia is reconciled to her father's death. While she held up outwardly, in public, inwardly her resolution was not perfect. Seneca lauds Marcia: 'favour his plan [to take his life] you did not, but you acknowledged defeat, and you routed your tears in public and choked down

45 'Mores tuos uelut aliquod antiquum exemplar aspici' (*Ad Marciam* 1.1) ('your character was looked upon as a model of ancient virtue').

46 'Fiduciam mihi dedit exploratum iam robur animi et magno experimento adprobata uirtus tua' (*Ad Marciam* 1.1.). ('But your strength of mind has already been so tested and your courage, after a severe trial, so approved that they have given me confidence').

47 'Non est ignotum qualem te in persona patris tui gesseris, quem non minus quam liberos dilexisti, excepto eo quod non optabas superstitem. Nec scio an et optaueris; permittit enim sibi quaedam contra bonum morem magna pietas' (*Ad Marciam* 1.2) ('how you bore yourself in relation to your father is common knowledge; for you loved him not less dearly than your children, save only that you did not wish him to outlive you. And yet I am not sure that you did wish even that; for great affection sometimes ventures to break the natural law').

your sobs, yet in spite of your cheerful face you did not conceal them – and these things in an age when the supremely filial was simply not to be unfilial!'[48] She was opposed to his suicide, and did not have a philosophical relation to her bereavement, but only one dictated by public opinion, custom and tradition.

The common, non-philosophical notion of consolation is also seen in the idea of immortality found in fame. By saving his books, Marcia is said here to have done the greatest service to the man himself, who will now live on in Roman scholarship.[49]

Seneca alludes to Marcia's philosophical predisposition, which transcends her gender.[50] Because of this tendency, he is able to apply strong remedies, such as recalling the old wound of her father's death.[51] While others might use a 'gentler remedy' (*leniore medicina* 1.8), which is effective in the early stages of grief, Seneca will battle with her grief (*confligere cum tuo maerore*, 1.5) a metaphor which resonates with Stoic fortitude. The problem is that grief, like vice, begins as something to which one has a free relation, but with time becomes hardened into something like a natural disposition.[52]

48 'non fauisti consilio eius, sed dedisti manus uicta, fudistique lacrimas palam et gemitus deuorasti quidem, non tamen hilari fronte texisti, et haec illo saeculo quo magna pietas erat nihil impie facere' ('favour his plan you did not, but you acknowledged defeat and you routed your tears in public and choked down your sobs, yet in spite of your cheerful face you did not conceal them – and these things in age when the supremely filial was simply not to be unfilial' *Ad Marciam* 1.2).

49 'optime de ipso, cuius uiget uigebitque memoria quam diu in pretio fuerit Romana cognosci'. This limited understanding of fame is contradicted later in the work (section 26). ('you have done … a very great service to the man himself, whose memory now lives and will ever live so long as it shall be worth while to learn the facts of roman history') (*Ad Marciam* 1.3).

50 'Haec magnitudo animi tui uetuit me ad sexum tuum respicere, uetuit ad uultum, quem tot annorum continua tristitia, ut semel obduxit, tenet' ('This evidence of the greatness of your mind forbade me to pay heed to your sex, forbade me to to pay heed to your face, which, since sorrow once clouded it, unbroken sadness holds for all these years' *Ad Marciam* 1.5).

51 'antiqua mala in memoriam reduxi.' ('I have recalled to your face old misfortunes' *Ad Marciam* 1.5).

