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Abstract

This thesis examines the *Ad Helviam*, a consolatory treatise written from exile by Seneca to his mother Helvia which is not only one of Seneca's best works, but is also among the very best of extant *consolationes*. The thesis is in two movements, covering (i) the content of the *Ad Helviam*, and (ii) the purpose of the *Ad Helviam*.

The introduction sets the writer and his work in their respective contexts, and illustrates the main areas of interest and relevance which the work has for us today. It then outlines the two areas of study which are contained in the body of the thesis.

The first chapter looks at the content of the *Ad Helviam*, dealing with its literary and philosophical debt. This includes a survey of the genre of consolation literature and the subsection of that genre which dealt with consolations for exile. Following a treatment of Seneca's various philosophical sources in the dialogue is a detailed study of how the structure and argumentation of the *Ad Helviam* are affected by generic concerns, concluding that there are elements of originality, although there is a debt to tradition. Seneca deserves credit not only for his innovations, but also for the many means which he uses in order to maintain a tone of freshness and intimacy, and thus to keep his readers interested in his work.

Using the first chapter as a basis, the second chapter is an examination of the many purposes which the writer had for composing the work. Here we move from a re-evaluation of material which for the most part has been previously studied to a fresh synthesis of ideas and a new statement on the *Ad Helviam*. Six purposes are suggested for the composition of the dialogue, the first two of which are of a private nature, while the rest assume a wider audience.

Seneca may have written to console Helvia, to console himself, to expound his philosophy, to defend himself on the adultery charge for which he had been exiled, to bolster his literary reputation in Rome, or to set the scene for and politely request his return to society. Evidence for these motives is obtained both from within the dialogue and from external sources; it is possible to believe that all the motives existed in the writer's mind simultaneously at the time of composition.

Finally, the conclusion not only summarises the two chapters, but unites them by stating that it is through the use and refashioning of generic material that Seneca achieves his purposes.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of ancient works and authors and of periodicals are in accord with those listed in the following works:

- i) Latin authors: *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. ed. P.G.W. Glare (Oxford, 1982), ix-xxiii.
- ii) Greek authors: Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed., rev. H.S. Jones (1940; repr. Oxford, 1968), xvi-xxxviii.
- iii) Periodical titles: *L'Année Philologique* (1924- ). Vol. 51, 1980 Suppl. *Index des Périodiques* (ed. P. Rosumek) (Paris, 1982).

Other abbreviations:

Abel = K. Abel. *Bauformen in Senecas Dialogen. Fünf Strukturanalysen: dial. 6, 11, 12, 1 and 2*. (Heidelberg, 1967).

Griffin = M.T. Griffin. *Seneca. A Philosopher in Politics*. (Oxford, 1976).

Grimal = P. Grimal. *Sénèque ou la conscience de l'Empire*. (Paris, 1978).

Johann = H.T. Johann. *Trauer und Trost*. (Munich, 1968).

Kassel = R. Kassel. *Untersuchungen zur Griechischen und Römischen Konsolationsliteratur*. (Munich, 1958).

Meinel = P. Meinel. *Seneca über seine Verbannung. Trostschrift an die Mutter Helvia*. (Diss. Bonn, 1972).

OCD = *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. ed. N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard. (2nd ed.: Oxford, 1970).

OLD = *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. ed. P.G.W. Glare (Oxford, 1982).

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my thanks first of all to the University of Victoria for granting me a generous Fellowship over the past two years, and allowing me thus to pursue my studies in this delightful corner of the world.

I owe a very special debt to Dr. J.G. Fitch, who has supervised my research at every stage with unflagging interest and much moral support. I am also indebted to Professors K.R. Bradley, D.A. Campbell, and T.G. Sherwood for their recommendations. They have saved me from many errors; for those which remain I must bear full responsibility. I cannot pass over my debt to the Campbells and the Fitches for their kindness and hospitality to me personally during my stay in Canada.

Finally, I am very grateful to Mrs. A. Nasser for typing my thesis with customary speed and accuracy, and to Miss Laurie A. Mitchell for assisting with typing and proof-reading at short notice in a very self-sacrificial way.

*Cui dono, quaesistis, ocellum hunc paene librorum?*

*vobis, mi genetrix optima, docte pater.*

## INTRODUCTION

### The *Ad Helviam*: Its Context and Significance

Sometime shortly after being exiled on an adultery charge by the Claudian administration in A.D. 41, Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the philosopher and statesman whose life spanned the reigns of all the Julio-Claudian emperors, wrote a consolatory treatise to his mother Helvia. In it he tried to explain with no little eloquence that banishment had not crushed his spirit and that Helvia ought to have no reason for disquiet over his circumstances.

I propose to look in detail at the content of this touching and pleasurable essay, examining what is traditional and what is original in it, and then from that basis to set forth a fresh synthesis of the various aims which the author had in mind, or which it has been suggested that he had in mind, when he composed the work. First of all, I would like briefly to place in context both the man and the work, and to evaluate the general merits and relevance to us of the latter.

\* \* \*

Few classical authors or personalities have gained as much attention, if not indeed popularity, in the course of Western civilization as Seneca.<sup>1</sup> Within a generation of his death, the exceptional popularity of the Cordovan philosopher with the youth of the day had been pointed out by Quintilian, despite the professorial reservations which he held over his style: *hic solus fere in manibus adolescentium fuit* (X.1.126).<sup>2</sup> He appealed to the early church fathers, since many of his Stoic thoughts bear sufficient resemblance to New Testament Christianity for early Christians to accept that there was a connection between Seneca and St. Paul, and once Jerome had added his seal to their supposed correspondence (now almost universally held to be fictitious),<sup>3</sup> he was

incorporated into the canon of literature acceptable to the church, the depository of learning during the Dark Ages. The revival of learning brought philosophy to the fore, and Seneca appealed in this quarter too: alongside the professor of philosophy at the university of Piacenza in the thirteenth century there was a 'professor of Seneca'.<sup>4</sup>

While Seneca has been favoured by many divines for his moralistic tenor, and the Elizabethan tragedians did not hesitate to plunder his poetry, the main issue which has provoked enthusiasm for or against him has been his style. The controversy which existed between Ciceronianism and Senecan mannerism is one which has been relived in succeeding centuries since Quintilian. Bacon and Montaigne, for example, admired and imitated Seneca out of a certain stylistic and temperamental affinity, while in the nineteenth century, with its very different preferences, a classicist such as Macaulay could condemn his style with the famous words that reading Seneca was "like living on nothing but anchovy sauce".<sup>5</sup> By 1911, E.V. Arnold could write that "Seneca's works are not read in our schools and universities, and are little known even to professional scholars".<sup>6</sup> Once again, he attributed this to stylistic deficiencies.

One might have thought that through constant working and reworking, the subject had been exhausted. But in actual fact, the tide of popularity has turned in Seneca's favour since Arnold's day, and is currently at a peak, this past decade having witnessed at least three major full length works in English, French, and German, each breaking new ground in some way or other.<sup>7</sup> Two of these authors (M.T. Griffin and P. Grimal) deal more with Seneca as a politician and statesman, while one (M. Rozelaar), in trying to reach *der ganze Seneca*, comes perilously close to missing out on everything.<sup>8</sup> This enthusiasm is more critical than that of the Patristic or Renaissance period, and is less interested in style as a criterion of worth, but it is an enthusiasm none the less.

Seneca has had his admirers and his detractors, and I speak here not of his contemporaries alone, but of his biographers too. Even though the most critically acute scholarship has generally and not surprisingly belonged to the twentieth century,<sup>9</sup> emotionally partisan views have perhaps still hindered the development of a disinterested view. Yet it is hard to avoid some kind of sides-taking in trying to gain a unified picture of Seneca, and this often tends to develop into a case for the defence rather than the prosecution. The main burthen of such writers as R. Waltz, W.H. Alexander, A.L. Motto, and P. Grimal,<sup>10</sup> to name but a few recent scholars, is protective of Seneca's positive reputation, trying to harmonize apparent discrepancies between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, both of which were incumbent upon the Stoic philosopher.

But despite the disagreement which has existed over the relationship of the works of Seneca to his life, the *Ad Helviam* has almost always been widely read, and usually recognized for its literary qualities and its candid tone, even by Seneca's more severe critics. Quintilian's statement of Seneca's popularity indicates that this was based on his published works, including *dialogi* (X.1.129), and it is highly probable that the *Ad Helviam* was a part of this collection, just as it is today; certainly it was more than just a private letter from the very time of its composition. Admittedly this does not prove that the treatise was well-liked, but wide circulation at least hints at popularity. In the seventeenth century, Dryden's friend Bolingbroke wrote a *Reflections on Exile* which was so full of thoughts from the *Ad Helviam* that Pope fancied that people would have considered it a work of *Seneca redivivus*,<sup>11</sup> and James Boswell's account of Corsica (1768) shows an awareness of the philosopher's opinion of the place.<sup>12</sup> Even H.J. Rose, who records of Seneca that "of his works the writer finds it hard to judge fairly, owing to the loathing which his personality excites",<sup>13</sup> could praise this touching treatise.

Of the commentaries that have been published on the *Ad Helviam*, three have appeared this century, but only one is recent. The study of C. Favez (1918)<sup>14</sup> is more extensive than that of J.D. Duff (1915),<sup>15</sup> who spreads himself over a wider area in covering the *De Brevitate Vitae* and the *Ad Polybium* as well, but Favez admits that he owes a lot to Duff. Peter Meinel's thesis *Seneca über seine Verbannung* (1972)<sup>16</sup> is in fact a chapter-by-chapter investigation of the *Ad Helviam*, despite its title, and it deserves to be placed in the category of a commentary. Its length and depth do not mean that it has completely superseded the earlier work, since it concentrates on some subjects more heavily than others. Only one page of the introduction, for example, is dedicated to the reason for the composition of the consolation, and there is very little expansion upon this in the course of the commentary either. Meinel's is basically a work of literary appreciation and *Quellenforschung* -- a comparative study in *consolatio* literature, and especially the *consolatio exilii*. Many other books and articles have dealt with the *Ad Helviam*, some tangentially, and some with a more specific focus, but reference will be made to these as is appropriate.

\* \* \*

What, then, are the main points of interest and problems in the *Ad Helviam*, and what is its significance? We are fortunate inasmuch as we are free here from two especially dogged problems in Senecan scholarship, particularly found in the *Dialogues* -- those of chronology and structure -- and largely free, at least in one sense, from a third problem -- that of lack of knowledge of the writer's personal situation at the time of composition. The chronology problem has long been recognized -- Lipsius wrote about it -- and every generation of writers has set its hand to seeking out new scraps of internal evidence, or modes of interpretation, in order to anchor a particular work to a particular

date, or to prove some kind of progression in the thought of the philosopher. A. Gercke (1895) concisely stated the importance of establishing the chronology of the *Dialogi*, although he probably overstated it: "so ist die Chronologie seiner Schriften, richtig verstanden, die Geschichte seines Lebens und bisweilen seiner Zeit".<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, scholarly debate brought a conclusion no nearer, and when F. Giancotti's exhaustive volume surveying all previous approaches appeared (1957),<sup>18</sup> it was still possible to place the *De Providentia* anywhere between A.D. 37 and 64.<sup>19</sup> Happily no real conflict surrounds the dating of the *Ad Helviam*, and we cannot be far wrong in assigning its composition to 42 or 43, since Seneca writes of leaving a period of time after his banishment in 41 before putting pen to paper.<sup>20</sup> It might still be conceivable to place the *Ad Polybium* before the *Ad Helviam*, which could have an interesting effect on the views of Waltz and A. Ferrill,<sup>21</sup> for example, but aside from this there is little intrinsic interest in the date of the work.

One hesitates to call structure a 'problem', since Seneca often deliberately seeks looseness of organization, and conceals the rhetorical structure which he includes in some of his works, but at least from Quintilian's point of view, this dialogue is almost uniquely above reproach in the rounded neatness of its layout and the logical consistency of its development. When we compare it with the *dispositio* of material in the other treatises of Seneca, we see that only the *De Constantia Sapientis* was produced with similar architectonic tidiness.<sup>22</sup> While this more formal structure is only one of a variety of approaches which the author takes to *Beweismittel*, and not necessarily a superior one, it is plainly the most convenient and immediately appealing to the reader. In terms of a rhetorical summary of the work, we have an *exordium* (1.1-3.2), a *divisio* (4.1-3), an *argumentatio* (5.1-19.7), and a *conclusio/peroratio* (20.1-2), with further divisions of the material in the argumentation which are carefully and logically elaborated.

That Seneca hardly ever tells us anything of the concrete details of his life is a perennial headache for the Senecan scholar. In all the volumes of Seneca which have been left to us, there are under a hundred pieces of information which might be considered autobiographical, and most of these references are duplicates of one another.<sup>23</sup> There are many occasions when we may be tempted to make leaps of faith, but we can rarely be certain that Seneca is writing in a manner revealing of his personal life or circumstances. When he uses 'You' and 'I' -- a problem possibly more prominent in the *Epistles* -- he may be in earnest, or he may be talking in the abstract.

The *Ad Helviam*, however, is of particular interest to the chronicler of Seneca's life and times. It bears more information on the philosopher's family relations than any other of his extant works.<sup>24</sup> From it we can deduce that he was married, since he mentions the loss of a son (2.5), even if we are baffled by the failure to mention his wife throughout the dialogue. As well as acquiring knowledge of Helvia, and gaining insight into the *antiquus rigor* of his father, we learn of Seneca's brothers Novatus (later the Gallio of the New Testament) and Mela (18.1-3), of the aunt and uncle with whom he spent much time in Egypt while convalescing (19.1-7), and a few other named and unnamed relatives. We also learn of family estates (14.2), and of Seneca's early career (19.2 is the sole literary evidence of his quaestorship) amongst other things. Some of this information has led to more questions, rather than giving us answers: although these are not major issues, it is still disputed whether the Marcus of 18.4-8 is Seneca's son, or his nephew the poet Lucan, or whether Novatilla (*ibid.*) is Seneca's daughter or niece.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the comparative wealth of personal information in this consolation, we must be cautious about accepting at face value Seneca's statements about his relationships with others and his state of mind in exile, since he is almost certainly to some extent projecting a self-image to the world, rather

than a complete and true self-disclosure. The need for caution in assessing Seneca's self-portrayal is exemplified by the approach of one scholar (and only one, to my knowledge) who has trodden a dangerous pathway in trying to reconstruct a character portrait of Seneca from the language of intimate relationship present in the *Ad Helviam*. Psychoanalysis is not an easy task, far less when one's patient has been dead for nearly two millennia, and Marc Rozelaar's *Gesamtdarstellung* has not won the admiration of the critics. His allegations of homosexuality and an "erotic" relationship between the mother and the son do not do justice to the sources.<sup>26</sup> We must also exercise care in forging links between Seneca's career and this dialogue. For example, we could easily mistake a reference to Agrippina and Nero in 14.2,<sup>27</sup> and we would not hesitate to think of her were this passage in the *Epistles*, but we know that the dialogue must belong early in the exile, rendering such a reference impossible.

The personal witness of the *Ad Helviam* is all the more helpful when we consider the lack of contemporary, or roughly contemporary, source material to back up the picture which we can haltingly piece together from Seneca's other works. The much-lamented missing books of the *Annales* could have provided us with vital information; they may, for instance, have dated his quaestorship. As it is, we have to work around this shortcoming and make retrospective inferences from the surviving later books of Tacitus. Apart from scattered references in a handful of Silver authors, such as Suetonius, Juvenal, the Elder Pliny, and Martial, we are dependent on the third century Dio Cassius (and his epitomators), whose picture of Seneca is insecure and probably based on an uncritical mixture of sources.<sup>28</sup> It is to the *Consolationes*, not least to the one addressed to Helvia, that we must look for tidbits of detail to break the silence which covers the whole of his early life and career before his recall from banishment in 49.

There are a few secondary points stemming from the dialogue, such as Seneca's view of women, and his estimation of Corsica as a place, which merit passing attention. Suffice to say, regarding the former, that Seneca's humanitarianism has given him distinction, and that he came a lot closer to proclaiming the equality of the sexes than most Romans.<sup>29</sup> Further, the controversial description of Corsica will interest the geographer, but may also bear implications for the author's attitude during exile, considering the dismissive metaphor used for the island (*nudum saxum*).<sup>30</sup> But these minor interests do not require the attention which should be paid to a more weighty question, such as the consistency of Seneca's philosophy, and why he uses non-Stoic arguments in his consolation -- a question which we will tackle in due course.

However, the two items which most stand out and give importance to the *Ad Helviam*, and the two items which will be discussed at greater length, are

- (i) The indebtedness of the dialogue to the consolation tradition, and the extent to which Seneca has reshaped that tradition.
- (ii) The presence of ulterior motives for its composition related to Seneca's personal and political life.

Although much labour has been spent on the consolation tradition and Seneca's place in it, I have chosen to explore this in some measure at least, since the question of tradition and originality is so central. Thereafter I pass on to examine the manifold purposes of the writer in composing the dialogue, which not only relate to his career, but also demonstrate his talent.

FOOTNOTES

1. For Seneca's literary reputation over the centuries, v. W. Trillitzsch, *Seneca im literarischen Urteil der Antike. Darstellung und Sammlung der Zeugnisse*, 2 Vols., Amsterdam, 1971; also, W.C. Summers, *Select Letters of Seneca*, London, 1910, xciv - cxiv.
2. v. Appendix C for a full statement of Quintilian's opinion. Cf. p.57, n.115.
3. Trillitzsch, *Urteil der Antike*, I.170-185; II.379-384.
4. Summers, *Select Letters*, ci.
5. *ibid.*, cxii.
6. *Roman Stoicism*, London, 1911, 114.
7. M.T. Griffin, *Seneca. A Philosopher in Politics*, Oxford, 1976; P. Grimal, *Sénèque ou la conscience de l'Empire*, Paris, 1978; M. Rozelaar, *Seneca. Eine Gesamtdarstellung*, Amsterdam, 1976. In terms of political biography, such as is the scope of Griffin and Grimal, one should also note F. Prieto's *El pensamiento político de Seneca* (Madrid, 1977), which argues that there is a consistent political doctrine present in Seneca's writings, that of accepting and humanizing the Principate (*ap.* A.L. Motto and J.R. Clark, 'Scholarship on Seneca's Prose: 1968-1978', *CW* 77 [1983], 88 -- an article which is a valuable guide to recent work on Seneca).
8. Miriam Griffin's sophisticated study first builds an account of Seneca's career from the testimony of other ancient writers and from such references in his works as may be securely connected to his life (as opposed to the many links which are hypothesized). The second half of her work is a study of political issues -- such as Seneca's view of the Republic, the Principate, slavery, and wealth -- as we can determine them from the prose works. She concludes that on the whole his words and actions were

more harmonized than disjoint (p.389). Grimal also divides his work into two parts, following his sympathetic biography of 'Sénèque en son temps' with a discussion of the characteristics of the writings and beliefs of this "philosophe hors de l'école", and sensitively highlighting his devotion to philosophy and to mankind in general. Rozelaar's long-distance psychobiography of Seneca has not been well received by the critics, and Griffin's stinging review even suggests that he "would have done better to write an historical novel" (*CR* 30 [1980], 31). For this new and controversial approach to Seneca, which is to a large extent extrapolated from his view of the *Ad Helviam*, v. Appendix B.

9. It has, however, been suggested by Z. Stewart (*AJP* 74 [1953], 70) that a complete and accurate biography of Seneca had almost been produced by 1490 -- the *Vita Senecae* of Paulus Pompilius. Stewart gives a list (*ibid.* n.1) of significant biographies for 1900-1953, with reference to earlier ones, lamenting the lack of original work on Seneca since Pompilius and Lipsius (1605) up to his own day, except for the contributions of A. Gercke ('Seneca-Studien', *Fleck. Jahr. Kl. Phil.* Suppl. 22, Leipzig, 1895; repr. N.Y., 1971) and P. Faider (*Études sur Sénèque*, Ghent, 1921). He is perhaps being unfair in omitting R. Waltz's *Vie de Sénèque* (Paris, 1909), which was a thoroughly researched and annotated enterprise, and became a standard work of reference for many years. He also seems to omit the more popular treatments of A. Bailly (*La vie de Sénèque*, Paris, 1929) and R.M. Gummere (*Seneca the Philosopher and His Modern Message*, Boston, 1922).
10. Books and articles by these writers are listed in the bibliography. According to C.J. Herington (*Arion* 5 [1966], 463), Grimal "paints Seneca in unbelievably rosy colours" -- at least in his earlier works, since this is said of his *Sénèque, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa philosophie*, published in 1948.

11. *ap. Summers, Select Letters, cx.*
12. v. J.D. Duff, *L. Annaei Senecae Dialogorum Libri X, XI, XII. Three Dialogues of Seneca*, Cambridge, 1915, xxxiv-xxxvii.
13. *A Handbook of Latin Literature*, London, 1936 (3rd ed.: 1954; with new bibliog.: 1966), 359. Rose finds the *Ad Helviam* "much better" than the *Ad Polybium*, and finds it "pleasant to record that Seneca in private life seems to have been amiable and a good son." (p.365).
14. C. Favez, *L. Annaei Senecae Dialogorum Liber XII Ad Helviam Matrem De Consolatione. Texte Latine publié avec une introduction et un commentaire explicatif*, Lausanne-Paris, 1918. Unfortunately this work only became available to me at the latest stages of my research, and I have been unable to appreciate its value fully.
15. Mentioned above, n.12. Although it is written mainly as a school and undergraduate edition, scholars may still benefit from his work.
16. *Seneca über seine Verbannung. Trostschrift an die Mutter Helvia, mit einem Exkurs: Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt*, Habelts Diss. -- Dr. R. Klass Philol. XVI, Bonn, 1972.
17. *Seneca-Studien*, 282.
18. *Cronologia dei Dialoghi di Seneca*, Turin, 1957.
19. H. MacL. Currie calls this inconclusiveness "very wise" (*The Younger Seneca's Style: Some Observations*", *BICS* 13 [1966], 86 n.31), but certainty of the date would obviously be much preferable. Clausulaic evidence, which has gained little attention recently, would tend to push it towards a post-60 date: cf. A. Bourgery, *RPh* 34 (1910), 167-172.
20. *expectabam itaque dum ipse [morbus] vires suas frangeret et ad sustinenda remedia mora mitigatus tangi se ac tractari pateretur.* (1.2). For more on the date of the *Ad Helviam* and its interest, v. p.72.
21. Waltz (*Vie*, 100ff.) and Ferrill ("Seneca's Exile and the *Ad Helviam*: a

Reinterpretation", *CP* 61 [1966], 255f.) both see a linear decline in Seneca's attitude during exile, which they infer from the contrast between the spirit of the *Ad Helviam* and that of the *Ad Polybium*. Waltz dates the vigorous *De Const. Sap.* and the *De Prov.* to 41, and sees a gradual weakening through the *Ad Helviam* to the dejection of the *Ad Polybium*.