52 'Quemadmodum omnia uitia penitus insidunt nisi dum surgunt oppressa sunt, ita haec quoque tristia et misera et in se saeuientia ipsa nouissime acerbitate pascuntur et fit infelicis animi praua uoluptas dolor'. ('Just as all vices become deep-rooted unless they are crushed when they spring up, so, too, such a state of sadness and wretchedness, with its

Seneca proposes to deviate from the traditional method of beginning with precepts and then following up with examples.[53] In the *Ad Marciam*, examples are the main moving force. The commonplace arguments are important but secondary. Seneca has already begun with an *exemplum*, Marcia herself. This is followed by two women, contemporaries well known to Marcia. Seneca begins with Marcia, paralleling the setting of the work which has him approaching Marcia in her grief when all other consolations, family, friends, books, even time, have failed. He comes to her to begin his consolation from this state of distress. She is in a contradiction: self-obsessed and, as Seneca suggests, almost in love with her own grief, having forgotten herself and her former courage in the face of loss. The first move away from this contradiction is made by presenting her with two *exempla*, two alter egos.

> Duo tibi ponam ante oculos maxima et sexus et saeculi tui exempla: alterius feminae quae se tradidit ferendam dolori, alterius quae pari adfecta casu, maiore damno, non tamen dedit longum in se malis suis dominium, sed cito animum in sedem suam reposuit. Octauia et Liuia, altera soror Augusti, altera uxor, amiserunt filios iuuenes, utraque spe futuri principis certa.
>
> I shall place before your eyes but two examples – the greatest of your sex and century – one, of a woman who allowed herself to be swept away by grief, the other, of a woman who, though she suffered a like misfortune and even greater loss, yet did not permit her ills to have the mastery long, but quickly restored her mind to its accustomed state. Octavia and Livia, the one the sister of Augustus, the other his wife, had lost their sons –

self-afflicted torture, feeds at last upon its very bitterness, and the grief of an unhappy mind becomes a morbid pleasure' *Ad Marciam* 1.7).

53 'Scio a praeceptis incipere omnis qui monere aliquem uolunt, 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' ('I am aware that all those who wish to give anyone admonition commonly begin with precepts, and end with examples. But it is desirable at times to alter this practice; for different people must be dealt with differently. Some are guided by reason, some must be confronted with famous names and an authority that does not leave a man's mind free, dazzled as he is by showy deeds' *Ad Marciam* 2.1).

> both of them young men with the well-assured hope of becoming emperor. (*Ad Marciam* 2.2-3).

Octavia stands in for Marcia herself, allowing her to free herself from her own grief and see it from a close, yet external perspective. Like Marcia, Octavia did not, on close examination, fixate so much on her lost son as on herself.

Livia is the true *exemplum* here. Seneca presents her as measured in her grief. Livia kept her son's pictures everywhere (*privatim publiceque repraesentare* 3.2), talked about him and listened to others' stories. She did not make his memory an affliction. On the other hand to follow Octavia's model involves turning away from the living and the dead, for Octavia not only shunned her other children but turned away from her son as well. She never ceased grieving, would look at no pictures and would not even read Virgil's tribute to her son (*Aeneid* 6.860-66).

The *exemplum* of Livia is presented as attainable, requiring not an extreme but a middle way, moderation in grieving (*dolendi modestia* 3.4). At this point, anything as extreme as Stoic *apatheia* would seem not only impossible but inhuman. These sorts of consolations are patently ridiculous to offer to a mother after the loss of a son.

Seneca continues, admitting that the issue here is not about exterminating the grief, which is impossible. Rather, it is a choice between deep (but short lived) grief or never-ending pain. To follow Livia, philosophy is necessary.

> Illa in primo feruore, cum maxime inpatientes ferocesque sunt miseriae, consolandam se Areo, philosopho uiri sui, praebuit et multum eam rem profuisse sibi confessa est, plus quam populum Romanum, quem nolebat tristem tristitia sua facere, plus quam Augustum, qui subducto altero adminiculo titubabat nec luctu suorum inclinandus erat, plus quam Tiberium filium, cuius pietas efficiebat ut in illo acerbo et defleto gentibus funere nihil sibi nisi numerum deesse sentiret.

> During that first passion of grief, when its victims are most unsubmissive and most violent, [she] made herself accessible to the philosopher Areus, the friend of her husband, and later confessed that she had gained much help from that source – more than from the Roman people, whom she was unwilling to sadden with this sadness of hers; more than from Augus-

> tus, who was staggering under the loss of one of his main supports, and was in no condition to be further bowed down by the grief of his dear ones; more than from her son Tiberius, whose devotion at that untimely funeral that made the nations weep kept her from feeling that she had suffered any loss except in the number of her sons. (*Ad Marciam* 4.2).

Like Seneca coming to Marcia, Areus is elevated above other consolations. Seneca employs *prosopopeia* to present to Marcia the counsel of Areus to Livia. The problem with Livia, as with Marcia, is a false perception (*opinionis suae custodem diligentissimam* 4.3). Both believe that their fortune consists of unmixed evil. The *prosopopeia* is intended to loosen the grip of this opinion.

From his close relationship with her husband, Areus is able to understand much about what moves Livia. He told her that he has observed not only her appearance to the public, but also, he says, 'the more secret thoughts of your mind' (*omnes sunt secretiores animorum uestrorum motus* 4.3). Areus employs the Epicurean consolation strategy of recalling to mind past pleasures. Livia's fault is to forget past and present good fortune, dwelling upon bad fortune. Livia must focus on the son who is still living, and the children of her dead son.

Seneca argues that if grief has some purpose, one ought to grieve, but if it is futile, it must cease. He anticipates Marcia's complaint, that grief appears to be a phenomenon dictated by nature (*At enim naturale desiderium suorum est* 7.1). Against this, Seneca delineates the difference between natural grief and that which comes from the contribution of the will. Evidence that there is an unnatural component to human grief is brought forward. Natural phenomena, such as fire, do not vary from place to place or diminish over time, while grief does gradually fade. Grief, therefore, is not from nature but something we judge that we ought to feel.

Though not attributable to Nature, our grief does have a cause. Seneca rehearses a version of the Cyrenaic *topos*, 'nothing unexpected has happened'. He argues that our failure to anticipate the inevitable misfortune leaves us open to the blows of fortune.[54] Ordinary experience allows us to

54 'Quod nihil nobis mali antequam eueniat proponimus, sed ut immunes ipsi et aliis pacatius ingressi iter alienis non admonemur casibus illos esse communes' (*Ad Marciam* 9.1).

infer from the misfortunes of others the nature of our common lot. Unlike the Epicurean consolation, which cannot forestall grief, the Cyrenaic *topos* has the power to prevent the effects of bad fortune.

Moderation is the goal of these consolations (*moderandum est itaque uobis maxime* II.1). The question still remains how the nature of fortune can have been forgotten. The origin of Marcia's grief is not to be found in the external order governed by fortune. It is a problem of self-knowledge, and a case of amnesia about the true self. Marcia must recall 'the meaning of that famous utterance ascribed to the Pythian oracle: Know Thyself. What is man? A vessel that the slightest shaking, the slightest toss will break.'[55] The first step is to recover knowledge of human nature as 'exposed to all the affronts of Fortune'.[56]

Marcia has been slightly removed from her grief, but she still clings to errors and thinks she is justified in her complaint against fortune. The next step is a series of examples which will lead her further away from error by looking at *exempla* from more remote parts of Roman history, which present a more idealized and more heroic portrait of human nature. These portraits, however, are still human, and do not suggest a stoic *apatheia*. They are instead examples of those who have calmly endured bad fortune.