22. Cf. Currie, *The Younger Seneca's Style*, 80. E. Albertini (*La composition dans les ouvrages philosophiques de Sénèque*, Paris, 1923) and J.R.G. Wright ('Form and Content in the *Moral Essays*', in *Seneca*, ed. Costa, London, 1974, 39-69) examine and defend the complexity and variety of Seneca's prose style.
23. v. Griffin, 1 n.2, based on Trillitzsch's *Urteil der Antike*.
24. The lost *De Vita Patris* may have contained more information (Griffin, 2 n.11).
25. Griffin, 57-59; K. Abel, 'Sen. Dial. 12, 18, 4ff. ein Zeugnis für die Biographie Lucans?', *Rh M* 115 (1972), 325-329. It is surely most natural to take Novatilla as Novatus' daughter (*contra* Abel).
26. v. Appendix B. The allegation of erotic relations with Helvia first appeared in an article three years prior to the publication of the book ('Seneca. A New Approach to His Personality', *Psychiatry* 36 - Washington W.A. White Psychiatric Foundation [1973], 85).
27. *viderint illae matres quae potentiam liberorum muliebri inpotentia exercent, quae, quia feminis honores non licet gerere, per illos ambitiosae sunt ...*
28. Griffin, 427ff., esp. 433.
29. Cf. A.L. Motto, "Seneca on Women's Liberation", *CW* 65 (1972), 155-157.
30. 6.5 cf. *infra*, p.96, n.62.

CHAPTER I: The Content of the *Ad Helviam*

The *Consolatio* Genre

The *Ad Helviam* is one of a number of consolatory writings which Seneca composed. Two other formal consolations, *Ad Marciam* and *Ad Polybium*, are contained in the corpus of *dialogi*, and in addition there are about a dozen letters which belong to this longstanding genre.<sup>1</sup> These can only be fully understood in the light of similar works which had been produced before.

We can define the genre in two basic ways. In a narrow sense, the *consolatio*, or παραμυθητικὸς, was a piece written to comfort someone in distress. But in its second, broader sense, consolation literature included treatises written to instruct the reader, specified or unspecified, in areas irrespective of an immediate context, and to forearm him against the general vicissitudes of life. Apart from bereavement, many kinds of misfortune could elicit a consolatory address, including exile, as Cicero outlines for us:

*separatim certae scholae sunt de exsilio, de interitus patriae, de servitute, de debilitate, de caecitate, de omni casu, in quo nomen poni solet calamitatis.* (Tusc. III.81)

It goes without saying that long before the constitution of a formal genre, men had been expressing condolences to one another in writing.<sup>2</sup> If we go back to the father of Greek literature,<sup>3</sup> we will meet such thoughts, just as we do in the tragedians.<sup>4</sup> In fact, Homer and Euripides were to become favourite quarrying grounds for later *consolatores*, including the popular Crantor<sup>5</sup> and the author of the *Consolatio ad Apollonium*,<sup>6</sup> who borrows from Homer nineteen times and Euripides ten times in the course of his exposition. At a popular level, wayside inscriptions of all periods display similar ideas, and indeed in later times borrow expressions from literature, including the *consolatio* genre.<sup>7</sup>

But despite its deep roots, *consolatio* flowered late, and it is to the sophistic era that we must look for the *terminus post quem* of its true genesis.<sup>8</sup>

Antiphon, for example, who was said to have set up a stall in the marketplace at Corinth where he claimed to be able to cure the afflicted διὰ λόγων,<sup>9</sup> was also the author of a τέχνη ἀλυπίας, or "means of allaying grief". It was through the sophists that *consolatio* was given the rhetorical and dialectic flavouring which was to characterize it throughout its history.<sup>10</sup> Rhetoric and philosophy were closely allied during the sophistic period, but after their separation, rhetoricians and philosophers continued on their own to develop themes of a consolatory nature.

Different philosophical schools used different lines of reasoning, and a clear distinction can be drawn between the various practices of the Cyrenaics, the Epicureans, the Peripatetics, and the Stoics.<sup>11</sup> Individuals within a given tradition might also differ.<sup>12</sup> As time went on, however, people began to borrow freely from the approaches of others, and by the first century B.C. the whole range of arguments had been collated into single works, such as the lost *Consolatio* of Cicero.<sup>13</sup> The Cynics, and popular philosophers of Cynic bent, incorporated consolatory arguments into their public lectures, and thus continued the rhetorical tradition.<sup>14</sup> They had a taste for paradoxes, for which the Stoics became noted, and which Seneca was no less ready to employ than his predecessors.<sup>15</sup>

Yet it was through the Stoics that the genre was most clearly defined, and through them that it flourished. They viewed grief (λύπη, *aegritudo*) as one of the four principal passions (πάθη) or 'disorders of the soul', which had to be eliminated, and this was one prime incentive for them to write *consolatio*.<sup>16</sup> Of the early Stoics, Chrysippus was particularly interested in confronting and countering λύπη, but neither he nor any of his peers addressed consolations to specific individuals. His attitude came closer to Seneca's than the severity of some Stoics; he is on record as advocating a moderate approach to grief.<sup>17</sup> Later, in the second century B.C., Panaetius wrote a *consolatio* addressed to

Q. Tubero,<sup>18</sup> and Seneca himself composed several *consolationes* with a primarily Stoic orientation.<sup>19</sup>

Of the other schools, the Epicureans were concerned in their writings to allay the fear of death, and Lucretius III is as eloquent a consolation as the ancients produced. Epicurus wrote a *περὶ Ἠγησιάνακτος τελευτῆς*, and there is also the evidence of Seneca for the consolatory thoughts of the Epicurean Metrodorus.<sup>20</sup> Neither Plato<sup>21</sup> nor Aristotle addresses this field, though they are often quoted in the genre by other writers, especially the arguments which Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates at his trial.<sup>22</sup>

Nonetheless, it was upon a member of the Old Academy that the Romans looked back as the originator and most notable author of consolation literature. Crantor (c.335-c.275) wrote an epistle entitled *περὶ πένθους* to his friend Hippocles, upon the death of Hippocles' children. Cicero admired Crantor immensely:

*Legimus omnes Crantoris, veteris Academiae, de luctu;  
est enim non magnus, verum aureolus, et, ut Tuberoni  
Panaetius praecipit, ad verbum ediscendus libellus.*<sup>23</sup>

Cicero used the *περὶ πένθους* as a base for his *Tusculans*, and as a model for his own *Consolatio*, which, like Crantor's work, unfortunately survives only in fragments.<sup>24</sup> Pseudo-Plutarch's *Consolatio ad Apollonium* may be attributable to Crantor's influence in a large part, to name but one of his other debtors.<sup>25</sup> Crantor brought together Platonic and Aristotelian thoughts on death and immortality in his epistle, and called for a moderation of the passions in the face of grief (*μετροπάθεια*),<sup>26</sup> in opposition to the *ἀπάθεια* which was demanded by the early Stoa.

In the rhetorical schools,<sup>27</sup> *consolatio* exhibited itself as an element in funeral oratory (*λόγος ἐπιτάφιος*), which goes back at least as far as the famous Periclean speech in Thucydides (II.35-46). In the first century A.D., Dio Chrysostom's *Orationes* 13 (on exile) and 16 (on grief) were consolatory;<sup>28</sup>

Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Ars Rhetorica VI* is also devoted to *consolationes*, and later still Aelius Aristides, who studied under the same tutor as Marcus Aurelius, wrote exercises in a consolatory vein. Menander Rhetor deals with the λόγος παραμυθητικός in his περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν (413f.), classifying the topics and types of arguments used. One should not pass lightly over this rhetorical aspect of the genre; Seneca was, after all, thoroughly steeped in the rhetorical tradition. This association of the genre with rhetoric suggests that a consolation was generally regarded as intended for publication, rather than a purely private expression of condolence. In particular, the classification of consolation under epideictic, as in Menander, would encourage the writer and his audience to view it as an opportunity for "display" of his powers.

In classical Latin literature,<sup>29</sup> Cicero and Seneca are our main sources for *consolatio*, but we also have a number of poetic items, including the Pseudo-Ovidian *Consolatio ad Liviam*, Juvenal's mock consolation (*Sat.* XIII), and Statius' *Silvae* II.1, II.6, III.3, and V.1. Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* are an excellent source of information on the art of consolation and the motifs running through it, books I and III being particularly relevant. Book I treats and rejects the proposition that 'death is an evil', by asserting that it is either a departure into a better life, or a deliverance, by annihilation, from the ills of present existence. Book III outlines for us the Stoic idea of the four main πάθη of the soul, namely joy (ἡδονή / *voluptas*), desire (ἐπιθυμία / *cupiditas*), fear (φόβος / *metus*) and the aforementioned *aegritudo* (24ff.). The remainder of the book is dedicated to the alleviation of *aegritudo*, while the fourth book covers the correction of the other three disorders. We should further note the consolatory epistle which Cicero wrote to Titius (*Fam.* V. 16), and the one he received from Sulpicius at the death of Tullia (*ibid.* IV. 5). The passing of Tullia early in 45 B.C. was one of several motivating factors in the composition of the lost *Consolatio*, and, subsequent to that, the philosophi-

cal works, to which he turned as a *doloris medicina*.<sup>30</sup> This motif of self-consolation is clearly present in the *Ad Helviam*.

The Greek authors of the Roman period and also the Christian *consolatores*<sup>31</sup> ought not to be overlooked. Of the former, Plutarch is the best known; he has left us the touching little letter *Consolatio ad Uxorem*, a *De Tranq. Animi*, and the *De Exilio*; the *Consolatio ad Apollonium* (*Mor.* 102-122) is considered by most commentators to be falsely ascribed. Since Christian writers were prepared to borrow pagan thoughts, we can trace out *consolatio* into the late empire and beyond into the middle ages, through the mediation of Jerome, Augustine, Boethius, Paulinus of Nola, and others.<sup>32</sup> W.C. Summers takes us further, practically to the Renaissance, arguing that Seneca's *Epistle* 63 influenced both Petrarch's *Consolatio* and Albert of Brescia's *Liber Consolationis et Consilii* (A.D. 1246),<sup>33</sup> the latter of which passed via a French translation to Chaucer's *Meliboëus*.

Thus Seneca stands in the middle of a long-lived genre of ancient literature which is more than just a general corpus of domestic letters imparting condolences over the death of a loved one, but is also a collection of philosophical expositions and exhortations, traceable to the sophists of classical Greece, which continues as a regular theme of the philosophical and rhetorical schools, until it finally passes into the hands of Christian writers and thereby to mediaeval literature.

#### Consolatory Treatises on Exile

While death was the main event which would occasion a *consolatio*, we know that it was not the only one,<sup>34</sup> and exile is one of the other issues which fall within the category. We might consider the *consolatio exilii* as a subsection of the whole genre, tracing its evolution through the Hellenistic period to its

zenith during the early imperial era, and can firmly place the *Ad Helviam* within this tradition.

The blossoming of literature περὶ φύγης in the early Empire is not an accident. It was during the late Republic that exile first became an official legal penalty,<sup>35</sup> and by the Augustan age exile was considered next to death in terms of severity of punishment. With increasing authoritarianism, people with Republican tendencies, often philosophers and littérateurs, were forced into exile in numbers.<sup>36</sup> Connotations of disgrace were obvious, and the exile needed to be solaced in such a situation. For this reason, we find in the *Ad Helviam* and the other extant exile consolations a stress on ways of counter-acting the particular disadvantages which the Roman exile faced, notably the loss of reputation and, in some cases, the loss of wealth (*Ad Helv.* 10.1-13.8).

*Exilium* was a blanket term for several different degrees of banishment, ranging from *relegatio* to *deportatio*.<sup>37</sup> In the *Ad Helviam*, as often happened in non-legal contexts, it is used in a general way. In fact, although it seems clear that Seneca suffered only *relegatio*, and not a full *exilium*, he never used the technical description once.<sup>38</sup> *Relegatio* (i) was the mildest of four types of exile which could be imposed. This involved no loss of civil rights (for citizens), although the penalty could be permanent, not only temporary, and there were limitations placed on travel or choice of residence outside Italy. This was the kind of banishment which Dio Chrysostom, Epictetus, and Junius Gallio (*Ann* 6.3), who was later to adopt Seneca's elder brother, all experienced. The recipient of Plutarch's *De Exilio* faced an equivalent non-Roman penalty in being expelled from Sardis. *Relegatio in insulam* (ii) was on the same terms as above, but the offender was confined to remain on an island, as was Seneca's fate. A graver situation faced the man who suffered *aqua(e) et igni(s) interdictio* (iii). Loss of citizenship and confiscation of property ensued, but the residence was undesignated, whereas *deportatio* (iv) involved

the same loss of status and wealth, but which also allocated the exile to a confined space in perpetuity.

In cases where property was removed from an exile, he was still provided with an allowance (*viaticum*), to which Seneca refers (12.4), in order to live. Even at that, loss of property was not necessarily total. Augustus had made provision that, in cases of adultery, only half of the property of those convicted was forfeited, and that *relegatio* was imposed.<sup>39</sup> This could well have been Seneca's experience. Possibly he did not wish to define his exile as *relegatio* in the consolation to Helvia because of the reminder it provided of his adultery charge, on which he was quietly trying to assert innocence.

The evidence of the widespread nature of the *περὶ φυγῆς* tradition amongst philosophers and rhetoricians comes to us both through direct and indirect means. For instance, we know of a Cyrenaic philosopher called Aristippus who composed a treatise *Πρὸς τοὺς φυγάδας*, and possibly another entitled *Φυγάδες*.<sup>40</sup> Cicero, again, says that there were dissertations written on the subject,<sup>41</sup> and Seneca's own claim to have read 'all' the advice of former authors on the subject<sup>42</sup> -- even though he means all types of consolatory writings -- certainly gives the impression of a sizeable body of literature, which must have included works on exile. However, most of the works *περὶ φυγῆς* which are extant are post-Senecan, and their number is not legion. We can name the treatises on, or at least treatments of (if "treatise" is sometimes too glamorous a word), exile by Teles, Cicero, Musonius Rufus, Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, Favorinus and Dio Cassius (on Cicero's exile), but apart from these, there is little of any substance by which we can make comparisons with the *Ad Helviam* unless we are to resort to occasional remarks on exile, such as those of Epictetus.<sup>43</sup>

Of these works *De Exilio*, only Cicero's and Teles' contributions antedate Seneca. Teles lived in the mid-third century B.C., and was a Cynic philosopher. Unfortunately he is known to us only through Stobaeus' late *Anthologium* (c. A.D.

500), and even then we are dependent on the brief epitome of one Theodorus, whose dates are unknown.<sup>44</sup> Seneca's writings reveal no awareness of Teles, although, as Teles was a formative composer of diatribe, there may be an indirect stylistic debt to him. Cicero devotes several paragraphs to the seeming ills of exile, in the context of trying to prove that *virtus* is sufficient for leading a happy life (*Tusc.* V.106-109), and his approach is quite close to that of Seneca. His main point is that exile is just a continual residence abroad (*perpetua peregrinatio*), and on that basis he dismisses four items which in the popular mind would make exile an evil:

- (i) loss of popularity (106)
- (ii) separation from one's country (106)
- (iii) loss of property (107)
- (iv) supposed disgrace (107-109).

If we consider that (i) and (iv) are fairly similar, we then have the three basic points which make up Seneca's argumentation, and the same order of treatment, even if the coverage is much briefer. Seneca argues that banishment is only a *loci commutatio* (6.2-9.8), that *paupertas* is no hardship (10.2-12.7), and that *ignominia* need not be involved (13.4-8). To illustrate his point, he uses many *exempla*, including an apothegm attributed to Socrates which appears in Plutarch and in Musonius,<sup>45</sup> revealing the way in which those tidbits of knowledge were commonly known, if not in fact demonstrating any kind of dependence (although we should not rule it out). More interestingly, Cicero employs Aristides as an *exemplum* in the section leading up to his discussion of exile (V. 105), just as Seneca uses him as a paradigm of graciousness in the face of scorn (*Ad Helv.* 13.7).

Of the other authors of treatises *περὶ φύλης* mentioned above, three overlap with Seneca's life, Musonius, Dio Chrysostom, and Plutarch, while Favorinus was born around the start of Domitian's reign, and Dio Cassius belongs to the late second and early third century. Like Teles, Musonius' essay ὅτι οὐ κατὸν

ἡ φύγη is preserved by Stobaeus (III.40.9), and along with Plutarch, these three form a group of writers who treat the theme in a very similar fashion.<sup>46</sup> We know that Musonius had personal experience of exile since he was expelled from Rome in 65 during the Pisonian affair, which had brought about Seneca's suicide.<sup>47</sup> In undergoing banishment he was like his pupil Dio Chrysostom as well as Seneca.<sup>48</sup> Favorinus, interestingly enough, was in turn one of Dio's most outstanding pupils,<sup>49</sup> and he too faced exile under Hadrian; but Plutarch and Dio Cassius do not fall into this category of exiled writers.

Dio Chrysostom (c. A.D. 40-120) had been banished c. 82 by Domitian on a charge of implication in a conspiracy. He was excluded for life from Italy and from his native Bithynia, but was freed on Nerva's accession in 96. He gives the impression in his *περὶ φύγης* (*Orat.* 13) that he practised a manly Stoicism which enabled him to bear exile quite successfully, although, to be fair, he had more freedom of movement than Seneca. His *περὶ λυπῆς* (*Orat.* 16), brief though it be, also belongs to the consolation tradition.

Plutarch was no stranger to travel and residence abroad, although he was very attached to his native area of Chaeronea.<sup>50</sup> His work on exile (*Mor.* 599-607) is written to a man banished from Sardis (600A, 601B), possibly one Menemachus,<sup>51</sup> and contains a regular batch of *topoi* from the Cynic-Stoic *consolationes*. The consolatory letter to his wife over the death of their infant daughter (*Mor.* 608-612) also bears comparison to the *Ad Helviam*, since it is an example of a close, personal communication rather than a theoretical philosophical treatment of the subject, and its tone is accordingly more intimate, much more so than, for instance, the pseudepigraphical *Consolatio ad Apollonium* (*Mor.* 101F-122), which is a storehouse of arguments and *exempla* from the genre, but as it stands has little ring of authenticity about it; perhaps it was the rough draft for a genuine *consolatio* which never reached a final revision.

Favorinus (c. A.D. 81/2-150) hailed from Arelate in Gaul.<sup>52</sup> He received a

Greek education at Massilia before attending the lectures of Dio Chrysostom in Rome. Despite the age gap, he was a friend of Plutarch. He is said to have written voluminously, and although very little survives, we are fortunate in possessing his *περὶ φυγῆς*, discovered earlier this century on a papyrus.

Although favoured by Hadrian at first, he fell into disgrace c. 130 and was exiled to Chios, only enjoying restoration after Antoninus' accession in 138.<sup>53</sup> Thus the time he spent in exile is comparable to the period of Seneca's relegation. The five basic points of Favorinus' exposé are in line with Seneca's progression of thought in *Ad Helviam* 5-13 (loss of [i] one's country, [ii] relatives and friends, [iii] possessions, [iv] honour and fame [v] freedom), and are more organized than most of the other *consolationes exilii*.<sup>54</sup>

Dio Cassius' treatment of Cicero's exile and the attempted consolation by a certain Philiscus (38.18-29), who is otherwise a mystery to historians of the late Republic, shows an acquaintance with exile literature, and a large number of parallels can be drawn, even if we cannot demonstrate that the above mentioned writers were a specific source.<sup>55</sup> F. Millar thinks that Philiscus is a fictitious character, whose name was possibly borrowed from a contemporary *rhetor*, and that the whole dialogue between Cicero and Philiscus has neither historical basis nor any function within Dio's history as a whole.<sup>56</sup>

As we look into the structure and argumentation of the *Ad Helviam*, we can draw valid parallels with literature which was designed to comfort men in exile, such as those works mentioned above. But first we should make a few closer observations on Seneca's philosophical sources.

#### Seneca and His Philosophical Sources

Seneca's claim to have read widely before writing (*omnia clarissimorum ingeniorum monumenta* - 1.2) is not substantiated by any clear attributions to either exile-consolations or any other consolations in the text. He

mentions the names of Brutus and Varro (8.1), recording their views on exile, but does not offer us any more precise information than that Brutus' book was *de virtute* (9.4). Apart from this, we have to take the slow route, which involves the danger of subjectivity, of building up comparisons from other consolatory and philosophical literature. This is the task undertaken by Abel in his *Bauformen*, and on a grander scale, by Meinel's thesis.

The task is made harder by the fact that the climate of Seneca's day was one where the lines between various philosophical schools and ideas had become blurred. In popular philosophy, just as in *consolatio*, sources were freely mixed together in order to provide the most effective presentation of an idea, as in the case of the Sextians, with their emphasis on practical philosophy and moral reform which so influenced Seneca, and diatribe.<sup>57</sup>

Further, Seneca may be making a very free use of his sources, and drawing on his forbears only subconsciously at times. This does not mean that it is inappropriate to speak of a literary debt, but simply that we must take care in making strict definitions and categorical assertions about his sources. He clearly relies on Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* and *Paradoxa Stoicorum* amongst other of his works for his knowledge of Hellenistic philosophy, rather than on copies of the actual works of that period.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, he was so widely read in Virgil, Ovid, and Horace, that he is more likely to be borrowing common ideas from these authors than from philosophical textbooks. The attack on luxury (10.1ff.), which may owe something to a collection of Epicurus' sayings, could equally be inherited from diatribe (which also featured verbal attacks on wealth), or could more simply come to Seneca through the literary mainstream, especially the *Sermones* of Horace. The nature of the problem is further exemplified by the fact that the *praemeditatio* which Cicero calls Cyrenaic is also treated in a Stoic context by the same author (*Off.* I.81, presumably from Panaetius).

For all this, source-research can yield meaningful results, and it is perhaps fitting to begin by briefly evaluating Seneca's debt to his Stoic predecessors before looking at his debt to other schools.<sup>59</sup> Zeno had first propagated the ideas of ἀπάθεια and ἀταραξία, and although his successors Cleanthes and Chrysippus made some adjustments and developments, this strictness of the early Stoa did not really change until Panaetius' time. Panaetius made some distinct innovations, and is, as far as we know, the first Stoic to have written a *bona fide* consolation (Cic. *Acad.* II.135). This letter of Panaetius to Quintus Tubero serves as a precedent for Seneca's *dialogus* to his mother, in the sense that both are practical rather than theoretical works, and this pragmatism distinguishes the middle and late Stoa from that of Zeno and his immediate followers. The polymath Posidonius, who studied under Panaetius, developed the old concept of the *cognatio* of things human and divine which is reflected in *Ad Helv.* 8.3-6,<sup>60</sup> and Seneca's debt to him should not be underestimated. But the idea of philosophy as a spiritual cure, and of the Stoic wise man as the *Seelenarzt*, is consistent with all periods of Stoicism, and whether or not the exponent of the consolatory art viewed grief as something to be moderated or eradicated, it was still a part of the Stoic duty to help a person come to terms with his passions.

While Seneca was consciously a Stoic in practice and outlook, he was not so narrowly doctrinaire in his approach that he would exclude the wise sayings and reflections of members of other schools, and this eclectic bias, if we may term it so, is nowhere more apparent than in the consolatory works. The *Ad Helviam* contains arguments which can easily be paralleled from the Cyrenaic, Cynic, Epicurean, Peripatetic, and Academic schools, even if the base is a broadly Stoic one.<sup>61</sup>

The introductory paragraph (5.1 - 5.6) which precedes the major subdivisions of the argument displays a debt to more than one source. When Seneca

encourages the reader to anticipate strokes of ill fortune, he is treading on what was originally Cyrenaic territory: *illis gravis est [impetus fortunae], quibus repentina est; facile eam sustinet, qui semper expectat* (5.3). The source of this attitude of *praemeditatio*, adopted elsewhere by Seneca,<sup>62</sup> is pointed out by Cicero (*Tusc.* III.28,76).<sup>63</sup> At the same time, the context and flavouring are Stoic, with echoes of Chrysippus,<sup>64</sup> and Seneca reaffirms his commitment to Stoicism: *sapientibus me viris dedi et...in aliena castra confugi, eorum scilicet, qui facile se ac suos tuentur* (5.2).<sup>65</sup>

The outlooks of the Cynics, the Epicureans, and of Plato are reflected in the *Ad Helviam*. While the notion of the world as one city, the cosmopolis (8.1 ff.), was promoted by the Stoa, it belonged to the Cynics too, and possibly belonged to them first.<sup>66</sup> Again, although wealth and worldly comforts may have been considered amongst the *indifferentia* for the Stoics,<sup>67</sup> there are signs that Epicurus was the ultimate model for the attack on luxury (10.1 ff.), just as he is exploited frequently in the early *Epistles*, as he is known to have stated that true wealth consists in having a supply of the basic necessities of life.<sup>68</sup> In touching on the immortality of the soul (11.5-7), an area in which Seneca's views are not consistent,<sup>69</sup> the writer brings Platonic ideas into play. The body is regarded as *custodia et vinculum animi*, while the soul is *sacer et aeternus* (11.7).

However, it would be superficial to term Seneca eclectic. It would be more appropriate to say that he synthesised his own particular brand of Stoicism. He once compared himself to a bee, gathering from many different flowers, then distilling his own compound which retained traces of its origin, yet was a unique composition.<sup>70</sup> There seems to have been a tradition of gathering arguments from as many sources as possible for *consolationes*, in the hope that at least one or two of them would be applicable to the reader, and it may be that Seneca is deliberately operating within these guidelines in allowing

himself such free range.<sup>71</sup>

A certain conflict in outlook is still involved. The Stoics, originally at least, had a very negative attitude towards the expression of emotion, regarding any πάθος as an irrational movement of the soul which required to be eradicated as soon as possible. In contrast to this, Seneca allows that Helvia needs the help not only of *ratio*, but of friends and relatives too (*Ad Helv.* 18.1-19.7), and only warns against immoderate grief, rather than counselling the Stoic ἀπάθεια. Such μετριοπάθεια was a Peripatetic doctrine which Crantor's consolation also preached. However, this Peripatetic view of the emotions appears in Seneca only in the consolatory treatises and letters, and does not imply a weakening of Seneca's Stoicism, but reveals instead the combined influences of the demands of the genre with his keen concern for his addressees as individuals.<sup>72</sup> This concern for the individual would be even more poignant where Helvia was involved, and may be the most cogent explanation for the dominance of human feeling, as well as reason, in the attempt to counter λύπη.<sup>73</sup> The argumentation is no less sincere for being traditional, and the combination of pragmatic sincerity and tradition are sufficient to explain Seneca's exploitation of other philosophers' reasonings on the subject.

#### The Effect of Genre on the Structure and Argumentation of the *Ad Helviam*

Seneca wrote his *Ad Helviam* from a preconceived plan to which he adhered strictly. This is one of three kinds of composition which he uses,<sup>74</sup> and the one he uses most sparingly. Normally he is more discursive, as most of the other works περὶ φύσεως are. Using rhetorical terminology to describe his layout, we can divide the treatise up, as if it were a speech (it may have been recited publicly anyway),<sup>75</sup> into *exordium* (1.1-3.2), *partitio/divisio* (4.1-3), *argumentatio* (5.1-19.7) and *peroratio/conclusio* (20.1-2).

Since consolation as a genre is essentially an epideictic construct, it is not surprising to find this kind of layout. There are also many more subdivisions within the argumentation, particularly at 6.1, where Seneca begins to lay out the proofs that his own situation is not unbearable, and at 14.1, where he attempts to deal with his mother's situation and demonstrate that there is nothing in it that should distress her unduly.<sup>76</sup> His arguments reveal a dependence upon the *consolatio* genre, in its expression as a consolation both for death and for exile. In essence, the first main section of the *argumentatio* (chs. 5-13) owes more of a debt to the *consolatio exilii*, while the second (14-19) borrows more heavily from the *consolatio mortis*.

Bearing in mind that Seneca's situation was novel, inasmuch as he was speaking as one who was being mourned to the one who was mourning for him, like a man rousing himself from his funeral pyre to comfort his relatives, as he put it,<sup>77</sup> we are likely to find original features in the development of the arguments.<sup>78</sup> All the same, we can see from other consolatory works of Seneca that he assumed on the part of his readership a prior knowledge of the arguments he was going to use: *scio pertritum iam hoc esse, quod adiecturus sum, non ideo tamen praetermittam, quia ab omnibus dictum est* (Ep. 63.12); *liquet enim mihi te locutum tecum quicquid lecturus es...* (Ep. 99.32). In this latter case, Seneca assumes that Lucilius is completely *au fait* with the *topoi* employed. In his quest for material for the *Ad Helviam*, he perused the standard works on the subject (1.2) rather than simply working from scratch,<sup>79</sup> and the fruits of that quest can be documented throughout the dialogue.

Seneca's introduction begins very formally, with a catalogue of three reasons why he felt urged to write to Helvia and three reasons which delayed him (1.1-4). Having convinced himself that it is now the time to write, Seneca proceeds to tackle Helvia's sorrow, which he boldly regards as the most serious wound she has suffered (3.1). He lists the sufferings she has had to

face so far in life (2.1-3.2), just as he does to Marcia (*Ad Marc.* 1.2-4), as a means of encouraging her to renewed fortitude: if she could stand up to the death of relatives, she can stand up to this situation too. As he describes the pain which was involved in his exile, both for himself and for Helvia, he consistently uses medical imagery.<sup>80</sup> This is not only one of Seneca's favourite metaphors, but it was common for all philosophers, especially the Stoics, to compare sicknesses of the body to those of the soul.<sup>81</sup>

Perhaps the clearest example of a traditional topos in the *exordium* is the delay before writing: *hoc propositum meum erant rursus quae retardarent* (1.2). It was Chrysippus' belief that there was a right time to offer spiritual counsel to the troubled soul, and that it would be harmful to apply the remedy too soon.<sup>82</sup> Apollonius is also advised from the outset that the moment has now come for the help of friends (*Ad Apoll.* 102A), since the passage of time has allowed his sorrow to die down enough for it to be ready to receive effective comfort; here too the surgical analogy is drawn. Seneca shows an awareness of the necessity of good timing in his other consolations, as he apologizes to Lucilius for his *remedium tam serum* (*Ep.* 99.32) and to Marcia for the *iniquum tempus* of his address (*Ad Marc.* 1.1).

Seneca's argument is a diptych, as he outlines in his *divisio* (4.1-3). He intends to demonstrate first that he is not unhappy, and secondly that there is no reason for Helvia to be burdened on his account, and he faithfully adheres to his promised format. This two-fold concern for mourner and mourned is an inheritance from the tradition, which we can trace at least to Crantor, and also observe in the *Consolatio ad Apollonium* (111E), in Cicero (*Fam.*V.16), and in Sulpicius' letter to Cicero (*Fam.* IV.5.5: *quid est, quod tu aut illa cum fortuna hoc nomine queri possitis?*).<sup>83</sup> Seneca employs the thought that there is no need to grieve on the account of either party in his two other formal consolations (*Ad Polyb.* 9.1: *utrumme meo nomine doleo an eius qui*

*decessit?*; *Ad Marc.* 12.1; 19.1-4), and in the latter case it is quite an important element in the structure, just as it is in the *Ad Helviam*.<sup>84</sup> The format does not appear in exile literature, apart from a dubious case in Dio Cassius.<sup>85</sup> The basic reason for this is that most consolations of this type were addressed to the general reader, not a close relative, and showed an interest only in the lot of the exile. But this should not obscure the originality of Seneca in transferring the concept from the *consolatio mortis* to the *consolatio exilii*.

The introductory paragraph (5.1-6) of the *argumentatio* sets out to show that happiness lies in the mind, not in external circumstance: *unusquisque facere se beatum potest* (5.1). This thread of thought is picked up later (8.1ff.; 11.5ff.), and is equally appropriate to both main sections of the content. It can easily be paralleled within the genre of exile literature. Dio's Philiscus, for instance, encourages Cicero to believe that it is not the place we live in that is the key to success, but that each one of us can create for ourselves our own homeland and our own satisfaction with life:

οὐ γὰρ δήπου τὰ χωρία οὔτε εὐτυχίαν οὔτε κακοδαιμονίαν  
τινὰ δίδωσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος αὐτῶ καὶ πατρίδα  
καὶ εὐδαιμονίαν δεῖ καὶ πανταχοῦ ποιεῖν. (38.26.2)

The examination of the trials which the exile must face (6.1 - 13.8) subdivides the material further. Exile is first defined as merely a *loci commutatio* with a triad of potential *incommoda*, namely *paupertas*, *ignominia*, and *contemptus*. This is a further *divisio*, and the points raised are duly treated in the order in which they were mentioned. First Seneca follows out at some length (6.2 - 9.8) the view of Cicero that exile is simply an extended stay abroad,<sup>86</sup> and shows that even in climatically inhospitable areas, people voluntarily take up residence (6.5). Man is a rover by instinct (6.6-8), and history is full of migrations not just of individuals, but of entire peoples (7.1-10) to the extent that there is hardly anywhere in the

world where the inhabitants are native (*vix denique invenies ullam terram, quam etiamnunc indigenae colant* - 7.10). Here Seneca foreshadows the list of migrations, colonizations, and mass exiles which Favorinus' *De Exilio* enumerates (9.7 ff.), with the similar conclusion that ἅπαντας ἀπανταχοῦ ξένους τε καὶ φυγάδας εὐρήσεις.<sup>87</sup> Seneca's suggestion (8.1 - 9.7) that *natura* and the consciousness of one's own *virtus* are more than sufficient compensation for seeming locational disadvantages covers some very familiar ground. Teles, Musonius, and Plutarch, each in one way or another state that a man is not deprived of his virtues, or his potential for virtue, by being exiled,<sup>88</sup> just as Seneca supports Brutus' claim that it is sufficient *quod licet in exilium euntibus virtutes suas secum ferre* (8.1). Supplementing the argument with a lengthy *exemplum*, as usual, Seneca imagines Marcellus encouraging himself to bear his exile in Mytilene with the thought that to the *sapiens*, every place is his own country (9.7; cf. *Ep.* 28.4). Plutarch considers that the whole concept of a 'homeland' is merely a convention (φύσει γὰρ οὐκ ἔστι πατρίς - *De Exil.* 600E), and expands upon a couple of lines from the much-quarried Euripides to show, as Favorinus does,<sup>89</sup> that since the whole universe belongs to us all, we can be an exile nowhere.<sup>90</sup>

In the second subsection (10.1-12.7), Seneca borrows not only from Epicurus, but also from diatribes περὶ πενίας<sup>91</sup> in weaving together the strands of his argument, with the aim of showing that the poverty which accompanies exile is not necessarily an evil. Stressing the ease of obtaining food (10.1-11) and glorifying simplicity in clothing and furniture (11.1-4), he takes the opportunity to inveigh against gluttony and luxury, giving the cuisine of Apicius particularly rough treatment. Within the framework of a Platonic view of mind and body, he understands the mind to be the only true source of wealth (11.5-7), and then proceeds to give examples (12.1-7) of poets, philosophers, and heroes from Roman history

who experienced a noble poverty. The advantage of simplicity and its sufficiency for happiness, are, of course, more commonplaces from the *consolatio exilii*, to the extent that Cicero can dismiss the *paupertas* ensuing from confiscation of property in a single sentence, assuming that his readership is well-versed in arguments exalting a plain life-style.<sup>92</sup> Dio Chrysostom attributes to Socrates, who appears frequently in the exile genre,<sup>93</sup> an anti-wealth sentiment (*Orat.* 13.16), and later describes how he himself used Socrates' approach while giving public lectures (13.33-34). Plutarch, however, stands at variance with the anti-wealth tradition, when he includes wealth with friendship and freedom from political life as one of the potential boons or comforts of exile (*De Exil.* 600A). Philiscus believes in simplicity,<sup>94</sup> but does not argue Seneca's proposition that the mind cannot be exiled (11.7); rather, in response to Cicero's complaint that his suffering was in his mind, not his body, he contends that the mind is easier to train since it is of a more divine nature, or *dei's cognatus* in Senecan terminology (11.7; cf. 6.6-8). To Seneca, the opportunities provided by the *otium* of exile were central to his own comfort. Now his mind was free to be creative: [*animus*] *ipse bonis suis abundat et fruitur* (11.5). The idealistic vignette with which he closes the whole consolation further expresses, or at least professes to express, how the writer was making use of his leisure to the maximum benefit,<sup>95</sup> and he elsewhere puts an equal value on both philosophical *quies* and political success.<sup>96</sup> Cicero too recommended a withdrawal into study,<sup>97</sup> and especially the study of natural science, a field in which Seneca was interested (*Ad Helv.* 8.1-6; 20.1-2), while Philiscus encourages Dio's Cicero to balance academic and practical pursuits in using exile to engage in farming and historiography (*Dio Cass.* 38.28.2).

We have noted that in the first century B.C., exile had become the regular legal alternative to a capital sentence, at least for the upper

classes, and in this sense it was publicly understood as an ignominious sentence. Seneca's defence against those who would impute disgrace to his exile, the third and final subsection of this part of the work (13.1-8), is to imply his own *virtus* (*cum semel animum virtus induravit, undique invulnerabilem praestat* - 13.2) including in the light of the adultery charge which was at the root of his banishment, his sexual abstinence (13.3). Socrates, Cato, and Aristides are each used as examples of unjust suffering triumphing over public disapproval (13.4-7),<sup>98</sup> the conclusion being that a great man remains great even if he has fallen, and remains an object of reverence, not scorn (*si magnus vir cecidit, magnus iacuit* - 13.8), which was a daring *apologia* on the writer's part. Throughout this section there is a debt to literature *περὶ τιμῶν*, which was an ingredient in the *consolatio exilii*.<sup>99</sup> The central thrust of Cicero's brief discussion of exile is also his attempt to prove that disgrace and expulsion are not synonymous. In so doing, he lists a host of philosophers who spent time, sometimes their whole adult lives, away from their own country *at enim sine ignominia* (*Tusc.* V.107). Interestingly, Aristides is used as an example of a man banished for being too just (*quod praeter modum iustus esset* V.105), the thought which leads to the discussion of exile. Cicero cites Socrates for his cosmopolitan attitude, using (in translation, as he normally does) the identical dictum found in Musonius and Plutarch: οὐκ Ἀθηναῖος οὐδὲ Ἕλληνας, ἀλλὰ "κόσμιος" εἶναι.<sup>100</sup> To Plutarch, whose list of honourable exiles is even longer than Cicero's, exile is a term of abuse only amongst fools (*De Exil.* 607A), and he sees the soul as an exile by nature, as Seneca does.<sup>101</sup> Teles and Musonius also tackle the problem of ὄνειδος, emphasising that the shame falls back on the heads of those who brought about the conviction in the case of an innocent man, rather than on the exile.<sup>102</sup> Seneca gives a characteristically pointed twist to the argument, saying that the praetorship and the consulship, not Cato,

suffered disgrace through Cato's *repulsa* (13.5). Seneca devotes less space to this section on *ignominia* than to his treatment of *loci commutatio* and *paupertas*, partly at least since it was political etiquette to tread carefully and avoid making too assertive a claim to innocence.

As Seneca moves into the second half of his thesis (14.1-19.7), weighing the *incommoda* which the relatives of the exile must face at home, his literary debt essentially changes from the *consolatio exilii* to the *consolatio mortis*. Treatises *περὶ φυγῆς* tended to focus almost exclusively on the one banished, not on his relatives, since in nearly all cases there was freedom for both parties to see and be with each other. (Seneca, by use of the *exemplum* of Rutilia who followed her son Cotta into exile [16.7], may in fact be inviting a personal visit, although neither Cicero nor Ovid made any moves to bring their spouses out to join them, leaving them instead to manage their affairs at Rome and intercede for them as appropriate).<sup>103</sup> Another reason why Seneca borrows from the wider spheres of *consolatio* is that Helvia's grief was, as it is portrayed for us, as strong as if she had suffered a bereavement, not a temporary separation. This is not incredible, given that a very close relationship existed between them. (15.1-3)

A third, small *divisio* (14.1) diagnoses two potential causes of Helvia's pain. Seneca had been a tower of strength to his mother, and the loss of this *praesidium* may have upset her (14.2-3). However, he dismisses this selfish motive, just as he does with Marcia (*Ad Marc.* 19.3) and Polybius (*Ad Polyb.* 9.1), convinced that it must be Helvia's deep maternal affection (*desiderium*) which is at the root of her *dolor*. He then proceeds to suggest a number of remedies (15.4-19.7), making basically four suggestions, although they are treated at different length. Seneca touches lightly upon the thought that the experience of past sufferings is an aid to conquer present distress (15.4), since he had already mentioned this in the *exordium*, and then moves into an

exhortation to moderation of grief (16.1-7) which entails two *loci communes* from the genre. The first is the argument that Helvia ought not to use her femininity as an excuse for indulging in excessive grief, and the second is the encomium of her. As usual, the argument culminates in a series of Roman *matronae* who acted in an exemplary fashion in similar circumstances.

In Dio, we find that Philiscus' opening bid is to arraign Cicero for his womanish behaviour (ἄθητων καὶ γυναικείως διακείμενος - 38.13.1), at which he is surprised in the light of his education and long experience. Despite the fact that this may reveal more of Dio's prejudice<sup>104</sup> than the truth of Cicero's response to exile, even though he seems in reality not to have borne his banishment without grumbling,<sup>105</sup> yet it remains clear that this was one of the first thoughts to occur to the historian as he graphically tried to recreate the past. The *Consolatio ad Apollonium* is even starker in its condemnation: mourning is feminine, weak, and ignoble, and a sign of a lack of education.<sup>106</sup> The work guides us towards the μετριότητα which Seneca recommends (*et sentire desiderium et opprimere* - 16.1). Just as Seneca approves of Marcia's *dolendi modestia* (*Ad Marc.* 16.1-4; cf. 1.1, 3.4), so Plutarch was not surprised by the maturity of his wife's responses to their child's death, even though those who reported the tragedy to him, he writes, were amazed that neither she nor her maids were extravagant in their mourning.<sup>107</sup>

The *Ad Helviam* contains two *laudationes*: Seneca dwells on his mother's old-fashioned upbringing and values (16.3-5), and at much greater length on the courage and modesty of his aunt Galeria (19.1-7). Now *laudatio* is a natural element of consolation as applied to a mourner like Helvia,<sup>108</sup> or of course to the person mourned (cf. *Ad Marc.* 23.3, *Ad Polyb.* 3.1). But Galeria does not belong to either of these categories. The description of her fortitude over the loss of her husband (19.4-5, 7) is intended as an example to Helvia, but there is no such obvious relevance to the rest of the

*laudatio*, with its emphasis on her modesty and unsullied reputation. It seems likely that Seneca, for apologetic and political reasons, is reminding his Roman audience of the virtuousness and high status of this close relative of his, who had been wife to the governor of Egypt, and who was influential enough to have clinched Seneca's quaestorship (19.2). Similarly Seneca's emphasis on his mother's chastity (16.3-4), while given some colour as an instance of her lack of female weaknesses, advertises the virtue of his family.<sup>109</sup>

Seneca's third and fourth remedies for Helvia's λύπη reflect the biases of the Stoic and the Peripatetic schools respectively. Having already stated that a moderation in grief is to be sought, he goes on to outline the fullest cure, *ratio* (17.2) and *liberalia studia* (17.3-5). Checking grief is only the first stage; the application of reason will end the mourning once and for all, restoring the person concerned to equilibrium. Feeling is not excluded altogether, as an early Stoic might have advised, but a gradual movement by means of reason towards ἀπάθεια, such as a struggling *proficiens* might endure, is recommended. As a final compromise, however, the help of relatives is permitted, as it is for Marcia (*Ad Marc.* 16.5-8), as an intermediate step (18.1-19.7). Mixing his metaphors royally, Seneca proposes that his brothers Novatus and Mela, his nephew and niece Marcus and Novatilla, and his aunt Galeria, can all act as vine-props (*adminicula* 18.1) until Helvia reaches the haven (*portum*) which is afforded by philosophical studies.