The *exempla* are arranged in three groups of four, although each group contains a pair so closely linked that they are treated as one example, and thus the structure is in a sense three groups of three. The first group is drawn from the remote past, starting with Lucius Sulla (born c. 138 BC), then Xenophon (c. 428/7 BC-54 BC), the details of whose story are almost exactly paralleled by those of the quasi-mythic Pulvillus (6th c. BCE), and finally Aemelius Paulus (consul 181 BC). The next group is drawn from more recent history and includes Bibulus and Caesar (bound together as consuls in 59 BC as well as by *concordem fortunam*), Augustus (63 BC-AD 14) and Tiberius (42 BC-AD 37). The third group retraces the progression from distant to recent history using women as examples. The first, from the days of the last king of Rome, is Lucretia, followed by Cloelia, a heroine from the same period. Seneca concludes this group with the two Cornelias *ex una familia*. The first was the daughter of Scipio Africanus, the second the wife of Livius

55 'Hoc uidelicet illa Pythicis oraculis adscripta uox: nosce te. Quid est homo? quolibet quassu uas et quolibet fragile iactatu' (*Ad Marciam* II.3).

56 'Ad omnis fortunae contumelias proiectum' (*Ad Marciam* II.3).

Drusus (consul 112 BC). The diversity of these examples moves Marcia's gaze to an idealized human nature, one not limited to a particular place, time or even gender (at 2.2 the *exempla* were *maxima et sexus et saeculi*).

Following these *exempla*, Seneca urges Marcia to reckon the amount of favour she has found from fortune. Marcia is also reminded that Fortune afflicts the good and the bad equally, and that her plight would be more disturbing if fortune only beset the bad with loss and never touched the good. Thus, to Marcia's anticipated objection, that it is nonetheless hard to lose a son, Seneca retorts that there is comfort in the knowledge that this is the common lot for mankind.

The notion that man's common lot is characterized by never knowing 'the real terms of [one's] existence' (*numquam scires, cuius esses status*) introduces the metaphor of the Trip to Syracuse (17.2). This extended image presents all of the pleasures and pains of such a voyage, which must be estimated before setting out. Similarly, one must weigh the possibilities with regard to bringing children into the world. Nature does not make any guarantees except that she will deceive no one (*dicit omnibus nobis natura: 'neminem decipio'* 17.6). The *prosopopeia* of a personified Nature here moves Marcia's gaze from the historical *exempla* toward a larger order. The particular city in the first part of the metaphor is replaced by a cosmopolis. Seneca asks Marcia to imagine that he has come to her before her birth, and tells her, 'You are about to enter a city … shared by gods and men – a city that embraces the universe' (*Intraturus es urbem dis, hominibus communem* 18.1). The lengthy simile enumerates the order of nature, from the movements of the heavens down to the cycles of the natural word, and then continues with the human order, its practice of the arts, as well as the corruption of this order, and the attendant plagues, wars, grief and torment which attend human life.

As if the preceding were merely a digression, Seneca states that he is returning to the subject of consolation (*Sed ut ad solacia ueniam* 19.1). Sections 19 to 24 rehearse a series of consolatory *topoi* and provide the final group of *exempla*, a series of men whose lives were harmed by living too long and who would have benefited from a premature death (Gnaeus Pompeius, 20.4; Cicero, 20.5; Cato, 20.6). Seneca returns to the death of Cremutius Cordus in section 22.4, and describes his decision to commit suicide as the only weapon remaining to him against his political enemies. From Cordus Seneca finally moves to Marcia's son, Metilius, and sets out an encomium on his virtue (23.3-24.5).

The final two sections (25-26) give an elaborate account of the state of her son now that his soul has left his body and ascended to the heavens. Seneca paints a portrait of Metilius and Cordus, along with the Scipios and Catos, who now share one mind and gaze upon the cosmos with the leisure of the gods. The condition enjoyed by Cordus and Metilius, together with the Scipios and the Catos, resembles a state of *apatheia*. Cordus is unmoved by anything, even Marcia's grief, and he dispassionately goes about his scientific and historical studies. The final image not only consoles Marcia concerning Metilius, but provides a deeper consolation for the death of her father than she had realized at the time of his death. The self-control and moderation which she had imposed on her passions because of external considerations about public perception, she now possesses by virtue of a philosophical insight.

The *Ad Marciam*'s consolation operates by coordinating the three features discussed: the use of *exempla*; the arguments for *metriopatheia* and *apatheia*; the change of perspective from human to cosmic. While most commentators focus on the formal *exempla*, the first of which follows Seneca's advertisement of his novel approach of putting *exempla* before *praecepta*, there is, as Shelton points out, another exemplum before this: 'The *exemplum* of the "former" Marcia, who maintained rational control even when struck by a mighty blast of Fortuna, is the first *exemplum* in the essay and provides a powerful paradigm for the "present" Marcia to whom Seneca addresses his consolatio.'[57] In addition, this first example appears to be a model of moderation. Seneca praises Marcia, saying 'you routed your tears',[58] but also points out that while she accepted her father's death, she did not agree with his decision. The picture of Cordus's suicide here is from Marcia's perspective alone, and there is a tension present in her response. She was not moderate in her response because she understood or agreed with her father's rationale for suicide. Her moderation is presented as a result of considerations of public perception and her father's legacy (Seneca suggests that, like Livia, Marcia felt compelled by a concern for appearances and the sense of what is becoming a woman in her position). The fact that Marcia did not, at the time of her father's death, internalize the rationale for his action, that she did not reconcile his suicide with necessity, indicates that her position was not

57 Shelton 'Persuasion and Paradigm' 188.
58 'fudistique lacrimas' (*Ad Marciam* 1.2).

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Stoic *apatheia*. Thus, while Marcia is given a mirror at the beginning of the work, the image of herself in a similar situation,[59] this same response is not presented as the goal of the consolation. Seneca wishes to bring about a consolation based upon a deeper understanding of the nature of her loss. This deeper understanding involves a reflection on death from a variety of perspectives, accomplished through the use of *prosopopeia*.[60] The first involves the putative consolation given to Livia by the philosopher Areus.[61] The next is a personified nature, who states unequivocally, 'I deceive no one'.[62] Finally, the work closes with the *prosopopeia* of the dead Cordus.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE *PROSOPOPEIA*

When Seneca approaches Marcia, she is attached to her grief. She nurses it (*haerere*, 1.1) and broods upon it (*incubare*, 1.1). (This is an image which literally comes from a bird hatching eggs. Thus, as Seneca says, Marcia has replaced her son with a new child, her grief: 1.6.) She is so enamoured of the morbid pleasure (*voluptas dolor*, 1.7) she finds in her grief that Seneca will need to remove it almost against her will (*invitus*, 1.5). Through this self-afflicted torture (*in se saevientia ipsa*, 1.7) she has chosen to remove herself from the number of the living (*eximes te numero vivorum*, 2.4). Consolation requires that Marcia be freed from the grip of grief, or rather, she must re-

59 Seneca observes that Marcia loved Cordus not less dearly than her children, 'save only that you did not wish him to outlive you' (excepto eo quod non optabas superstitem, *Ad Marciam* 1.2). This establishes that the loss here is equal to the loss of her father and thus comparable.

60 Manning observes, 'Seneca is in fact extremely fond of the rhetorical device of *prosopopeia* which occurs twice subsequently in this work (17.6 and 26.1), once in the *Ad Polybium* (14.2ff.), three times in the *De Constantia Sapientis* (6.3; 13.4 and 16.4) and no less than four times in the comparatively short *De Providentia*.' *On Seneca's* Ad Marciam 46.

61 'It was thus, I fancy, that Areus approached her, it was thus he commenced to address a woman who clung most tenaciously to her own opinon' (Hic, ut opinor, aditus illi fuit, hoc principium apud feminam opinionis suae custodem diligentissimam *Ad Marciam* 4.3). Shelton remarks, citing Manning, Grollios and Abel, 'Most modern scholars believe that Seneca created this speech for the occasion and that it does not contain direct quotations from Areus and is not an adaptation of one of Areus' own works.' 'Persuasion and Paradigm' 178.