Once again, parallels are not difficult to draw. Dio Chrysostom's treatise περὶ λυπῆς, which may belong to the period of his exile,<sup>110</sup> regards reason as the deliverer (τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐλευθεροῦντα ἡμᾶς)<sup>111</sup> and states in strong language that the intelligent man should be completely insensitive to pain.<sup>112</sup> The *Consolatio ad Apollonium* holds that it is through reason that we are led to temper our grief (102E), but also regards it as the best cure (κράτιστον φάρμακον 103F), and it is to reason that the author appeals as a parting shot

(121E). Plutarch's work on exile considers philosophy as the answer to ill fortune (*De Exil.* 600B), but also considers the help of friends as one of the comforts of banishment (599Aff., 600A, 603F-604A), as does the *Ad Apollonium* (102B).

Seneca winds up his treatise with a portrayal of himself as a happy, liberated, and studious man (20.1-2), and a doxology on the glory of the heavens, which he found a particularly interesting object of research. This bears some comparison with the ending of the *Ad Marciam*, which describes the Stoic conflagration and the dissolution of the heavens from the lofty vantage point of the dead Cordus; in both cases the panoramic view of the universe contains a note of hope. Seneca affirms to Helvia the immortality of the soul (*aeternitatis suae memor[animus]* 20.2), and in so doing adapts a theme from the *consolatio mortis*. In the *Ad Apollonium*, the father is given parting comfort (121F) with the thought that his son is "feasting with the gods", and in general, apart from in Epicurean works, most other consolations at least have a muted presupposition of some kind of after-life (*Cons. Ad Liv.*, *Stat. Silv.* V.1) in their finale. But we search in vain to find exile consolations which conclude with such thoughts.

\* \* \*

The danger, however, of adducing straightforward equivalents for Seneca's arguments is that it tends to obscure sincerity and originality. Even if Seneca was basing himself on previous writers and using their thoughts, we should not imagine that he had scrolls laid out in front of him from which he was paraphrasing verse by verse, so to speak. His literary debt may be much more general. Citing a parallel (and the treatment given above is by no means exhaustive) demonstrates neither dependence nor paternity, and if we can detect arguments that are not original, they are not points for which Seneca would

have claimed originality anyway. After all, there is only a limited number of things one can say to a person in distress, and *consolatores* of every age are bound to repeat these, whether they refer to the consolatory works of their predecessors or not.

To counterbalance the appeal to tradition in our consideration of this dialogue, we must point to two specific innovations on the author's part. In the first place his very conception of blending the two different strands of consolatory literature into one essay deserves credit. Although works written *by* exiles, such as Cicero's and Ovid's, were clearly interested in family concerns, most exile-consolations were solely concerned with the banished person, not with his relatives left at home. Speaking to his mother, Seneca could consider his own fate as a kind of "death", which would lead her to mourn, and he could thus, as he remarks in his introduction (1.3), address her from a unique position, as if the deceased were comforting the mourner. This clever conceit permits him to use arguments from both the *consolatio mortis* and the *consolatio exilii*, and to discuss both his own and his mother's situation.

In his definition of his subject matter (4.1-3), that is, the two-fold concern to demonstrate his own happiness and to inspire Helvia's, Seneca does not merely transfer this topos from the *consolatio mortis*, but imaginatively reshapes it by reversing the order of treatment. This metathesis, accomplished without awkwardness, is a second innovation. Whereas in the *Ad Marciam* he addresses the mourner first before dealing with the lot of the departed, just as Crantor's *περὶ πένθους*, the model for so many consolations, had done, Seneca here places his own situation before that of Helvia. This manifestly indicates his concern with self-presentation, and probably with self-consolation too. Arguments on exile were no doubt his first interest on being expelled from Rome; through them he sought comfort, and through them he tried to justify himself and project an image of himself before the watching world.

It is also necessary to go beyond looking for novelty in Seneca's approach to the *Ad Helviam*, and to indicate that we are not making a value judgment on Seneca, or Silver Latin, or Latin literature as a whole, by describing it as basically derivative. The fact that almost every work of classical literature is fashioned to a large degree by generic traditions does not mean that its content is perforce stock or dull, and we are not at liberty to consider "generic", any more than we may consider "rhetorical", as a pejorative term. For one thing, literate society of the first century had different expectations from those of twentieth century critics, and we ought to appreciate the background from which Seneca was coming, and realize that as he interpreted the *Zeitgeist*, he was trying to meet the needs of his audience as one *eius temporis auribus accommodatus* (Tac. *Ann.* 13.3). But the real issue is the way in which the writer handles his material and brings it to life. Sophocles, for example, abides by the conventions of Greek tragedy, but no-one would consider his *Antigone* or *Oedipus Rex* as "merely generic". Seneca's success in the *Ad Helviam* lies not only in making innovations within a traditional oeuvre, but also in his ability to engender a pervasive sense of freshness and immediacy in his work. There are a variety of means which he uses to achieve this, and we will consider the principal ones now.

#### The Literary Merit of The *Ad Helviam*

Most of what enhances the attractiveness of the *Ad Helviam* can be classified in rhetorical terms, and it is impossible to appreciate, or even survey, any work of Seneca without paying attention to his style and to the role of rhetoric in its formation. That role is no less apparent in this dialogue than in any other, and goes much deeper, of course, than the level of overall structure. Indeed, in the eyes of one writer, it is the work of Seneca which *most*

reveals his indulgence in the *deliciae scholasticorum*.<sup>113</sup>

As regards structure, Seneca pays deference to rhetorical ideas in the *Ad Helviam* in a way almost unique in his writings. Although he generally eschews *divisiones*, as H. MacL. Currie points out,<sup>114</sup> he adopts here a smoothly logical progression with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Apart from the *De Constantia Sapientis*, few other works of his have such tidiness of construction, and this achieves a clarity which, at least for the modern reader, is desirable and appealing.

The most basic influence on Seneca's style was the education received both from his father and from the other orators and rhetoricians to whom he had listened as he grew up. Seneca makes reference to men such as Haterius, Vinicius, and Fabianus (*Ep.* 40.9ff), and we also know from external evidence that his writing was influenced by these people (Quint. X.1.130).<sup>115</sup> Interesting comparison can be made between Seneca and this earlier generation of *rhetores* by means of the Elder Seneca's accounts of their predilections and idiosyncrasies in the *Suasoriae* and *Controversiae*, as has been done for the *Ad Helviam* by Charles Favez.<sup>116</sup> The vast difference in quality between Seneca and these declaimers is apparent even from the most cursory reading of the two Senecas: to turn from the Elder to the Younger is to turn from a showcase of fulsome, precious nonsense to a real engagement with the world.

Declamation was the single factor which most influenced the literary style of the early Empire. After the fall of the Republic, oratory was forced to retreat from the forum to the declamation schools, and speakers no longer wrote to convince, but to please (*Contr.* X. *prae*f. 1). Accompanied by the widespread practice of reading aloud rather than silently, the concern to write something which would tickle the hearer's ear was paramount. This led to a gradual dissolution of the grand style, where the rolling rotundity of Cicero was replaced by a snappier and much more pointed style based on *sententiae* which expressed

thoughts in a concise and usually antithetical fashion which carried immediate appeal.

This is the background in which Seneca grew up and which moulded his approach both consciously and subconsciously. Seneca was aware enough of his contemporaries' stylistic errors to attempt a critique of them in a relatively detailed way (*Ep.* 114; also *Ep.* 100.5-6). He laments the excessive and incessant search for novelty, the abruptness of the *sententiae*, and the triviality and showiness of current writers. Quintilian tried to point the finger of condemnation at Seneca for these same faults (*abundant dulcibus vitiis* X.1.129), but we should not be so ready to condemn him for a style which he deliberately pursued. His general avoidance of periodic construction does not mean that he did not know how to use it,<sup>117</sup> but rather that he chose not to. It was his belief that philosophical advice was more effective if given in a conversational tone (*Ep.* 38.1), and, through the regularly occurring device of the imaginary interlocutor, and through a paratactical sentence structure, he sought to obtain the "studied informality"<sup>118</sup> which is clearly present in the *Ad Helviam*.

To look for evidence of the declamatory style in any work of Seneca is almost otiose. It would be, to turn the proverb round, rather like looking for hay in a haystack, since every page bears witness to the writer's training. Even a straightforward enumeration of the figures of speech which Seneca employs might, in the words of S.F. Bonner, be "indefinitely extended";<sup>119</sup> but it is valuable nonetheless to highlight the more recurrent aspects of his style, and to see how he brings life to this dialogue through them.

The foundation of Senecan syntax is antithesis. The whole basis of the dialogue written to Helvia is the distinction between his own *fortuna* and that of his mother, but at a much humbler level antitheses present themselves to us constantly.<sup>120</sup> The opening sentence sets the tone: *saepe iam...impetum cepi consolandi te, saepe continui*. Taking the symmetry one step further, Seneca

lists three reasons (*primum...deinde...praeterea*) why he was urged to write, and then three reasons for his delay. Moreover, each of the first three ideas displays a sense of balance:

*si supprimere non potuissem...certe abstersissem  
ad excitandam te...si ipse consurrexissem  
a me victa ...aliquem meorum vinceret*

Parallelism carried to this degree seems more appropriate for a wider audience than a personal letter. Its main benefit is, again, the clarity of thought and purpose which it brings.

Often this antithesis is subsumed under a *sententia*, such as *edunt ut vomant, vomunt ut edant* (10.3), which is the *ne plus ultra* of epigrammatic brevity, or *si magnus vir cecidit, magnus iacuit* (13.8). As is the Tacitean manner, this kind of expression is frequently used to round off a sequence of thought.<sup>121</sup> These *sententiae* provide for the reader an immediate and memorable way of holding onto an idea.<sup>122</sup>

The latter example of a *sententia* given above (13.8) may also provide us with a case of poetic allusion since it sounds suspiciously like an Iliadic line: *κεῖτό μέγας μεγαλωστί, λελασμένος ἵπποσυνάων* (XVI.776). Seneca imbues his language with the colouring of previous poets, and in particular Virgil and Ovid.<sup>123</sup> A description of *aer* and *aether* similar to Seneca's (20.2) is found in Ovid (*Met.* I.54-56; 67-68), and the account of Cornelia's loss of children (16.6) may spring from Niobe's words in the *Metamorphoses* (VI.199),<sup>124</sup> but this is only to touch on the debt to Ovid, and it lies outside my scope to explore this further. Poetry affects vocabulary and phrasing too. For this reason we have *profundum* instead of *mare* (10.2), *senium* for *senectus* (7.3), and regular personification (*pietas* 4.2, and *luxuria* 6.2, as subjects of the sentence).<sup>125</sup>

This kind of evocation and poetic colouring would appeal to the intelligentsia, and quite conceivably would be appreciated by Helvia, since she was by no means uneducated (17.3).

Two other significant elements need at least to be mentioned, namely the use of excursus and *exempla*. Both could be used by the orator to maintain the enthusiasm of his audience. An excursus could either be descriptive, such as Seneca's accounts of the Corsican landscape (6.5; 9.1), the peoples which inhabited it (7.8-9) and the migrations of other peoples (6.2-4; 7.1-8), or an excursus could be the development of stock themes, such as wealth (9.2-3) or poverty (10.1-12.7), which in the case of the *Ad Helviam* are not entirely irrelevant, as they might be in other rhetorical works. In particular, the contrast between the decadence of first-century society and the humble beginnings of Rome was a favoured *topos* which Seneca himself used frequently.<sup>126</sup> His vigorous picture of the city (6.2), and of people being drawn there from all parts of the world by ambition, greed, or other interests, foreshadows Juvenal's third *Satire*.

Of the many excursive descriptions in the *Ad Helviam*, few can match the glowing tribute to nature and the universe in 8.2-6, which, in C.J. Herington's words, is one of a select group of passages in Senecan writing which are "scarcely equalled for majesty in all Latin prose".<sup>127</sup> This passage, one of the most purple in the treatise, exhibits the writer's keen sympathy for and understanding of the branch of ancient philosophy covered by physics, and his sense of perspective on the human condition. It is also useful for illustrating the elevation to which Seneca's style can rise. The last sentence is the longest in the work by far and constitutes a paragraph in itself; it contains loftiness of thought and multiple levels of subordination. As with so much in Seneca, we really need to *hear* this, rather than see it, to grasp its power.

Seneca deliberately contrasts such elevated passages with the more conversational level of the rest of the dialogue, in order to achieve variety. Thus after the lengthy sentence just described, the following one returns to the more regular, staccato tenor of his prose. Here we meet another of the author's most

characteristic devices -- the imaginary interlocutor. It is one of the most recurrent features of his style that he prefers, in a way reminiscent of Lucretius, to speak in the second person instead of the third person. Indeed, the prose works have aptly been called "frozen conversations".<sup>128</sup> In the case of the *Ad Helviam* this means that sometimes Seneca is addressing Helvia, sometimes the fictitious *adversarius*, and sometimes it is not clear who is addressed (especially in chapters 5-13). Instead of cataloguing a series of points to be dealt with objectively, he prefers to shadow-box, as it were, defending or attacking a point of view with interruptions and objections addressed to himself every so often. Thus in chapters 8 and 9, instead of simply saying "It does not matter where we live, even if it is as remote an area as Corsica," Seneca typically waxes lyrical in the first place on the theme of the Cosmopolis (8.2-6), then interrupts himself with the thought "Ah! But Corsica lacks resources" (9.1), then counters this interjection, using *te* and *tu* (9.3); having used the *exemplum* of Romulus, he concludes with a *sententia*.

In contrast to the excursus, which self-evidently stood outside the body of the work, the historical *exemplum* was considered a vital ingredient in establishing any argument, as Quintilian outlines (XII.4). Most of these *exempla* formed a widely-circulating collection which orators could draw on at any moment. Various historical figures came to stand for different qualities; Cato, for instance, who is often mentioned by Seneca elsewhere as well as in this dialogue (13.5),<sup>129</sup> came to stand for *virtus*, or a courageous death, and so was canonized by oratory. Seneca reveals that there was a tradition of putting consolatory arguments before the examples which supported them (*Ad Marc.* 2.1),<sup>130</sup> and this is basically the order which he follows in the *Ad Helviam*, which, although many of its *exempla* (drawn mainly from Roman history) are fairly standard, contains much more than this. The very negative view of Gaius and the eye-catching account of his greed (10.4) was based on a vivid and painful

recent experience for Seneca, no doubt with a bit of exaggeration and hearsay thrown in. Similarly, Apicius (10.8-10) was a memory from the Tiberian period, and not a byword for gluttony received at second-hand.

An effective way of appreciating the power of Seneca's style would be to take a passage of the *Ad Helviam* and look at its content in detail. Seneca offers us (9.8) the dramatic representation of Caesar's campaign in the civil war, as he imaginatively describes the thoughts which might have been in the mind of the exiled Marcellus in language which any competent declaimer would have relished using to stir his audience:

*Nunc ecce trahit illum ad se Africa resurgentis belli minis plena, trahit Hispania, quae fractas et adflictas partes refovet, trahit Aegyptus infida, totus denique orbis, qui ad occasionem concussi imperii intentus est: cui primum rei occurret? cui parti se opponet? Aget illum per omnes terras victoria sua. Illum suspiciant et colant gentes: tu vive Bruto miratore contentus.*

"And now, look you, he is being dragged to Africa, which is teeming with threats of resurgent war; he is being dragged to Spain, which is renewing the strength of the shattered and prostrate opposition; he is being dragged to perfidious Egypt; he is being pulled, in a word, to every quarter of the globe, which is intently watching its opportunity as the empire is shaken. Which crisis will he meet first? To what quarter will he first turn? His own victory drives him from land to land. Let the nations revere and worship him: enough for you the admiration of Brutus." (Hadas)

This passage both exemplifies the strength of Seneca's rhetorical training, and also illustrates the concentration of imperial authors on what was at the time pleasing to the ear. The whole paragraph as far as the second rhetorical question is the typical scenario for a *suasoria* - the *grammaticus*' stock-in-trade. *Nunc ecce* vividly attracts the listener's attention; the dramatic tri-colon *Africa, Hispania, Aegyptus*, with the anaphora on *trahit* and personification of the countries leads into the hyperbolic *totus denique orbis*, each subject having its own epithetic phrase or word. The two rhetorical questions, each beginning with *cui*, are balanced by the repetition of *illum* in the two sub-

sequent sentences before the final punchline comes with its triple antithesis and personal application. The last five statements are typical of Senecan brevity, each being devoid of subordination, and there is a marvellously ironical pointedness in the idea of Caesar being dragged by his own *victoria*, as if he were the conquered and not the victor. Besides all this, Seneca subordinates historicity to the demands of rhetorical impact by altering the order of Caesar's campaigns: Caesar fought in Egypt (autumn 48 - June 47), then Africa (the battle of Thapsus was in April 46), and finally in Spain (Munda was in March 45). It is very possible that the order is intended to be climactic, *infida (Aegyptus)* being stronger than *plena minis (Hispania)*, and leading into *totus denique orbis*.<sup>131</sup>

From this passage, and from the other stylistic qualities listed above, we can begin to see why the *Ad Helviam* has been considered among the finest of Seneca's works, if not his finest, and also considered "doubtless the most carefully elaborated specimen of the genus we have,"<sup>132</sup> and arguably the most satisfying and subtle *consolatio* in extant classical literature.

FOOTNOTES

1. According to the catalogue of C. Buresch (*LSKPh* 9 [1886], 109), *Epp.* 13, 26, 30, 36, 49, 54, 63, 77, 91, 93, 98, 99, 107. *Epp.* 63 and 99 are worthy of special mention.
2. A fine example of an early *consolatio* appears in a poem of Archilochus written for a certain Pericles after some friends had been lost at sea. For text, translation, and brief commentary on this poem, v. D.A. Campbell, *The Golden Lyre* (London, 1983), 211.
3. E.g. *Il.* V.381ff., where Dione comforts her daughter Aphrodite, who has just received an injury at the hands of Diomedes. She encourages her to endure (τέτλαθι - 382), offering a list of precedents for suffering amongst the Olympians. The philosophical consoler of later generations, however, would envy the speedy effectiveness of the consoler's power, not to mention her miraculous ability to heal. Aphrodite's wound is wiped clean by Dione almost immediately, and her grief ceases: ἄλθετο χεῖρ, ὀδύναι δὲ κατηπιόωντο βαρεῖαι (417). The idea of not grieving beyond measure, a commonplace in Seneca (cf. *Epp.* 63.1; 99.15, 16, 20; *Ad Marc.* 4.1, 7.1-2; *Ad Polyb.* 4.3; *Ad Helv.* 16.1) and other *consolatores*, comes in an interchange between Hector and Andromache (λίην - *Il.* VI.485ff.). Cf. *Il.* I. 361ff. (Thetis and Achilles).
4. The τόπος of the universality of death is used by the chorus to comfort Admetus (Eur. *Alc.* 416ff.). The *Alcestis* also contains other consolatory arguments (328-371; 995-1005; 1079-1096), as Lattimore notes (*Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* [Urbana, 1942], 216 n.6). Soph. *El.* 137ff. is in the same spirit. Cf. R. Kassel, *Untersuchungen zur Griechischen und Römischen Konsolationsliteratur* (Munich, 1958), 5ff., for further detail. Kassel's monograph is basic to the subject, and together with H.-T. Johann's

*Trauer und Trost* (Munich, 1968) forms some of the main scholarship on the subject in recent times.

5. Crantor admired Homer and Euripides above all other poets, according to Diogenes Laertius (IV.26). For Crantor, v. n.23.
6. Plut. *Mor.* 102-122A. Cf. the number of entries in J. Hani's index of authors cited (*Plutarque - Consolation à Apollonios, Texte et traduction avec introd. et commentaire* [Paris, 1972], 198). No-one is quoted as often as either Homer or Euripides.
7. v. Lattimore, *op.cit.*, 215ff., for the use of consolation on tombstones. He thinks it likely that at least some writers of epitaphs found their source of inspiration in the *consolatio*, but will not commit himself firmly to this. Despite many parallels, we must remember that inscriptions were being written before *consolationes* were.
8. For the debt to Sophism, v. Kassel, 4-12.
9. Plut. *Mor.* 833C.
10. "das rhetorische element in der Konsolationsliteratur kein sekundäres Ingrediens ist, sondern auf die sophistischen Anfänge zurückführt".
11. Kassel, 17-39; more briefly, C.E. Manning, *On Seneca's Ad Marciam*, *Mnem. Suppl.* 69 (Leiden, 1981), 14.
12. In Stoicism, which became more syncretistic through time (Meinel, 22-25), opinions and emphases varied widely. For example, Cleanthes taught that there was nothing evil in whatever occurred (*Tusc.* III.76-77), while Chrysippus stressed the Cyrenaic view that forethought lessened the impact of the blow (*Tusc.* III.52) and also stressed that mourning was not an ordained duty (*Tusc.* III.76).
13. *Tusc.* III.76.
14. Kassel, 12-17. Bionian σπουδογέλοιοις is combined with consolatory thoughts

in the *De Luctu* of Lucian many centuries later, underlining the continuance of the tradition.

15. And sometimes very contrived paradoxes too. Cf. *Ep.* 63.7: *habui enim illos* [sc. *amicos*] *tanquam amissurus, amisi tanquam habeam.*
16. "The Stoic *consolatio* was educational and therapeutic work of prime importance", since it meant "bringing the individual will into harmony with the cosmic will". (Manning, *op.cit.*, 19).
17. Stob. III.7.20: ἀλγεῖν μὲν τὸν σόφον, μὴ βασανίζεσθαι δὲ· μὴ γὰρ ἐνδιδόναι τῇ ψυχῇ.
18. *De Fin.* IV.23, *Acad.* II.135.
19. His addressees were Marcia, Polybius, Helvia, Lucilius, Annaeus Seneca (*De Tranq. Animi*), and the dedicatee of the lost *De Immaturata Morte*. *Ep.* 99, although addressed to Lucilius, contains the substance of a letter previously sent to Marullus (the consul of 62, *Tac. Ann.* 14.48).
20. *Ep.* 99.25.
21. The attribution to Plato of *Axiochus*, a consolation of meagre literary value, is false.
22. v. Manning, *op.cit.*, 108ff., for *loci* in Cicero and Seneca.
23. *Acad.* II.135. Diogenes Laertes deals with Crantor (IV.24-27), recording the popularity of his work (Θαυμάζεται δὲ αὐτοῦ βιβλίον μάλιστα τὸ Περὶ Πένθους - 27). An imaginative reconstruction of it has been undertaken from the various fragments (Johann, 135-136. Cf. also pp.28-32; 75; 92-96; 127-136; 163-164).
24. Pliny (*NH. Praef.* 22), in contrasting Cicero's noble admission of his source with the bald plagiarism of some Silver Writers, pays Cicero the same compliment (*ediscendus*) which Cicero paid to Crantor. Seneca is no less aware that what he has to say is derived from his forerunners in a general sense at least, and Cicero is probably one of his most significant sources

(cf. Griffin, 16ff.).

25. Crantor is cited four times (102C, 104C, 114C, 115B).
26. In *Cons. ad Apoll.* 102D, the author uses the word μετριοπάθεια approvingly and then proceeds directly to quote Crantor, using the same passage as Cicero does in *Tusc.* III.12.
27. Cf. Kassel, 40-48.
28. Hani (*Consolation à Apollonius*, 14), in offering a long list of rhetoricians who composed consolatory exercises, includes Dio Chrysostom on the basis of *Orationes* 66, 78, and 79; but these are attacks on popularity, wealth, and envy, and in reality fall outside of the category of strict *consolatio*, even though the ideas might appear in that context, as they do in the *Ad Helviam*.
29. M.E. Fern, *The Latin Consolatio as a Literary Type* (St. Louis, 1941), covers all the main *consolationes* in Latin from Cicero to Statius and Martial, although her survey still leaves room for many more critical insights to be made.
30. *Acad. (Post)*. I.11.
31. For the whole area of Christian *consolatio*, v. C. Favez, *La consolation Latine chrétienne*, Paris, 1937.
32. Hani (*op.cit.*, 14) indicates that the little known Andrew of Crete (c. 600-700) wrote a *Sermon on Human Life* which has many parallels to the *Cons. ad Apoll.*
33. *Select Letters of Seneca*, 245, being the preface to his commentary on *Ep.* 63. His notes draw many good parallels with other consolatory works.
34. Cic. *Tusc.* III.81, cited above, p.13.
35. Before 69 B.C. (at least), voluntary exile was a recognized way of avoiding a capital sentence, v. P. Garnsey, *Social Status and Legal Privilege in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1970), 112. For exile in general, *ibid.*, 111-122;

J.A. Crook, *Law and Life of Rome* (London, 1967), 273f.; M.V. Braginton, "Exile Under the Roman Emperors," *CJ* 39 (1944), 391-407. As a general rule, it seems that men of higher status went into exile for serious offences, while *humiliores* would be sent to the mines (*metallum/opus publicum*) or executed.

36. *plenum exiliis mare* (Tac. *Hist.* I.2). Cf. R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), 65-67.
37. We read of expulsions which were *non exilia sed relegationes* (Ulp. *Dig.* 48.1.2).
38. Cf. p.78, esp. n.66.
39. Garnsey, *op.cit.*, 116.
40. Diog. Laert. II.84-85. It is very likely that these are both the same work. The title πρὸς τοὺς φυγάδας belongs to Diogenes' own listing, while the second and similar list of Aristippus' works, which simply has φυγάδες, is that of Sotion and Panaetius.
41. *certae scholae* (*Tusc.* III.81). Cf. *supra*, n.34.
42. *omnia clarissimorum ingeniorum monumenta* (*Ad Helv.* 1.2).
43. Arr. *Epict. Diss.* III.13.16; 22.22. Both passages contain thoughts similar to those conveyed in *Ad Helviam* (e.g. 8.1ff.). Epictetus goes on to borrow from the Pseudo-Platonic *Cleitophon*, using the same paragraphs (407A-B) from which Dio Chrysostom excerpts material for his *De Exilio* (*Orat.* 13.14-28).
44. For Teles' period of writing, cf. O. Hense, *Teletis Reliquiae* (Tübingen, 1909), XXIX: *terminus enim post quem illum* [sc. πρὸς φυγῆς] *composuit, est fuga Hippomedontis Lacedaemone extorris facti circa annum 241; for Theodorus, XVff.. Cf. also PW, s.v. Teles (2). Teles' thoughts on exile appear in Stob. Anth. III.40.8.*

45. Plut. *De Exil.* 600F; Mus. p.42.1-2 (ed. Hense).
46. According to A. Giesecke, *ap.* P.H. De Lacy and B. Einarson, Plut. *Mor.* Loeb Vol. VII, 515.
47. Tac. *Ann.* 15.71; Dio 62.27. Details of his life are not easy to come by, but we are aware of a second exile too. v. *testimonia veterum* in O. Hense, *C. Musonii Rufi Reliquiae* (Leipzig, 1905), xvi-xxxvi, and more recently, C.E. Lutz, *YCS* 10 (1947), 3-147. Musonius wrote in exile, using arguments which he had found useful for himself (Lutz, 75, l. 20) to help his unidentified addressee (Rubellius Plautus? -- cf. Lutz, 14).
48. For Dio's exile, v. C.P. Jones, *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Cambridge, Mass., 1978), 45ff.; for his student days under Musonius, 12-14.
49. *ibid.*, 78. Favorinus' work may well have been, like Seneca's, autobiographical.
50. For Plutarch's frequent travels, v. C.P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford, 1971), 20-25.
51. v. *Mor.*, Loeb Vol. VII, 513f.
52. For a brief picture of Favorinus, v. M. Grant, *Greek and Latin Authors 800 B.C. - A.D. 1000* (New York, 1980), s.v.. For a recent text and commentary, v. E. Mensching, *Favorin von Arelate* (Berlin, 1963). The text was originally edited by M. Norsa and S. Vitelli, *Il Papiro Vaticano Greco* 11.1, *Studie Testi*, 53 (Vatican City, 1931).
53. Whether Hadrian was really behind Favorinus' exile has been disputed, but G.W. Bowersock (*Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* [Oxford, 1969], 52) believes that "there is reason to assume the Emperor's favour and his hostility," although he is very reserved in his judgment (cf. p.36).
54. So Meinel, 30-31, and 257, n.70.
55. v. F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio* (Oxford, 1964), 50, n.5. He draws only one parallel with the *Ad Helv.*, but many more exist: 38.19, 20, *Ad*

- Helv.* 10.2ff.; 21, *Ad Helv.* 6.7-8 (the divine nature of the mind); 24, the use of *τύχη* is similar to Seneca's stress on *Fortuna*; 27-28, *Ad Helv.* 17.3, 18.2, 20.1-2 (*otium* and *studia* recommended as a cure for grief).
56. *ibid.* 50-51.
57. On the Sextians, cf. Manning, *On Seneca's Ad Marciam*, 15ff. On diatribe, v. A. Oltramare, *Les origines de la Diatribe Romaine* (Lausanne, 1926), esp. 250ff. He points out that exile was one of the stereotypical themes of the genre (47 n.19, 267 n.19), Cf. also Griffin, 13ff., and Albertini, *La composition*, 308.
58. On Seneca's Roman sources, v. Griffin, 16ff.
59. For *consolatio* in Stoicism, v. Meinel, 22-25; Kassel, 17-29; Meinel's broad generalization that no Stoic before or after Seneca was so occupied with *consolatio* is fair, provided we temper this by taking into account that we have far more extant literature of Seneca than any other Stoic writer. The same criterion applies to M.E. Fern's statement (*The Latin Consolatio as a Literary Type*, 34) that "Seneca performed, as perhaps no other writer of his time, the duty of a consoler."
60. Seneca's glorification of the stars here is very likely to owe something to Posidonius. Cf. Abel, 60f.
61. Meinel, 26f.
62. *Ep.* 98. Cf. C.E. Manning, "Seneca's 98th Letter and the *Praemeditatio Futuri Mali*," *Mnem.* 29 (1976), 301-304, which attempts to show that the contents are essentially Cyrenaic rather than Epicurean, although there are Stoic touches (§§ 7-8).
63. *Cyrenaici non omni malo aegritudinem effici censent, sed insperato et necopinato malo* (III.28); "*sunt qui satis putant ostendere nihil inopinati accidisse, <ut Cyrenaici>*" (III.76). Cf. Meinel, 61ff.
64. 5.6-6.1. v. Meinel, 24.

65. Meinel seems to think (p.26) that *aliena castra* refers to other philosophical schools and the writer's debt to them, as though *castra* had a plural sense. But context, particularly the reference to *sapientes viri*, makes it plain that the Stoics alone are meant. *aliena castra* is used of the Epicureans (above) in *Ep.* 2.5.
66. Meinel, 102.
67. Cf. Griffin, 294ff., on Seneca, wealth, and the doctrine of the ἀδύατορα.
68. Cf. Abel, 59, esp. n.29. Hor. *Serm.* I.1 is on a similar theme.
69. Cf. Abel, 29, n.56.
70. *Ep.* 84.5 for the bee simile; cf. *Ep.* 2.5 *ex pluribus quae legi, aliquid adprehendo* ("claim for myself").
71. Cicero indicates that some advised this approach: *sunt enim qui haec omnia genera consolandi colligant - alius enim alio modo movetur* (*Tusc.* III.76); he then goes on to describe how he did thus in his own *Consolatio* in an attempt to counter his own emotional stress at the death of his daughter.
72. Cf. C.E. Manning, "The Consolatory Tradition and Seneca's Attitude to the Emotions", *G&R* 21 (1974), 71-81.
73. C. Favez, "Le Sentiment dans les *Consolations* de Sénèque, *Mélanges Paul Thomas* (N.Y., 1930), 262-270. He is right in understanding that Seneca did not solely wish to develop *loci communes* in his consolations, but that he was a man of true feeling, who "dans tous les passages de ses *Consolations* où se révèle le sentiment, ce n'est plus le stoïcien qui parle, c'est l'homme" (p.270). However, this sympathy does not necessarily outshine reason as a remedy for grief; it operates alongside with it.
74. According to the classification of E. Albertini, *La composition* 244-245. He distinguishes (i) composition following a plan laid out in advance, as in the case of the *Ad Helviam*, (ii) pieces written separately then sewn together into a whole, and (iii) composition by the association of ideas.

75. v. p.68.
76. v. Appendix A for a synopsis of the work.
77. *homo ad consolandos suos ex ipso rogo caput adlevans* (1.3).
78. Although Kassel and (particularly) Johann treat the *Ad Marciam* and *Ad Polybium* at some length, they clearly regard the *Ad Helviam* as distinct enough from other consolation literature to merit, for the purposes with which they are dealing with the genre and Seneca's place in it, only passing attention.
79. There is surely an element of hyperbole in his claim to have read *omnia clarissimorum ingeniorum monumenta ad compescendos moderandosque luctus composita*. It is unlikely that he had all these books with him on Corsica, and we may suppose that he is working from the memory of an earlier reading of many of these *monimenta*, for example in his student days, or, more plausibly, in preparation for writing the *Ad Marciam* two years before. (Cf. Johann, 158, who, in noting Seneca's originality in transferring *topoi* from the *consolatio mortis* to the *consolatio exilii*, attractively suggests that this supports an early date for the *Ad Marciam*).
80. *plaga mea, vulnera vestra* (1.1); *remedium, corpus cicatricosum* (2.2); *manus medicorum, curatio* (3.1).
81. *hoc loco nimium operae consumitur a Stoicis, maxime a Chrysippo, dum morbis comparatur morborum animi similitudo* (Cic. *Tusc.* IV.23). It is almost superfluous to search out *loci* for such a well-worn simile, but Meinel (38f.) still considers it worthwhile to list examples from Homer, Archilochus, Democritus, Plato, Aristotle, and many others.
82. *Tusc.* IV.23; cf. III.76 on choosing the proper time; also Pliny *Epp.* V. 16.10-11 and Stat. *Silv.* II.1.8 (*intempesta cano*).
83. For Crantor's diptych, a glance at Johann's reconstruction of the  $\pi\epsilon\rho\iota$   $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\nu\theta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  (135-136) will suffice for immediate visual evidence. He thinks

- (93-96) that we can scarcely doubt that the entry of the two-fold division of this kind into consolatory writings should be attributed to Crantor.
84. After a brief *divisio* at 12.1, Seneca deals with the *incommoda Marciae* (12.1-19.2), and then with those of her son (19.3-25.3).
85. 38.19.2. "Are you really in a troublesome situation?", and "How can we heal that?" Cf. Meinel, 31.
86. *iam vera exsilium, si rerum naturam, non ignominiam nominis quaerimus, quantum tandem a perpetua peregrinatione differt? Tusc. V.107.*
87. Cf. also Dio Cass. 38.24.2.
88. Plut. *De Exil.* 607E. Musonius says δοκεῖ μοι ἡ φυγή στερίσκειν μὲν ἄνθρωπον οὐ πάντως οὐδ' ὧν οἱ πολλοὶ νομίζουσιν ἀγαθῶν ... οὔτε γὰρ ἀνδρείαν ἢ δικαιοσύνην ὁ φεύγων ἔχειν κωλύεται, διὸ φεύγει, οὔτε σαφροσύνην ἢ φρόνησιν, οὐδ' αὖ ἀρετὴν ἄλλην ἠντινοῦν (p.50.6ff., ed. Hense; cf. p.42.6). For Teles' similar view on the inalienability of virtue: καὶ τίνων ἡ φυγή <ἢ> ποίων ἀγαθῶν στερίσκει; ... εὐλογιστίας, ὀρθοπραγίας, εὐπραγίας ἡ φυγή στερίσκει; οὐ δὴ. ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀνδρείας ἢ δικαιοσύνης ἢ ἄλλης τινὸς ἀρετῆς; οὐδὲ τοῦτο. (p.22.1ff., ed. Hense).
89. χρῆ...πᾶσάν τῆν γῆν οἰκεῖν ὡς πάντων μητέρα καὶ τροφὸν τὴν αὐτὴν οὔσαν. (9.23-25).
90. Ὅρας τὸν ὑποῦ τόνδ' ἄπειρον αἰθέρα  
καὶ γῆν πέριξ ἔχονθ' ὑγραῖς ἐν ἀγκάλαις;  
οὔτοι τῆς πατρίδος ἡμῶν ὄροι, καὶ οὐδεὶς οὔτε φυγὰς ἐν τούτοις οὔτε ξένος  
οὔτε ἄλλοδαπός. (*De Exil.* 601A).
91. Meinel, 26; 127ff.
92. *quid tum? parumne multa de toleranda paupertate dicuntur? Tusc. V.107.*
93. *inter alia*, Plut. *De Exil.* 600F, 607F; Cic. *Tusc.* V.108-109; Dio Chr. *Orat.* 13.14-28 (adaptation from Ps-Plat. *Cleitophon*); Sen. *Ad Helv.* 13.4.
94. ἀποχρῆν τε γὰρ ἀνθρώπῳ πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν τὸ τὰ ἀρκοῦντα κεκτῆσθαι...νομίζω.

*Dio Cass.* 38.21.1.

95. *qualem me cogites accipe: laetum et alacrem velut optimis rebus. sunt enim optima, quoniam animus omnis occupationis expertus operibus suis vacat et modo se levioribus studiis oblectat, modo ad considerandam suam universique naturam veri avidus insurgit* (20.1).
96. *Ad Helv.* 18.2-3, contrasting the careers of the elder and younger brother.
97. *quid est enim dulcius otio litterato. iis dico litteratis, quibus infinitatem rerum atque naturae et in hoc ipso mundo caelum, terras, maria cognoscimus* (*Tusc.* V.105).
98. Cf. p.73f.
99. Meinel, 26.
100. *Plut. De Exil.* 600F; *Muson.* p.42.1-2 (ed. Hense) Cicero's version runs *cum rogaretur civitatem se esse diceret, "mundanum" inquit* (V.108).
101. φεύγει καὶ πλανᾷται, θείους ἐλαυνομένη δόγμασι καὶ νόμοις (*De Exil.* 607D). Cf. *mobilis enim et inquieta homini mens data est...caelestium autem natura semper in motu est* (*Ad Helv.* 6.6-7).
102. οὐκ οὐκ ἀκλήρημά τι καὶ ὄνειδος ἐμόν, εἰ μὴ μετὰ πονηρῶν οἰκίῃσω. ἢ ἐμόν ὄνειδος, ἀλλ'οὐ τῶν ἐμὲ ἐκβαλόντων ἐπιεικῆ καὶ δίκαιον ὄντα; οὐκ ἀηδῶς Φιλίμων. (Teles, p.25, 8-10, ed. Hense). εἰ δ'ἀδίκως [sc. ἡμᾶς φεύγειν], τῶν ἐξελασάντων τοῦτ' ἂν εἴη κακόν, οὐχ ἡμέτερον. (*Musonius*, p.51, 11f., ed. Hense).
103. Cf. *infra*, p.99, n.88.
104. v. F. Millar, *A Study of Cassius Dio*, 49ff.
105. Cf. *Fam.* XIV.2.1.
106. γυναικῶδες τὸ πάθος καὶ οὐχ ἀρμόττον ἀνδράσι κοσμίους καὶ παιδείας ἐλευθερίου μεταπεποιημένοις. θῆλύ γὰρ ὄντως καὶ ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἀγεννὲς τὸ πενθεῖν (113A).
107. *Cons. ad Uxorem* 608F-609B.

108. For example, Ps-Plut. *Ad Apoll.* 120A, Ps-Ov. *Ad Liv.* 13ff., Plut. *Ad Uxorem* 608C-D. The latter, a eulogy of a baby girl, is quite striking.
109. We should doubt the view of Albertini (*La composition*, 230ff.) that there is satire here. In discussing Seneca's psychological insight, he includes *Ad Helv.* 16.1-4 amongst passages which he thinks are satirical: "L'éloge d'Helvia...contient tous les éléments d'une satire contre les femmes: car Sénèque glorifie sa mère de n'avoir point les habitudes qui sont celles de presque toutes les Romaines" (p.232). Satire of women is not Seneca's habit (cf. A.L. Motto, "Seneca on Women's Liberation", *CW* 65 (1972), 155-157, for his advanced and egalitarian view of women), and the tone of this passage is serious, not satirical, with emphasis on the mother rather than other women.
110. Cf. J.W. Cahoon, *Dio Chrysostom*, Loeb Vol. II, p.175.
111. *Orat.* 16.1.
112. μή λυπητέον περὶ μηδεὸς τῶ νόον ἔχοντι (§ 4).
113. Morawski, *ap.* Favez, *comm.*, LV n.3.
114. "The Younger Seneca's Style: Some Observations," *BICS* 13 (1966), 78-86. Currie's article is seminal on the subject. He deals with the disproportionate structure of many of the works, and the contrast with the *Ad Helviam* (80f.).
115. For Quintilian's thoughtful view of Seneca, v. Appendix C. It is well worth reading, but should not be swallowed whole.
116. *comm.*, LIV-LXVI.
117. *Ad Helv.* 8.6 consists of a thirteen-line sentence (*OCT*) which would match Livy at his peak. Around 20-25% of Senecan writing is periodic (v. B.L. Hijmans, *Inlaboratus et facilis. Aspects of structure in some letters of Seneca* (Leiden, 1976), 103ff.; C.E. Manning, *On Seneca's Ad Marciam*, 21ff.).
118. Manning, *op.cit.*, 22.

119. S.F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation* (Liverpool, 1949), 70.
120. W.C. Summers lists different types of antithesis common to Seneca (*Select Letters of Seneca*, lxxxv-lxxxvi).
121. Trillitzsch points out the significance of this statement in coming at the end of this portion of the argumentation (*Senecas Beweisführung* [Berlin, 1962], 119f.). The *sententia* "ist von Seneca an den Schluß eines Abschnittes gestellt, um durch seinen Eindruck den Gedanken wirksam abzurunden."
122. Favez thinks that Seneca's *sententiae* are more expressive and "mordante" than those of other contemporary writers, concluding that "c'est la différence du génie et du talent" (*comm.* LVIII).
123. Virgil is quoted almost ubiquitously in the *Epistles*, and the debt to Ovid is clearest in the *Tragedies*, the best place to look for evidence of Seneca's rhetorical training (v. Bonner, *Roman Declamation*, 161-167; E. Fantham, *Seneca's Troades. A Literary Introduction with Text, Translation, and Commentary* [Princeton, 1982], 24-34). Recent work has been done in the area of Ovidian *aemulatio* in Seneca's consolations by R. Degl'Innocenti Pierini ("Echi delle elegie ovidiane dall'esilio nelle *Consolationes ad Helviam e ad Polybium* di Seneca," *Stud. It. n.s.* 52 [1980], 109-143). Direct quotes from Virgil and Ovid are found in many of the *Dialogi* (v. the *index nominum et locorum* in L.D. Reynold's Oxford text [*L. Annaei Senecae Dialogorum Libri Duodecim*, Oxford, 1977]), but there are many more evocations.
124. Seneca: *Corneliam ex duodecim liberis ad duos fortuna redegerat*; Ovid: *ad numerum redigar spoliata duorum*.
125. Cf. Favez, *comm.*, LXI.
126. *Epp.* 87.41; 95.72-73. The *casa Romuli* (*Ad Helv.* 9.3) is mentioned by the Elder Seneca (*Contr.* I.6.4).
127. *Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, Vol. II (*Latin Literature*),

(Cambridge, 1982), 516.