62 'neminem decipio' (*Ad Marciam* 17.6).

lease her grip on it. This is accomplished through self-knowledge, and the personifications of Areus, Nature and Cordus are the keys to recovering self-knowledge because they allow Marcia to see herself as she appears from each level. She can know herself as she is known according to human nature, the Natural order, and her father's nature which he shares with the gods.

THE *PROSOPOPEIA* OF THE PHILOSOPHER AREUS

The first *prosopopeia* is the image of a philosopher who counsels the bereaved to turn away from evils in order to focus her attention on what good remains. The consolation implies the inability of the human to comprehend fate or fortune and is characteristic of the Epicurean *consolatio* described by Cicero in *Tusculanae* book 3. The philosopher, Areus,[63] expounds and embodies the completion of a worldly, human wisdom. Areus endorses a vision of moderation as the best result possible for a human. Seneca adopts the Ciceronian modification of the Epicureans' strategy of calling the mind away from a reflection upon evils to the recollection of past pleasures. In the *Tusculanae*, Cicero tells us that 'Alleviation of distress, however, Epicurus finds in two directions, namely in calling the soul away from the reflection upon vexation and in a "recall" to the consideration of pleasures.'[64] Cicero takes issue with the fact that this recall is easier said than done, but has a more serious objection to the Epicurean approach. Directing his words to Epicurus, Cicero laments, 'You bid me reflect on good, forget evil. There would be something in what you say and something worthy of a great philosopher, were you sensible that those things are good which are most worthy of a human being.'[65] Seneca, like Cicero, does not advocate the recollection of bodily pleasures, but recommends that Marcia recall her noble son and the pleasure she derived from his virtues.

63 *Ad Marciam* 4.3-5.6.

64 'Levationem autem aegritudinis in duabus rebus ponit, avocatione a cogitanda molestia et revocatione ad contemplandas voluptates' (*Tusculanae* 3.33).

65 'Iubes me bona cogitare, oblivisci malorum. Diceres aliquid, et magno quidem philosopho dignum, si ea bona esse sentires, quae essent homine dignissima' (*Tusculanae* 3.35).

THE *PROSOPOPEIA* OF NATURE

The second *prosopopeia*, Nature,[66] transcends the perspective of human nature by locating it within a larger order, that of the cosmos. Nature personified speaks as the object which eludes the Epicurean philosopher. Nature is speaking, revealing her inner character to Marcia, one that is in large part inaccessible and impenetrable, even to the philosopher. The consolation at this level consists in Nature's assertion that she 'deceives no one', and is a vindication of Nature in so far as she is akin to fortune. One must accept her on her own terms, and she makes no promises. The demand according to Nature is to recognize that there are contingent goods and evils beyond our control, and the best result to be hoped for is some balance between the two. This is the Peripatetic position of the *Tusculanae*.[67]

66 Post hanc denuntiationem si quis dixisset intrare se Syracusas uelle, satisne iustam querellam de ullo nisi de se habere posset, qui non incidisset in illa sed prudens sciensque uenisset? Dicit omnibus nobis natura: 'neminem decipio. Tu si filios sustuleris, poteris habere formosos, et deformes poteris. Fortasse multi nascentur: esse aliquis ex illis tam seruator patriae quam proditor poterit. Non est quod desperes tantae dignationis futuros ut nemo tibi propter illos male dicere audeat; propone tamen et tantae futuros turpitudinis ut ipsi maledicta sint. Nihil uetat illos tibi suprema praestare et laudari te a liberis tuis, sed sic te para tamquam in ignem inpositurus uel puerum uel iuuenem uel senem; nihil enim ad rem pertinent anni, quoniam nullum non acerbum funus est quod parens sequitur.' Post has leges propositas si liberos tollis, omni deos inuidia liberas, qui tibi nihil certi spoponderunt (*Ad Marciam* 17.6-7). ('If after such a warning anyone should declare that he desired to enter Syracuse, against whom but himself could he find just cause for complaint, since he would not have stumbled upon those conditions, but have come into them purposely and with full knowledge? To all of us Nature says: "I deceive no one. If you bear sons, it may be that they will be handsome, it may be that they will be ugly; perchance they will be born dumb. Some of them, it may be, will be the saviour of his country, or as likely its betrayer. It is not beyond hope that they will win so much esteem that out of regard for them none will venture to speak evil of you; yet bear in mind, too, that they may sink to such great infamy that they themselves will become your curse. There is nothing to forbid that they should perform the last sad rites for you, and that those who deliver your panegyric should be your children, but, too, hold yourself ready to place your son upon the pyre, be he lad, or man or greybeard; for years have nothing to do with the matter, since every funeral is untimely at which a parent follows the bier." If, after these conditions have been set forth, you bring forth children, you must free the gods from all blame; for they have made you no promises.')