128. Herington, *Arion* 5 (1966), 432.
129. Cf. *infra*, pp. 73-74, and n. 51.
130. *scio a praeceptis incipere omnis, qui monere aliquem volunt, in exemplis desinere*. There may have been other conventions; v. Manning, *op.cit.*, 35, for a brief discussion.
131. Seneca may just have made an historical error, as he does in at least three other places. He puts Aristides for Phocion (13.7 -- cf. Plut. *Phoc.* 36), Phocis instead of Phocaea (7.8 --- cf. Herod. I.165ff.), and also confuses Publius Scipio with Gnaeus Scipio (12.6 - cf. Duff, *comm. ad loc.*).
132. M. Hadas, *The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca. Essays and Letters of Seneca Translated with an Introduction* (Gloucester, Mass., 1958), 107.

CHAPTER II: The Purpose of the *Ad Helviam*

It is a fact that has not escaped the notice of scholars that Seneca had many purposes in composing the *Ad Helviam*. Few critics, however, if any, have made a serious attempt to synthesise the data regarding its purpose into a coherent whole. A further weakness has been the piecemeal fashion in which insights have been gained -- different scholars envisaging different layers of interpretation without noting ideas which had been previously suggested. For example, the lengthy commentary of Meinel takes no account of the significant article of A. Ferrill.<sup>1</sup> The first *desideratum* in this situation is a clear statement cataloguing the various strata of meaning in the *Ad Helviam*.

There are possibly six distinct motives for the composition of the dialogue including the openly stated one, which have received attention. They are not all immediately apparent from the text, and not all of equal weight or consequence; some of these purposes are highly self-centred, whereas at least one is ostensibly philosophical. To enumerate briefly, Seneca may have written

- (i) To console Helvia
- (ii) To console himself
- (iii) To give philosophical instruction
- (iv) To defend himself on an adultery charge
- (v) To foster his literary image
- (vi) To expedite his return to political life

These ideas are not of necessity mutually exclusive, nor contradictory to the declared intention, although the last four assume a wider readership than simply the addressee. We will attempt to evaluate these ideas, treating each point one by one in the order given above.

1. Efficacissima Consolatio (1.4)

Before we look into our text, it should be stated that the only evidence for the relationship between Helvia and Seneca comes from the dialogue we are

dealing with. In fact, we would not know the mother's name, far less anything of their relationship, apart from the title of the dialogue. Seneca addresses his mother once as *optima mater* (1.1), and twice as *carissima mater* (14.1, 19.3), but nowhere does he use her name. However, this silence doubtless tells us more about Seneca's reticence over personal affairs than the quality of the relationship, and we should not lay too much stress on it.

Despite formal language and rhetorical structure, there is much that commends itself to us as the sincere and candid expression of filial affection in this dialogue.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the many instances of tender language -- the language of intimate *necessitudo* -- led one writer to pronounce this "one of the noblest tributes from a son to a mother in literary history".<sup>3</sup> In contrast, Ferrill's incisive article complains that critics have always, as with Seneca's other dialogues, taken the work "at face value",<sup>4</sup> and he denies Seneca the quality of sincerity. But before we proceed to consider the alternative underlying purposes which he and others have discerned, or at least suggested, it is important to establish the declared purpose of the work, that is to say, a loving son's attempt to comfort his mother. It is all too easy for a critic to turn sceptic, and go to the extreme of denying any plain meaning for an ancient text, simply because he thinks he has found a hidden one, or because he has to cut through a lot of rhetorical undergrowth to find an interpretation.

The opening sections (1.1-4.3) reveal the surface motivation for the work. Seneca states here that he is anxious to provide the most effective comfort for his banishment that he can. The artful introductory paragraph claims that the son has such an altruistic love for his *mater optima* that if he could even wipe away her tears, let alone stanch their flow, it would remove the whole burden of concern then troubling him: *videbar depositurus omnia incommoda, cum lacrimas tuas, etiam si supprimere non potuissem, interim certe abstersissem.* (1.1). This strongly expresses a keen sense of identity between Seneca and Helvia, even

after allowance for its rhetorical casting.

Seneca hesitates to write only because he fears that writing during the earliest days of Helvia's sorrow might aggravate her grief rather than soothe it. It is not lack of interest which has checked him from writing earlier.<sup>5</sup> In fact, he used the time to consult the best authorities on consolatory writing, in order that he might help her all the more when he did write.<sup>6</sup> Despite this background research, he knows that the real consolation will be that he himself is doing the consoling: *quia possum instar efficacissimae consolationis esse ipse consolator*. (1.4).<sup>7</sup> Again, we are encouraged to assume a strong mutual tie.

Conversely, and by way of balance; the author's occasional hyperbolic claims might lead us to suspect disingenuousness. The idea that the exile is the *gravissimum vulnus* (3.1) which Helvia has ever faced strikes us as odd, or even arrogant, especially in view of its juxtaposition with references to the death of her husband and three of her grandchildren. The wound is said to have pierced her to the heart (*pectus et viscera divisit*); if this is not simply a flourish of exaggeration, which we may be more inclined to treat it as, then it is evidence for a very exceptional rapport. But it rather taxes our ability to believe him. Likewise, the idea that Helvia's *fortuna* is totally derivative (*tuam...fortunam, quae tota ex mea pendet*-4.1), or that she has a compulsive psychological dependence on the welfare of her middle son, is startling. A further point to bear in mind is that Seneca had been separated from his mother for a long period in earlier life, a fact which would hardly foster their relationship, at least from his side.<sup>8</sup>

That they were on very close terms, however, is still defensible on the basis of a paragraph which is well worth quoting in full, and which cements the earlier indications as to the nature of their relationship:

*ergo complexu fili carissimi careo; non conspectu eius, non sermone possum frui. ubi est ille quo viso tristem vultum relaxavi, in quo omnes sollicitudines meas deposui? ubi conloquia, quorum inexplebilis eram? ubi studia quibus libentius quam femina, familiarius quam mater intereram? ubi ille occursus? ubi matre visa semper puerilis hilaritas? (15.1)<sup>9</sup>*

Clearly Helvia enjoyed some intellectual and spiritual communion with her son as well as her maternal affection for him. Her grief for the loss of his *conspectus*, *sermo*, their *conloquia*, *studia*, *occursus*, and his *puerilis hilaritas*, was exacerbated by the fact that they had just previously been able to see each other after a long absence. As Seneca expressed it, their meeting meant that she "lost the habit of doing without him" (*consuetudinem desiderii perderes*-15.3), rendering the exile all the more bitter a blow.<sup>10</sup>

Given this high degree of intimacy, Seneca would certainly wish to contact Helvia, inform her of his feelings, and give her assurance, rather than merely use her name as a cover for, say, a political statement. Besides, if he was writing for friends and contacts at Rome as well as his mother, he could not afford to exaggerate too much the closeness they had, since friends who knew him would see through that. The picture we have here is probably a reasonable facsimile of the truth.

A final hint that Seneca was candidly doing what he proclaimed at the outset he would. Much of the *Ad Helviam* is of general interest, but some passages seem to be of too localized interest to be of ulterior consequence. Thus, as the list of Helvia's misfortunes is arguably redundant if addressed only to her,<sup>11</sup> so the mention of Marcus and Novatilla (18.4-8) is arguably redundant if addressed to anyone else.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Ipse Consurgere (1.1)

One of the secondary purposes which is most readily seen in the text is the

element of self-consolation. This has long been recognised.<sup>13</sup> We can well imagine that, as Seneca unrolled all the scrolls of consolatory literature (1.2), he was as much quarrying arguments which would enable him to come to terms with his own sense of loss and frustration as he was seeking for ways to comfort Helvia. This is borne out by the evidence of the document itself, not just by intelligent guesswork.

One of the factors which restrained him from sending a prompt despatch to Helvia was that he needed time to surmount the difficulties of his own situation before he could justly offer advice to another: *deinde plus habiturum me auctoritatis non dubitabam ad excitandam te, si prior ipse consurrexissem* (1.1). He immediately proceeds to assert his own victory over *fortuna* (*a me victa fortuna*), which we should associate with the act of *consurgere*, some time prior to the writing of the dialogue.

Besides any individual hints at self-consolation, the whole tenor of chapters 5-13 is consolation relevant more to the writer than the addressee.<sup>14</sup> There are occasions when he seems to lose sight of the one to whom he is speaking, as he becomes engrossed in an elaborate proof of his happiness and impermeability to grief. These nine chapters, a refinement on the bold assertion *indico me non esse miserum. adiciam, ...ne fieri quidem me posse miserum* (4.3), contain a wide variety of philosophical doctrines and historical and contemporary *exempla*, which are the fruit of careful forethought and organization. Their content is such that almost every word could be understood as self-consolation and be applied directly to the exiled person rather than the grieving relative at home.

In addition to the spiritual comfort provided by the arguments that exile is not a misfortune, there was the consolation of "work-therapy". Seneca found great refuge in reading and writing, and these would play a major part in the process of reconciling himself to his new circumstances.

Just as Cicero has written his *Consolatio* at a time of personal bereavement in order to divert his mind from grief and revive his flagging spirit,<sup>15</sup> and as the exiled Ovid had sought comfort in writing,<sup>16</sup> so for Seneca the intellectual exercise of reading through consolatory literature and assembling lines of reasoning was a vital ingredient in his return to spiritual equanimity. Leisure, he believed, should be dedicated to study;<sup>17</sup> while *liberalia studia* in general were only of propaedeutic value,<sup>18</sup> the study of consolation literature was actually within the philosopher's perimeters. Much of the previous τέχνη ἀλυσίας of earlier centuries had been written by philosophers, and especially Stoics, and as Seneca had plenty of time on his hands, and believed in hard work,<sup>19</sup> we can well understand how the composing of the *Ad Helviam* was the most natural thing to do upon arrival in Corsica, and how the act of writing was an act of self-consolation.

Thus he is certainly being less than honest when he says that he will not be relying on his own literary abilities in the writing of the *consolatio* (*non fiducia ingenii* - 1.4), or that this unprecedented sorrow has rendered him unable to find the *mot juste* (*dilectum verborum eripiat*), since even at this early stage his approach is highly articulate. He incorporates a choice vocabulary into a skilfully arranged schema of arguments, which, as they do not always do in Seneca, advance logically.<sup>20</sup>

Comparison with other works of Seneca supports the idea that composition offered self-fulfilment, or even self-absorption. Take, for instance, W.H. Alexander's critique of the *Ad Polybium*: "...as a work of literature it eased the mind of Seneca by permitting him to engage in a formal literary occupation, apart from any special relief it may have provided his subtle and complex spirit by indulging in an undercurrent of profound satire."<sup>21</sup> I think we may form a similar judgment on the *Ad Helviam*. Not only did the act of writing provide him with a *honesta occupatio* (*Ad Helv.* 18.8) and divert his mind from

his distress, but the undercurrents (not this time satirical, if we accept that this element is present in the *Ad Polybium*), the subtle ulterior meanings, gave him a particular pleasure. Seneca's was a complex, even if not a consistent, mind, and it is insufficient to see the *Ad Helviam* as a purely straightforward work.<sup>22</sup> We are justified in seeking out latent connotations, such as those contained in the politico-didactic references to Marcellus.<sup>23</sup>

It is appropriate to visualize Seneca as the practising Stoic who acts upon the doctrine which he recommends to Helvia (17.1 ff.), using *studia* and the power of *ratio* to surmount a frustrating situation. He is, however, frank enough to admit that he had been hurt, and that he wished to heal not only his mother but himself. The preparing and writing of a *consolatio* was a significant step in this direction which, if we are to believe the idyllic self-portrait with which he leaves us (20.1-2), was successful.<sup>24</sup>

\* \* \*

The first two motives for the *Ad Helviam* do not require that Seneca was writing to anyone beyond Helvia, but the remainder involve an assumption of a wider audience, at least close friends and relations, if not a larger circle of society in Rome. It is doubtful whether the work would have been preserved or included in the corpus of the *Dialogi* had it not been circulated in some way. If Seneca was writing for a wider audience, then we are more likely to find overtones in the consolation; that he was doing so is suggested by a number of factors, and even though some of these are *argumenta ex silentio*, the cumulative effect of the evidence should encourage us to adopt this view without reservation.

For one thing, it is difficult to be sure that any of the works of Seneca were intended as purely private communications. It is widely held

that even the most informal of Seneca's compositions, his *Epistles*, were public in essence.<sup>25</sup> The *Ad Helviam* was by no means alone in being written with one eye to publication.

Moreover, had he wished merely to write to his mother, he would have had little or no need to repeat to her all her misfortunes in life (2.1-3.2), which he may be doing only in order to gain public sympathy for his family situation. Nor would he need to develop arguments in such a formal way and at such great length, drawing in endless historical and mythical parallels, and waxing eloquent on philosophical concepts in an entirely digressive fashion. Even if Helvia was educated enough (17.3) to appreciate the dialogue's literary qualities, the whole rhetorical casting, wide and often recherché vocabulary, careful phrasing, logical progression, the array of stylistic traits which it displays, and the time spent in research for it, convince us that it was much more than a personal communication. As a parallel for a consolation addressed to a family member yet part of the writer's published *oeuvre*, we can point to Plutarch's *Consolatio ad Uxorem*, which is of undisputed sincerity, although it contains traditional arguments.

Meinel's suggestion that Seneca wrote to Helvia long before his actual consolation appeared would tend to imply a secondary purpose for the dialogue.<sup>26</sup> This idea makes sense in view of their close relationship, but there is no evidence, of course, and it rather undermines the sincerity of the existing *consolatio* if he had said all he really wanted to the first time round.

Seneca's inoffensive silence about his adultery charge and the events which led to his banishment, and the euphemisms which he employs to describe the administration which procured his exile,<sup>27</sup> could be explained by fear that the consolation would be intercepted, if it were purely personal. However, the subtle and diplomatic way in which the writer avoids blaming the administration

suggests that he was thinking of a larger, public audience, and as such may be considered evidence of the distribution of the *consolatio* in Rome.

A potential strand of external evidence for the circulation of the *Ad Helviam* are the signs that it was imitated in at least one passage in the *Octavia* (377ff.), where Seneca (the character in the play) describes his exile in language and thought similar enough to *Ad Helviam* to suggest a dependency.<sup>28</sup> This would imply that the author of the *Octavia*, whom most scholars hold to be a pupil of Seneca who was conversant with his literary output,<sup>29</sup> was working from a direct knowledge of the dialogue. Of course, this does not say anything about the possible date of its circulation, which on this basis may just as easily have been after the exile as before it; Seneca may have published as an afterthought. But it does suggest that by the Flavian period the *Ad Helviam* had become known to more people than just Helvia.<sup>30</sup>

How might Seneca have published his work? When we speak of "publication" in ancient terms, we have to remove ourselves from modern ideas of mass production and retailing. In a society where rhetoric was the basis of all education and reading aloud was the norm, the commonest way of reaching people with a new piece of literature was through a *recitatio*,<sup>31</sup> where people would be invited to hear one person (perhaps the author -- though this was plainly out of the question in this case) giving a reading of the work. A competent declaimer could readily stir an audience with any one of the plethora of purple passages found in the *Ad Helviam*.<sup>32</sup> Yet there could hardly be a formal recitation if Seneca was out of favour in governmental circles, and we should perhaps think in terms of groups of his confidants gathering together. All the same, if there was a sufficient groundswell of opinion which believed in Seneca's innocence, and if Claudius was really prepared to intervene to spare the philosopher's life (*Ad Polyb.* 13.2), the climate may have been favourable to an open *recitatio*, and it ought not to be completely ruled out. Even if it is not compelling to argue

that because the work lends itself to recitation it must have been produced for such an occasion, or for a toned-down version of one, it is more likely than that Seneca, imbued as he was in rhetoric, consciously, or worse still unconsciously, produced the elevated style of a rhetorical set-piece when writing to his immediate family.

### 3. Praecepta Sapientium (12.1)

There is a continual stress in all Seneca's writings on his pragmatic rather than theoretical interest in philosophy. He most frequently compared himself to a physician of the soul, as he does in this dialogue also.<sup>33</sup> *Discenda virtus est* (Ep. 123.16) was a maxim which led Seneca to commit his message to writing for the benefit of all who would read or hear it. This did not preempt the possibility of eloquent writing, but it meant that it was only secondary to the task of inculcating virtue.<sup>34</sup> Although he does not submit to the strict orthodoxy of the early Stoa, he is very aware of the philosophy which he professes, and like Lucretius, has a zeal to communicate this in an artistic fashion. The honey which sweetens the rim of his medicinal cup is, however, rhetorical rather than poetic.

The *Ad Helviam* is both artistic and instructive. I think that we can demonstrate not only the existence of an educational purpose, as Abel has done,<sup>35</sup> but that this was fitting both for Helvia and for a wider audience.<sup>36</sup> We can at least show from the internal evidence that Helvia was receptive to philosophical discussion. She had enjoyed studies *libentius quam femina* (15.1), and pursued them with some success (17.3); otherwise it might be considered unusual for a Roman woman to be the addressee of a discourse which involved philosophical concepts. But as has been said, we have no other source of evidence for Helvia's character, and distortion may be present.

The whole approach to the concept of consolation in this dialogue is

philosophical, which is not surprising since for one thing Seneca was a devotee of philosophy, and also since the genre was the property of philosophers throughout its history. The first real sign that we are dealing with didactic material comes after the personal detail of the introductory section. Here Seneca expands upon the role of *natura* and touches upon the idea of the Stoic *sapiens*. Continual references to *fortuna*, *fatum*, and *natura* are Stoic. In a similar vein are the inclusion of the gifts of fortune amongst things *indifferentia* (5.4) and the exhortation to *firmitas* (5.6). In addition to the individual phrases and sentences which betray the Stoic base for the work, there are a number of extended paragraphs which develop complex philosophical notions. The enumeration of these is a path well-trodden.<sup>37</sup>

We cannot say, however, that Seneca was advertising Stoicism alone, despite the fact that he interprets the precedents he offers, such as those of Marcellus and Brutus, in a Stoic fashion where the truth of history should not permit him to do so.<sup>38</sup> He deserts the historic Stoic attitude to λύπη, which was a strict ἀπάθεια -- the call to exorcise human passions, and freely accommodates the Peripatetic μετριοπάθεια. This is seen basically in his admissions that people need the comfort of relatives in times of distress, not simply the power of *ratio*, and that one should allow sorrow time to heal itself rather than attempting to subdue it instantaneously. *optimum inter pietatem et rationem temperamentum est et sentire desiderium et opprimere* (16.1) encapsulates this measured and Aristotelian approach. C.E. Manning has argued that this represents no leaning towards eclecticism on Seneca's part, but merely a compromise based on affection for the addressee, an attitude which is limited to the consolatory dialogues.<sup>39</sup> We can note that other Senecan material too, such as the *Epistles* and the *Tragedies*,<sup>40</sup> readily incorporates contrary or complementary facets of truth from other schools of thought. A dependence on Posidonius for the emphasis on the study of nature and the heavenly bodies has been seen.<sup>41</sup>

Seneca, then, is willing to use anyone's insight, although that is within the framework of commitment to one particular school.

Although Seneca will occasionally expatiate on metaphysical ideas, committing himself often to the *rigida ac virilis* view of the Stoics (12.4), he is not reduced to a dry or *rigida* exposition. Just as the astronomical (6.6-8) and cosmological information (8.3-6) is didactic, yet only vaguely relevant to the consolatory purpose, so we can detect instances where the material is both purely instructive and also light-hearted, and we must understand his didactic purpose as a blend of the serious and the light-hearted. Arguments against wealth and acquisitiveness (10.2ff.) are neither consolatory, self-edifying, political, nor apologetic. Seneca was not a glutton, nor did Helvia need to be persuaded not to throw wildly extravagant banquets. It is only the expository value of this section which gives it a *raison d'être*. Besides, this moralistic *locus* of popularized philosophy, cast in the diatribe tradition, would be aimed at a wider audience as much for its amusement (consider the sensationalistic account of Apicius' cuisine, and the witty remarks thrown in with it) as for its serious edification.

If we have accepted the premise that the *Ad Helviam* was intended for publication, then we are easily in a position to agree that he wished to exhibit his philosophical wares in at least an expository way, if not with a proselytising purpose in mind. I do not see any reason why this need detract from or contradict the presence of other declared or undeclared motives.

4. Ἐγκλήματα παρασκευάσασα? (Dio 60.8.5)

From the meagre evidence of Dio and a Juvenalian scholion, we learn that Seneca had been exiled on a charge of adultery with Julia Livilla, or at least of involvement in her misdemeanours.<sup>42</sup> We cannot prove his innocence or guilt,

for all that Tacitus speaks of an *iniuria* almost certainly in reference to the exile (*Ann.* 12.8), and for all that we can demonstrate that this kind of charge was trumped up in other cases to condemn innocent people during the same period of imperial history.<sup>43</sup> Adultery would, of course, have been an exceptionally hypocritical act on Seneca's part in the light of his philosophical commitments. Nor was the issue of the same order as wealth, where critics most often accuse Seneca of compromising his integrity: wealth could be considered among the *in-differentia*, whatever its temptations, but adultery could hardly be justified by a Stoic. It is very probable that Seneca's exile was stage-managed on political grounds, as Dio suggests, and that this was due to his connections with Agrippina and her supporters, who were outlawed, so to speak, under the Claudian administration by the machinations of Agrippina's domineering enemy Messalina and the freedmen in her coterie.<sup>44</sup>

In view of his popularity, Seneca would have a signal interest in clearing his name. Banished from Rome, his only line of communication was the pen, and he would have to handle this with greatest dexterity if he wished to restore his reputation without offending the authoritarian powers which had engineered his exile in the first place and which alone could sanction his recall. We may reasonably conjecture that the consolation to Helvia was the first composition of the exile to catch the public eye. The critics are unanimous in placing it between the summers of 41 and 43, and Giancotti is being too cautious in saying that it cannot be proven to antecede the *Ad Polybium*, as most believe.<sup>45</sup> It would be through this despatch, then, that he made his first impression, and he would have to be at his most adept to seize this initial chance for self-defence, allaying the fears of his erstwhile admirers, yet without causing offence in the palace.

There is ample evidence of a skilful and subtle apologetic element within the *Ad Helviam*, and much of this has been clearly expressed by K. Abel.<sup>46</sup> One

clear *apologia* against the adultery charge entails an explanation of the author's understanding of human sexuality (13.3). His basic argument at that point is that if one has virtue, it will toughen the spirit to face any stroke of ill fortune. In illustrating this, he chooses the example of lust, and by a statement of principle implies his own perfect control over it: *si cogitas libidinem non voluptatis causa homini datam sed propagandi generis, quem non violaverit hoc secretum et infixum visceribus ipsis exitium, omnis alia cupiditas intactum praeteribit*. He then goes on to make the generalization that *ratio* lays low all vices at one blow. In order to underpin this Stoic dogma, he invites comparison with Socrates and Cato,<sup>47</sup> the very embodiments of unjust suffering borne with equanimity and philosophical detachment, and Aristides, whose name stood for justice. The inference to be made is clear without being blatant.

Socrates, who of course predates Stoicism, is the man of integrity *par excellence*, yet suffers death anyway. Cato is the emblem of Stoicism in Seneca's eyes, but suffers political defeat in his candidature for the praetorship and consulship. Aristides is invoked because he is the model of *iustitia*; Seneca is so keen to draw attention to him that he overlooks -- whether out of premeditated or unpremeditated amnesia we cannot tell -- the fact that his anecdote actually concerns Phocion and not Aristides.<sup>48</sup>

The parallels between these *exempla* and Seneca's situation are clear, and wholly appropriate to his argument that *ignominia* need not be an accompaniment of exile. Socrates may have lost his *nomen* in the sight of the masses,<sup>49</sup> but his attitude to tyranny was such that incarceration was in fact only another *loci commutatio* (6.1) for him, and not truly an imprisonment, just as Seneca wished his exile to be perceived. The "tyrants" of Rome may not have numbered thirty, but their actions were essentially the same, we are encouraged to believe. *Ars est celare artem*; Seneca's intention remains covered,<sup>50</sup> and is artful enough to prevent possible recrimination from a hostile reader, whereas an open

statement of self-justification or of enmity towards the authors of his relegation could even have led to a *maiestas* charge.

Socrates and Cato are both used repeatedly by Seneca as paradigms of wisdom and virtue, more so than practically any other figures. Often the two are used together, and the examples recorded here are used elsewhere on more than one occasion.<sup>51</sup> We ought not to read too much into the potential comparison of Cato's failure to obtain the praetorship and Seneca's slow-moving political career. Why Seneca did not move as far as the praetorship by 41 has been the subject of discussion,<sup>52</sup> but there is no shred of evidence that he stood for the office until his return from exile. In summing up Cato's courage and steadfastness, he states that *nihil aeque magnam apud nos admirationem occupet quam homo fortiter miser*. In so doing, he comes perilously close to an arrogant assertion about himself as the *homo fortiter miser* (meaning, of course, the man brave in the midst of adversity, not wretched in the midst of his bravery), just as he does by the implications in *si magnus vir cecidit, magnus iacuit*. (13.8).<sup>53</sup> But all his arguments against *ignominia* and *contemptus* in 13.1-8 are clearly of a defensive nature.

We may consider the family references as partly apologetic too. In recounting the past sufferings of Helvia and her courage in the midst of them, he presents to the world a certain image of his own background, and tries to excite the sympathies of his audience, just as his portrayal of other family members does, by stating or implying their *virtus*. He recounts his brothers' *industria*, *sapientia*, and *pietas* (18.2). His aunt is *fidelissima* to Helvia (19.1), and is a *perfectissima femina* (19.4); Seneca encourages his mother to display a similar virtue to this woman who, we are told in unrealistically rosy terms, was regarded by the Egyptians as *unicum sanctitatis exemplum* (19.6). Together with references to Helvia's *pudicitia*,<sup>54</sup> one might think that he was trying to persuade us that moral purity was congenital in the Annaean house. The Roman audience

would also be impressed by the *pietas* of Seneca in addressing an elaborate consolation to his mother.

The idea that exile is made tolerable if one can carry one's virtues along with one, as Brutus put it (8.1), and as Seneca expands upon it (9.3), takes Seneca's innocence for granted. In fact, the whole moralistic tenor of the dialogue presupposes it. A Senecan sympathiser might argue that it would require a most astounding *tour de force* for an adulterer who professed to examine himself on a daily basis in search of shortcomings<sup>55</sup> to spend his energy publicly lauding the chastity of his mother and the modesty of his aunt, while failing to admit to his own unchastity. But in the end, only faith can give assurance of his innocence;<sup>56</sup> if he were guilty of adultery, one would not expect him to say so in a work intended for the public eye. What is certain is that he does not thrust his defence upon us, but quietly leaves it in the back of our minds.

##### 5. Claritudo Studiorum (Tac. *Ann.* 12.8)

Dio's account (59.19.7) of how a speech of Seneca inspired the jealousy of Caligula, together with Tacitus' information that he was recalled by Agrippina to tutor Nero *ob claritudinem studiorum eius* (*Ann.* 12.8), attest his talent and popularity (except with Caligula, of course) from the late 30's through to 49. Being a popular public figure, and one of the most prominent *littérateurs* of the day, he would be aware of his image very keenly. While his forensic skills may have formed the foundation for his popularity before the exile, the *claritudo* which existed when he returned in 49 could only have been maintained by literary accomplishments disseminated vicariously amongst the intelligentsia of Roman society. This reputation must have been based in part on the consolations to Helvia and Polybius, which, indeed, are the only works which can be firmly dated to the exile. If we knew more about the dates of Seneca's other works,

both surviving and lost, we could no doubt affirm that the steady production of "readable" literature occupied a large part of Seneca's time, just as it did in his later life. Certainly he was involved in *studia* (*Ad Helv.* 20.1), and it is fair to regard the *Ad Helviam* as part of an image-building process.

Moreover, the fact that Menander Rhetor (413f.) includes consolation under the heading of epideictic oratory not only suggest that Seneca had a wider audience in mind, but also that both writer and audience would regard the treatise as an opportunity for the display of his powers. We have already discussed the complex literary debt of the work and its literary qualities enough to see that it would appeal to his audience and reinforce his reputation, and we cannot doubt that his literary reputation was on his mind as he wrote. Indeed, we may safely look upon the *Ad Helviam* as a piece of literature designed as much for public consumption as for Helvia's benefit.

#### 6. Reditum Impetrare (9.6)

Little attention was paid to the idea of ulterior motivation in the *Ad Helviam* until the short but penetrating article of A. Ferrill,<sup>57</sup> which explored the political reasons for its composition. Along with Abel's analysis of the apologetic elements within the work, he has set the scene for a wider understanding of Seneca's purpose. Miriam Griffin and Pierre Grimal have noted these suggestions, but have not explored the range of possibilities, which is perhaps no more than is to be expected in view of the wide sweep of their books.<sup>58</sup>

Ferrill's basic view is that "every word" of the *Ad Helviam* "was written with an eye to recall" (p.255), and that Seneca hoped to achieve this by demonstrating to the public his lack of interest in political affairs. This argument is expressed in very strong language, but occasionally its logical consistency breaks down. For example, he thinks it is "patently ridiculous" (p.256)

to see the work as an expression of the "sincere" beliefs of Seneca, and that the author meant "just the opposite of what he said" (p.254). This rather immoderate outburst needs qualification. Strangely enough, Ferrill seems to offer this himself. He attempts to show that the boasts of being happy contained in the *Ad Helviam* are contradicted by the other works (*sic*) of the exile, the *Ad Polybium*, the epigrams, and even the tragedies.<sup>59</sup> On this basis he concludes that the positive atmosphere of the consolation to Helvia is mere bravado. Yet he later states that Seneca was "subject to periods of high hope and deep despair" (p.256) during the exile, although he has admitted that the *Ad Helviam* sounds the only ostensible note of hope throughout the time of his banishment. In addition to this, he admits that "a certain element of sincerity" (p.256) is present in the work, despite his earlier flat denial of this. This leads him into his conclusion that the work is "insincere only (!) in its major point, i.e., that exile was simply a *loci commutatio*, and its stated purpose, to console Helvia."<sup>60</sup>

Rather than regarding him as insincere, we may consider the political overtones as one strand of many that are woven into the fabric, and not as diametrically opposed *ipso facto* to the declared intention. Helvia is at one and the same time the addressee of a consolation, and the dedicatee of a work of philosophical literature with a bearing on the contemporary situation. Further, we cannot disprove the reasonable hypothesis that Seneca was indeed buoyant at the time of writing, but that his resistance and confidence gradually crumbled.<sup>61</sup> The complaints at his surroundings may have been because of the inclemency of the climate to his fragile constitution, rather than out of pique.<sup>62</sup>

Before looking at this political content in more detail, it is worthwhile observing that Seneca operates at various levels at once in more than one of his works. Perhaps it is most significant that an ulterior political purpose has been seen in each of his two other consolatory dialogues, the *Ad Marciam* and the *Ad Polybium*, but mention can also be made of the *De Vita Beata*, which

could well contain apologetic and polemic strains, and the *De Clementia*, which contains the philosopher's justification of his lofty political office.<sup>63</sup> The *De Brevitate Vitae* may also be intended as an "official version" of the retirement of Paulinus, Seneca's father-in-law, and the part that Seneca played in it.<sup>64</sup> It is self-evident that the *Ad Polybium* was written for a wider audience than its title suggests; the plea for recall is in Seneca's mind as much as the comfort of Polybius. As regards the *Ad Marciam*, we cannot prove concretely that Seneca's intention was political, but Z. Stewart presents a strong case for the idea that the author is trying to disassociate himself from Sejanus, with whom he had had links before the latter's fall from power; Stewart labels it "a work of pre-eminent opportunism".<sup>65</sup>

The main proof of the political nature of the *Ad Helviam* lies in the omissions from, rather than the content of, the text. Seneca entirely avoids some of the most basic issues which would interest his addressee. His failure to mention the adultery charge, the truth or falsity of which would be a basic element in Helvia's grief or comfort, is surely the single most striking gap in the dialogue. Not only does he refuse to say why he was exiled, but he offers no information on the kind of exile he suffered, or what the consequences of it were.<sup>66</sup> We might have expected him to say whether and which of his friends had stood by him at Rome, and, at the financial level, whether any confiscation of property had been entailed by his move to Corsica. We could easily understand these items as potentially explosive material which are excluded on grounds of political expediency. Even if Helvia knew some of these details, we would still expect Seneca to discuss such basic issues, if he were sending a purely private communication.

Every time Seneca refers to the exile he sees it as a stroke of *fortuna*, rather than an act of injustice on the part of a hostile administration. That Messalina and her cohorts, enemies of Agrippina and Julia with whom Seneca had

been associated, were engineers of the fate of Seneca as they were of Julia, is fairly clear, and for Seneca to have acted recalcitrantly could have meant for him an unsavoury death similar to Julia's.<sup>67</sup> The frequent usage of *fortuna* is mostly in the philosophical sense, and this enables the writer to avoid suspicion when he wishes to use the word as an euphemism for the regime.<sup>68</sup> His earliest uses of *fortuna* are innocent enough, and his *omnis conatus fortunae* (5.3) is no less so, being in a heavily philosophical context. However, we are tempted to look beneath the surface when he explains that he has never trusted fortune, and that he was not surprised when it removed his wealth, public office, and influence from him.<sup>69</sup> Of course, it was perfectly sound, orthodox Stoicism to attribute one's predicament to ill fortune; but there was no other way he could publicly express the loss of position and, possibly, of property which resulted from the exile.<sup>70</sup>

The virtue of these omissions is their inoffensiveness. By carefully sidestepping the opportunity for direct reference to, or accusations of, the Claudian administration, he was not only implying his innocence in a public way for his own sake, but he could also exert a subtle pressure on the authorities to satisfy justice, from his own viewpoint, by reinstating him in society. If that seemed a little over-optimistic, he could at least hope to establish the kind of moral/philosophical/literary climate in which he could be recalled if and when the political situation changed.

A more specific way in which he could be searching for recall in the *Ad Helviam* is through the renunciation of political ambitions, as Ferrill has argued, in order to imply that it was safe for him to be released. This leads us to examine the nature of Seneca's political ambitions and career up to his exile, and thus what exactly he might have been "renouncing". Can we determine that his writings from exile were intended to contain a disavowal of political ambition? Was that disavowal, if it existed, a genuine disclaimer, or did it

cover up his real concern for return to Rome and success in his career?

First we should examine what we can ascertain of Seneca's ambitions prior to the exile. Of his political life between his return from Egypt, datable to late 31, and his exile in 41, we know for certain only that he held the quaestorship at some undefined time. His aunt had been influential in gaining the office for him, overcoming her bashfulness to step into the affairs of men for his sake (*Ad Helv.* 19.2); there may be a hint in this that his keenness had to persist in order to obtain it. We may narrow down the period of tenure with some probability to the years 33-35, and might wish to infer, with Grimal,<sup>71</sup> that Seneca later in the 30's held the aedileship or the tribunate of the *plebs*, since the holding of either of these offices preceded the praetorship, which he gained immediately after his recall (and thus could not have held a *tribunatus plebis* then). The use of the word *honores* in the plural (5.4) supports the inference that he held more than one post before his exile, just as it does where Novatus is described (18.2).<sup>72</sup>

We might go further and suggest that Seneca's apparently slow progress in politics was not due to lack of interest on his own part, but that there were cogent reasons for the delay of his rise through the *cursus*, although this is certainly a debatable point. His failure to enter the political arena in youth can be explained by his severe bouts of ill-health as well as his preoccupation with philosophy, but his tardiness in full adulthood requires a different explanation. Under one reconstruction, his career between the Egyptian episode and the banishment to Corsica may have followed a natural progression which was as swift as was constitutionally possible, and he may only have been hindered from the *praetura* by the odium of Gaius arising from an incident in the senate in 39.<sup>73</sup> Others prefer to see Seneca, and his elder brother for that matter, as reluctant participants in the political arena, who, in Griffin's words, "may have suffered from a kind of sluggishness in the latter part of Tiberius' reign",<sup>74</sup>

given that it would be hard for them as *equites* to gain the emperor's pleasure as he was continuously absent from Rome. But let us not forget that provincials could still make their way into the senate under Tiberius, and that Seneca had many connections in the higher realms of society.<sup>75</sup> Whatever social relationships were disturbed by the fall of Sejanus in 31, if Galeria could pull enough strings to effect Seneca's quaestorship, why could she or others not do so again for other positions?

Because we are dealing with scraps of evidence for Seneca's activities under Tiberius and Gaius, and because Seneca gives so little autobiographical detail, we cannot know with certainty whether he had been impeded in his ambitions, or whether the fact that he did not hold the praetorship by 41 was due to other interests, or even a dilatory gradualism regarding political promotion. I have hesitations about accepting that connections with *Seianiani* were not a hindrance to social or political advancement in the late 30's,<sup>76</sup> and that Seneca failed to utilise his connections simply because he lacked the inclination to make headway *summa celeritate*, so to speak. While the question is likely to remain open ultimately, the heavier burden of proof perhaps lies with those who wish to deny that his approach to politics was a co-ordinated and premeditated progression, which was interrupted for reasons beyond his control.

Meaningful insights can be gained by looking at Seneca's political aspirations from the standpoint of his post-exilic success. In 49 Seneca was appointed Nero's tutor at the contrivance of Agrippina, and also obtained his praetorship.<sup>77</sup> It has been questioned whether or not he wished to take up this magistracy. Had he been seeking recall for social or political motives? Even if he had been politically minded in the early 40's, his attitude may have changed, just as man's restless desire for change (6.6) leads him to seek out new places to live. Eight years is a long time, and his interest in affairs of state could easily have soured or dried up altogether, given his isolation. The scholiast

on Juvenal 5.109 can be interpreted as indicating Seneca's intention to go to Athens instead of Rome<sup>78</sup> -- a move which would mean the continuance of the studies of the exile rather than the political responsibility of a *vita activa*. But this one reference, from a dubious source and passed on second hand, is insufficient to establish that Seneca did not wish to take up his post, and in general, the paucity of our sources, which deny us even the knowledge of any individual or group who worked specifically for the return of Seneca to Rome before the *spes dominationis* of Agrippina intervened, invite agnosticism.

It is well within the range of possibility, then, despite the caveat of the foregoing sentences and paragraphs, that Seneca had a keen itch to return not only to Rome, but to circles of governmental power, and on this basis, we may look cautiously into our text to evaluate the evidence for a renunciation of politics. If there is a disavowal, the clearest expression of it is through the emphasis on *studia*. On more than one occasion Seneca seems to portray himself as wholly occupied with scholarly pursuits of various disciplines, as if he wanted it to be understood that he had returned to the life of a student and preferred detachment to involvement. He is prepared to indulge in one of his most empurpled statements -- a sentence running for thirteen lines (*proinde, dum oculi mei ab illo spectaculo cuius insatiabiles sunt non abducantur, ... quantum refert mea quid calcem?* 8.6) -- to demonstrate his absorption in natural science. His description of Corsica indicates some geographical and sociological study, even if it is not completely accurate.<sup>79</sup> *Liberalia studia* are recommended to Helvia as a shield from fortune (17.3) and Mela is praised for his philosophical aversion to politics (*honestas...sapienter contempsit* 18.3). His parting words are an assertion of personal happiness and devotion to intellectual inquiry: *sunt enim optimae [res], quoniam animus omnis occupationis expertis operibus suis vacat et modo se levioribus studiis oblectat, modo ad considerandum suam universique naturam veri avidus insurgit.* (20.1). But this can hardly

be construed as a permanent disclaimer of political interests. In any case, many upper class Romans were both men of letters and statesmen, such as Cicero and the Elder and Younger Pliny. Seneca too in later years was not only the power behind the throne, but also continued to produce literature.

An area which most taxed the dexterity of Seneca is his handling of an *exemplum* from comparatively recent Roman history (9.4-10.1). Here he creates a paradigm of his own situation through the medium of a Stoic interpretation of events in the last days of the Republic surrounding Marcellus, Brutus, and Julius Caesar, which includes a possible renunciation of public life and a plea for recall. Marcellus had bitterly opposed Caesar as consul in 51 B.C.. But although he was originally joined to Brutus' as part of the senatorial opposition to Caesar's dictatorship, his attitude to the Civil War was passive, and he retired to a voluntary and undefiant exile.<sup>80</sup> After Thapsus and Caesar's victorious return to Rome, he received a pardon out of the generosity of Caesar and the efforts of men like Cicero who spoke on his behalf. Seneca would surely hope that the clemency of Julius Caesar and the pressure of public opinion which brought about the recall of Marcellus from Mytilene would serve as a precedent for his readers to act upon.<sup>81</sup> This is a subdued and respectful request, as it had to be.

Moreover, Marcellus was occupied with studies while in exile: *beatissime viventem neque umquam cupidiores bonarum artium quam illo tempore*. This description squares with Cicero's account in the *Brutus*. Rather than comparing himself to, say, Cicero or Ovid, who had complained miserably about their lot in exile,<sup>82</sup> he chooses a man for whom exile meant withdrawing into a pleasant life of study. Marcellus' consolation was in his patriotism and in his scholarly interests,<sup>83</sup> in which he became so involved that he had to be persuaded to return to Rome in the end. If Marcellus' exile, rather than his recall, was his finest hour (9.6), the parallel with Seneca will not square with Ferrill's opinion that there is a

desperate or blatant plea for recall here.

We are informed that Brutus' book *de virtute* related Caesar's embarrassment (*erubuit*) when sailing past Mytilene; he did not stop because he could not bear to look on "a great man marred" (*deformatum virum*).<sup>84</sup> We cannot know exactly how much responsibility Claudius bore for the exile of Seneca, but the signs are that he was driven to it more by the pressure of others in the palace than personal choice, and, in fact, could well have been embarrassed over the whole issue. According to the *Ad Polybium*, he even interceded for Seneca's life, reducing the sentence from death to exile.<sup>85</sup> Thus the writer refuses to apportion blame, as well as setting the scene for his readers to understand that he did not wish to resist or be disloyal to the Caesar of his day, that he was fully engaged in literary pursuits, and that it was accordingly safe for him to return to Rome, if Claudius should choose to allow it.

One or two other items may contain information which reflects on Seneca's social or political status, but do not contribute to his motivation for composition, such as the description of "fears" which Helvia had previously faced.<sup>86</sup> It should also be said that most of the other significant or puzzling silences, such as the precise definition of the exile,<sup>87</sup> and the absence of the mention of his wife,<sup>88</sup> are probably not of political origin.

However, enough has been said to illustrate the political sensitivity which Seneca needed and employed in writing the *Ad Helviam*. It still does not answer definitely whether he was actually leaving behind his public ambitions as he went to Corsica, or whether his renunciation, if it existed, was a pretence to cover his desire to be politically involved. What we can say is that if recall was Seneca's aim, the tone of his request is very quiet and unassuming, and that it is very unlikely that he had pretensions to, or was trying to convey an impression of, apoliticality.