67 'Hic mihi adferunt mediocritates. Quae si naturales sunt, quid opus est consolatione? natura enim ipsa terminabit modum; sin opinabiles, opinio tota tollatur' (*Tusc.* 3.74). ('At

THE *PROSOPOPEIA* OF CREMUTIUS CORDUS

Finally, Seneca presents Marcia with the counsel of her father, Cremutius Cordus.[68] This is not the wisdom he displayed in life, but the newfound understanding of history and science from the perspective of the gods. The books Marcia preserved contain Cordus' worldly wisdom. He once wrote 'the facts of Roman history' (*Romana*, 1.3) to provide examples of Roman virtue for posterity. Now, in his own words to Marcia, he views 'countless centuries, the succession and train of countless ages,' not only those in the past, but also 'the rise and fall of future kingdoms' (26.5-6). His mind is one not only with Metilius', whom he 'initiates into Nature's secrets, not by guesswork, but by experience having true knowledge of them all' (25.2), but also with the very figures of Roman history of whom he once wrote, the Scipios and the Catos. There, 'all are akin with all' (25.2).

Seneca adopts the imagery of Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, describing a position beyond the oppositions of the world and mortal life. Here alone real *apatheia* is realized, when the partial vision of the individual is replaced with the vision of the whole. Cordus unites the philosopher and the object of philosophy. Cordus is presented to Marcia as a witness, offering her a glimpse of his life and that of her son Metilius, for whom she grieves. The insights here are more than what is found in an *exemplum*, which only presents the outward appearance which can be seen by all. Here Cordus' perspective not only on history, but on his own suicide, is offered to Marcia. It is, for Seneca, a state of true *apatheia* which Cordus and Metilius occupy.

CONCLUSION

The diverse arguments of the *Ad Marciam* are parts of a unified consolation. The disparate arguments and images are united in a threefold schema that is hierarchically arranged. The earlier arguments, which operate on a human

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this point they confront me with their "mean" states. If these are based upon nature, what need is there of giving comfort? For nature will herself fix the limit; but if they are based on belief, then let the belief be completely set aside').

68 *Ad Marciam* 26.1-7.

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perspective, are able to engage Marcia precisely because she is not able to see anything beyond her immediate circumstances. The counsel of the philosopher Areus does not purport to present a comprehensive view because this would be incomprehensible to Marcia in her condition. Areus' Epicurean exhortation is, however, able to move Marcia's gaze from herself to the human condition in general. This first step is the condition of the second. Once Marcia can appreciate the common lot of men, she can see the place of mankind in a larger order. Evil is not particular to human affairs, but at the very heart of the natural order. This is Nature's own admission when she claims 'to deceive no one' in the second *prosopopeia*. Having been elevated to an appreciation of the natural world, Marcia can be persuaded to turn her gaze upon a state which is beyond the oppositions and evils of the world. This final perspective requires some notion of transcendence in order to hold together the opposed ideals of moderation and *apatheia*. In this, the unity of the *Ad Marciam* depends upon an understanding of consolation that is deeply Platonic.

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