Elaine Fantham has said of the *Tragedies* that "there is surely no reason why a creative writer should act from only one motive, and a literary form which serves an ideology need not be denied aesthetic purpose".<sup>89</sup> We may equally apply this to the prose works, and (with extensions) to the *Ad Helviam*. It is not solely a consolation. Then again, it is not written solely in the service of the Stoic ideology, since it incorporates material from other schools; it is certainly not *ars gratia artis*, and it is just as hard to believe that it was composed only with a view to recall, as Ferrill at least implies.

Since we can find evidence for each of the six motives listed, it is only one small step to believe that, as in Ovid's case,<sup>90</sup> they all existed simultaneously -- even if we cannot say which intention was uppermost in Seneca's mind. It is very easy for the last three motives to co-exist, since they are more egocentric; similarly, the third could join the first to form a pair of unselfish motives.

If there is a conflict, it is between the declared (first) and the undeclared (other) purposes. The sceptic will always be able to say that, since we have only internal evidence for Helvia's relationship with Seneca, it is a matter of the reader's own appreciation of Seneca whether he wishes to regard the personal content of the dialogue as mere hypocritical bluff, or as genuine consolation. In that sense it is impossible to disprove that the dialogue was written out of pure self-interest. But then again, there is a sense in which no publication in any age can be totally selfless in its purpose, apart from that which is done anonymously or pseudonymously; all writers assume they will be read, and hope they will be appreciated. The adverse critic should at least remember that distortion would be perceived by Seneca's friends and contacts in Rome, and might actually undercut his attempt to accomplish anything else through the work. Besides, an indirect consolation could be contained in the other motives:

Helvia could be comforted by a conviction of her son's innocence, an awareness that others would be persuaded of his innocence, and by the thought that the essay was well-received and that it bolstered his literary fame. If Seneca did not have his mother's consolation in mind, he has made a supremely artistic job of disguising it, and the intimate sincerity of his tone has deceived the great majority of his critics.

By way of conclusion, then, we can affirm that there is more than meets the eye in the *Ad Helviam*, and that it is not alone in the works of Seneca in peppering veiled references to the author's social and political circumstances. There are at least five other purposes beyond the declared one which exist, or strongly appear to exist -- self-consolatory, didactic, apologetic, self-advertising, and political -- of which many critics have observed hints without having drawn all the strands into one.

FOOTNOTES

1. Meinel's dissertation devotes only a paragraph (pp.21-22) to the purpose of the dialogue. Ferrill's article ("Seneca's Exile and the *Ad Helviam: A Reinterpretation*," *CP* 61 [1966], 253-257) looks at the political motivation for the work. More insights are found into Seneca's purpose in the *Ad Helviam* through Abel's *Bauformen* (47-69), which emphasises the apologetic strain. The achievements of Ferrill and Abel have been recognised in the most recent Senecan scholarship (Griffin, 21-22; Grimal, 97-99, 279-280). Abel's work (1967) was probably completed too early to include Ferrill's thoughts, though Meinel (1972) cannot be excused on this account. Griffin includes the *Ad Helviam* with works which "may serve some personal or political purpose" (p.10), but she does not explore all the possibilities.
2. M. Hadas comments in the introduction to his translation of the dialogue (*The Stoic Philosophy of Seneca* [Gloucester, Mass., 1958], 107) that "the high polish cannot disguise the essential sincerity of the piece or the genuine affection and concern Seneca felt for his mother." Hadas' translation is a welcome update in style (and sometimes accuracy) to the Loeb edition of J.W. Basore (1932).
3. R.M. Gummere, *Seneca the Philosopher and his Modern Message*, 11. Gummere's book, written more for a popular than a scholarly audience, displays good breadth of learning. Unfortunately, it commits the egregious error of dating Helvia's death to 39 (p.11), at least two years before the *Ad Helviam* was written!
4. Ferrill, *art. cit.*, 253. He is accurate at least regarding the *Ad Helviam*. The previous commentaries of J.D. Duff and C. Favez contain no treatment of ulterior motivation.
5. Even in the event of an earlier letter to Helvia, as Meinel (p.21) suggests,

the necessity for a fuller, second communication such as this dialogue would not be precluded. Granted that the delay before writing is part of the consolation tradition (cf. Plut. *Cons. ad Apoll.*, 102A-103A), Seneca would still need time to do background reading (1.2) and to organize his material in the way that he has done. The time lag does not prove lack of interest in true consolation.

6. Seneca claims to have read or at least consulted (*evoluere*) *omnia clarissimorum ingeniorum monumenta ad compescendos moderandosque luctus composita* (1.2). Whether these were books which he took with him to Corsica or ones which he somehow managed to procure in what was a fairly uncivilized setting, we cannot tell.
7. Hadas' translation of this (p.108) runs "but functioning as a comforter may bring *me* the most effective comfort" (my emphasis). This is perhaps not the most natural translation, but is grammatically possible, and cannot be rejected out of hand. Seneca may be saying that either (i) since it is he who is comforting it will prove most effective to Helvia, or that (ii) playing the role of comforter will bring himself the most effective comfort. This supports the idea of self-consolation as a motive in the writing, but is less likely in the immediate context. Basore does better to retain the ambiguity in his translation, but the first meaning is still the clearer one.
8. Seneca had been taken to Rome while young by his aunt, and had spent a long convalescence under her care (19.2), possibly in Egypt. We do not know how long his absence in Egypt was. Cf. Griffin, p.43.
9. "I have lost my dearest son's embrace. I cannot enjoy his presence, his conversation. When I saw him my face relaxed its sadness, to him I unburdened myself of all my cares: where is he? Where are the talks of which I could never have enough? Where are the studies which I shared with a pleasure beyond my sex and an intimacy beyond our relationship? Where are the encounters? Where the boyish glee at sight of his mother?" (Hadas).

- There is no need to find amatory overtones here, as M. Rozelaar does ("Seneca. A New Approach to his Personality," *Psychiatry* 36 [1973], 85), nor to think that *carissimus* means anything more than "a most beloved son", as if Lucius were the favourite of his mother (*ibid*). Contrast *Ad Helv.* 18.1-3, 20.1 with Rozelaar's view. v. Appendix B for more on Rozelaar.
10. Yet it is not clear why, if Helvia was used to travel between Spain and Italy, she could not go to Corsica, since it was less than fifty miles from the mainland. The account of Rutilia following her son Cotta into exile (an ironic prophecy, since Seneca was kept out of Rome almost as long as Cotta had been -- 91-82 B.C.) may even be a quiet request for Helvia to join him.
  11. 2.1-3.2 highlights Helvia's valour in the face of adversity. Seneca may be seeking for sympathy towards his family through this; the description of her *obsequium* and *pietas* (2.4) towards her stepmother may also owe something to encomiastic tradition (cf. 16.1-5), as Griffin argues (21f.).
  12. We are dependent almost solely on the *Ad Helviam* not only for tidbits of family information, but for much of the biography of Seneca's early years and manhood up to 41, as can be seen from Trillitzsch's exploration of *Selbstzeugnisse* in Seneca (*Urteil der Antike*, vol. 2, 301-310). We have no other information about Seneca's quaestorship (19.2).
  13. "Die Schrift dient...bis zu einem gewissen Grad der Selbsttröstung" (Abel, 47). Waltz (*Vie De Sénèque*, 110), had first observed this and other purposes: "Plus encore que de consoler Helvia, Sénèque a en effet pour objet, d'une part de se raffermir lui-même, d'autre-part d'entretenir à Rome son souvenir et sa reputation."
  14. Meinel is incorrect in saying that the self-consolatory idea is only discernible in the first paragraph of the work ("Seneca spricht dieses Motiv... nur einmal indirekt in der Schrift... (1.1) an." -- p.21).

15. Cicero describes how he put every possible consolatory argument into the work since *erat...in tumore animus et omnis in eo temptabatur curatio* (*Tusc.* III.76).
16. H.F. Fränkel has observed four different motives for Ovid's works from Tomis: (i) to maintain popularity at Rome; (ii) to maintain friendships/self-image; (iii) to inspire public pressure for his release; (iv) to give diversion from pain through literary pursuits (*Ovid. A Poet Between Two Worlds* [Berkeley, 1945], 131-136). We can see how Ovid's motivation is similar to Seneca's, except that the apologetic element is missing, since Ovid confessed that he had made an *error* (*Tr.* II.207-8).
17. Cf. *Ep.* 94.72: *otium...traditum litteris et animum ab externis ad sua reversum.*
18. Cf. *Ep.* 88.1-2 *rudimenta sunt nostra, non opera.*
19. Cf. *Epp.* 31.5; 50.6 *nihil est quod non expugnat opera et intenta ac diligens cura*, spoken of sin (*pravitas*), but for the Stoic, the passion of grief was not far removed from sin.
20. The argumentation of the *Ad Helv.* falls into the first of the three categories of Senecan methodology, according to E. Albertini (*La composition* 244ff.), in "suivant un plan tracé d'avance". He justly labels it (p.255) "un exercice classique exécuté avec soin".
21. "Seneca's *Ad Polybium de Consolatione*, a reappraisal", *Trans. Royal. Soc. of Canada*, Ser. 3, 37 (1943), 33-55. The quote is from p.54. Most of Alexander's articles, apart from those dealing with purely textual matters (v. Abel, 180, for a bibliography), are pro-Senecan, and defend him against charges modern and ancient which have been brought against him. His 're-appraisal' of the *Ad Polybium* tries to see the obsequiousness of Seneca as mainly satirical, and argues with good reason that it must be judged primarily as a piece of literature. It is a noble attempt which has won some support;

Ferrill calls this "the most realistic approach" (256, n.4; cf. Grimal, 280).

22. As we might interpret the statement of M. Winterbottom in his review of Meinel's thesis: "there is nothing very mysterious in this dialogue, and Meinel hardly ever finds himself up against real difficulties of interpretation" (CR 89 [1975], 315).
23. 9.4-10.1. Cf. *infra*, pp.
24. We may be disinclined to swallow it whole. The picture given at the end of the *Ad Polyb.* is exactly the opposite: *haec, utcumque potui, longo iam situ obsoleto et hebetato animo composui. ... cogita, quam non possit is alienae vacare consolationi, quem sua mala occupatum tenent...* (18, 9).  
The two works are not separated by more than two years at the very most, and are probably much closer than that. But the *Ad Helviam* certainly reflects a more cheerful attitude. Cf. Waltz, *Vie*, 100ff.
25. v. Griffin, 416-419, on the fictitious nature of the correspondence. Regardless of whether it was genuine or not, it was surely still intended for publishing from the start (cf. Abel, 167).
26. 'Seneca...mit ihr sicher schon vorher private Briefe gewechselt hat' (p.21).  
It is perhaps surprising that Meinel is the only scholar, to my knowledge, to have suggested this.
27. Cf. *infra*, pp.
28. C.J. Herington has recently noted (*Cambridge History of Latin Literature*, 530) the similarity of this passage to *Ad Helv.* 8 and 20. Lipsius noted it first (ap. T. Lodge, *Seneca. On Benefits*, London, 1899, xxii-xxiii).
29. Like most scholars, Herington (*ibid.*) doubts Senecan authorship of the play. Even if we side with the minority, such as L.Y. Whitman (*The Octavia. Introduction, Text, and Commentary* [Bern, 1978], 5-12), and M. Rozelaar (*Gesamtdarstellung*, 598-607), who thinks that Seneca wrote the play himself

and that it is a sign of his showy conceitedness to put himself on stage (a view unlikely to gain wide assent), this still argues that Seneca was as conscious of his literary image as the major parts of the *Ad Helvium* suggest.

30. Herington (*ibid.*) gingerly dates the play within the Principate of Vespasian, while T.D. Barnes (*Mus. Helv.* 39 [1982], 215-217) puts its composition in Galba's reign. The historical content precludes composition before A.D. 64.
31. Seneca tells us about *recitationes* in *Epp.* 7.9; 115.2. The invention of public recitations (as opposed to private ones, which had been practised in the Republic in Athens) is attributed by Seneca Père, *Contr* 4. pr. 2, to Asinius Pollio. (Cf. A.C. Dalzell "Asinius Pollio and the Early History of Public Recitation at Rome", *Hermathena* 86 [1955], 20-28.)
32. Cf. *supra* on 9.8, p.44.
33. E.g. 1.1 *ad obliganda vulnera vestra*.
34. *Ep.* 7.57: *non delectent verba nostra, sed prosint. si tamen contingere eloquentia non sollicito potest ..., adsit et res pulcherrimas prosequatur. sit talis, ut res potius quam se ostendat.* Cf. also *Ep.* 94.47.
35. "erzieherisch gemeinte", p.47.
36. Passages elsewhere in Seneca written for a "general audience" (Griffin, 12, n.1) include the exposition of Stoicism in *De Clem.* II.5.2-3, and the recommendation of political acquiescence in *Ep.* 73.
37. For Stoic literary sources for the *Ad Helviam*, v. Meinel, 22-25, and *passim* in the commentary.
38. For Brutus in Seneca, v. Griffin, 188 (also 185-186).
39. "The Consolatory Tradition and Seneca's Attitude to the Emotions," *G&R* 21 (1974), 71-81.
40. Cf. *Ep.* 12.11, and the many other quotes from Epicurus in the first book of the *Epistulae*. There are Epicurean thoughts in the *Tragedies* too (cf. *Tro.*

370ff.; *Thy.* 391ff.). Seneca is even willing to ridicule previous Stoics, especially Chrysippus (v. Griffin, 332-333).

41. Abel, 60f.

42. Dio 60.8.5. We also have the evidence of the scholiast on Juvenal 5.109:

*hic [Seneca], ut inquit Probus, sub Claudio quasi conscius adulteriorum Iuliae Germanici filiae in Corsicam relegatus post triennium revocatus. qui etsi magno desiderio Athenas intenderet, ab Agrippina tamen erudiendo Neroni in palatium adductus.*

Although there has been a clever emendation of the glaring *triennium* to *septuennium* (F. Gloeckner, *RhM* 35 [1880], 485), on the basis of the similarity of *iii* and *vii*, this does not eradicate the problems posed by the scholion. The start of the exile is usually dated to 41 (Griffin, 59 n.5; Kamp, *CJ* 30 [1934], 107); even if we date it to 42, to allow time for Claudius' intercession on behalf of Seneca after the trial of Julia in 41 (*Ad Polyb.* 13.2. v. E.E. Burriss, *Seneca in Corsica*, New York, 1922, p.9 -- a view about which I have doubts), seven years, counting inclusively, takes us only to 48 instead of 49, the known year of the recall (as we can infer from *Tac. Ann.* 14.53, where Seneca says it is the fourteenth year since his appointment to Nero; this is in 62). I have failed to find voices of scepticism being raised amongst scholars as to the accuracy of the material in hand here, even though many seem content to discuss in detail the implications of individual phrases and words as though they were primary means of evidence. For instance, Stewart (*AJP* 74 [1953], 83-84, n.86) has done a good deal of lexical research in order to establish that *quasi conscius adulteriorum Iuliae* could mean no more than "for being aware of Julia's loose morals", and picks up on the previous interpretations of Faider and Marchesi. He suggests that the scholion is "probably derived" from Suetonius, but offers no evidence other than inviting us to compare the similar use of *quasi* found in Suetonius (?!). Similarly, H.W. Kamp (*ibid*, 106)

regards *Athenas intenderet* as evidence of Seneca's lack of political ambition: his recall was a piece of strategy on Agrippina's part made without Seneca's collaboration. However, it is possible that this is simply a later commentator's attempt to insert into Seneca's life a visit to the home of philosophy; it would be unusual for so prominent a writer and thinker not have spent some time there, and we know of no visit to Greece made by Seneca from other sources apart from a very dubious reference to an Aegean island in *NQ* 6.21.1.

43. Messalina used an adultery charge as a means of acquiring the gardens of Valerius Asiaticus (*Ann.* 11.1-2). Cf. Griffin, 61, for other examples.
44. Cf. H.W. Kamp, "Concerning Seneca's Exile", *CJ* 30 (1934), 101-108. He argues that both the exile and the recall of Seneca were political moves.
45. v. Appendix on dating in Giancotti's *Cronologia dei Dialoghi di Seneca*; also his pp.74-92 on *Ad Helviam* and *Ad Polybium*. Waltz, however, places the *De Providentia* and *De Constantia Sapientis* first, after "minutieuse étude des textes" (*Vie*, p.7). This is in support of his theory of gradual decline in Seneca's attitude during the exile (101ff.) from the buoyancy of the *De Providentia* to the frigidity (p.113) of the *Ad Polybium*.
46. Abel, 47ff. "Die apologetische Tendenz ... steht außer Frage" (49) and "ist dem Werk nicht künstlich aufgepfropft, sondern gliedert sich ihm organisch ein" (51).
47. The significance has been observed before, of course. Cf. Faider, *Études Sur Sénèque*, 188, and Abel, 49.
48. Plut., *Phoc.* 36.2.7, 8.
49. For Plato's account, v. *Apol.* 32.C.
50. "Steht unausgesprochen", Meinel, 180. Meinel is more interested in sources than in potential overtones, here as elsewhere; he wisely says that a search for sources is futile in the case of such a well-known and hackneyed

topos.

51. Cf. the number of entries for each in A.L. Motto's *Seneca Sourcebook* (Amsterdam, 1970). For their use together, v. *Epp.* 24.4-8; 71.8, 16-17. For Socrates' imprisonment, cf. *Ad Marc.* 22.3 and *Epp.* 24.4; 70.9; 104.28, *inter alia*; For Cato's *repulsa*, v. *Ep.* 71.8, *De Ben.* 5.17.2.
52. v. *infra*, p.80.
53. Seneca is known for his lapses into egocentric self-portrayal, notwithstanding a general incommunicativeness in regard to details of his personal life (Griffin, p.1.).
54. 16, 4 - cf. 16.2: ... *a qua omnia muliebria vitia afuerunt.*
55. *De Ira* III.36 (possibly to be dated during the exile): *animus.... qui cotidie ad rationem reddendam vocandus est ... totum diem meum scrutor factaque ac dicta mea remetior.*
56. As Griffin (60 n.11) points out, criticizing Abel's confidence in Seneca's innocence (*Bauformen*, 70ff.).
57. "Seneca's Exile and the *Ad Helviam*: A Reinterpretation," *CP* 61 (1966), 253-257. Cf. n.1.
58. Griffin, 21-22; Grimal, 97-98, 279-280. Grimal writes, in contrasting the *Ad Helviam* with the *Ad Polybium*, "l'intention politique n'en est pas absente, mais elle y est moins apparente" (p.280). He also discusses the Marcellus *exemplum* in 9.4-10.1.
59. Cf. n.21 for the *Ad Polybium*. He quotes the *Corsica terribilis* of *Epigr.* 2 and the despair of *Epigr.* 3; but the authenticity of the epigrams will always be disputed. As to the tragedies, it is really questionable how much "light" they shed on "the personality and inner convictions of the exiled politician." If we were to try and make them in any way autobiographical, then some of them would seem more appropriate for Nero's day.
60. p.256. The exclamation mark is my own.

61. v. Waltz, *Vie*, 99ff., esp. 101.
62. 6.5: *nudum saxum*; 7.8; 9.1. Cf. Waltz's account of Corsica and its climatic disadvantages (*Vie*, 93-96). He records in his day that the inhabitants had to move into the mountainous areas in summer in order to avoid malaria, although he thinks it could not have been so bad in Seneca's time. It is confessedly difficult to construct a harmonious picture of Corsica's geographical and climatic conditions from the ancient authors who mention it (v. Pomponius Mela, *De Situ Orbis* II.7; Diodorus Siculus, V.13.3; Herod. I.165; Theophr. V.8; Strabo V.223f., Pliny, *NH*, III.6). Seneca is mistaken in calling the coastline *importuosa* (7.8); there is a magnificent natural harbour at Porto-Vecchio (Portus Syracusanus). Cf. Diodorus' εὐπροσόρμιστος.
63. v. Griffin, 19-22.
64. *ibid*; also 401-407.
65. "Sejanus, Gaetulicus, and Seneca", *AJP* 74 (1953), 70-85. Griffin finds this "attractive" (p.23) without committing herself. Abel, however, is unconvinced: "die Zielsetzung rein paramythischen ist". (p.19).
66. For the nature of Seneca's exile, v. p.18 (n.35). Only the epigrams, whose authenticity will always remain moot, make mention of a specific kind of exile (*parce relegatis, hoc est iam parce sepultis* 2.7; this also depicts dejection).
67. For Julia's death, seemingly through starvation (Sen. *Apocol.* X.4), v. Tac. *Ann.* 14.63; Suet. *Claud.* 29; Dio 60.8.4-5; 18.4. Cf. the scholiast on Juvenal (p.93, n.42).
68. Most of the 21 uses of the word in *Ad Helviam* are philosophical. A similar frequency (30) and usage is detectable in the *Ad Polybium*.
69. 5.4: *numquam ego fortunae credidi, ... omnia illa quae ... conferebat, pecuniam honores gratiam, eo loco posui unde posset sinu motu meo repetere*

... *itaque abstulit illa, non avulsit.*

70. A person relegated to an island "retained his civil rights and some or all of his property" (Braginton, *art.cit.* 396, who thinks Seneca probably did not lose anything). Cf. Ulp. *Dig.* 48.19, 28, 13 and 22, 14, 1. Apart from at 5.4, Seneca makes one other reference (10.2) to loss of property, though it is sufficiently ambiguous to have escaped correct interpretation in some quarters. Meinel (239-240, n.25) adduces *intellego me non opes sed occupationes perdidisse* as evidence that Seneca retained all his assets while exiled, whereas syntactically and contextually what this surely means is that the loss of property which he suffered was tantamount only to a loss of *occupationes*, or distracting business engagements. The comparison of the writer with Marcellus, [*quem*] *paupertas sequeretur*, supports this.
71. Grimal, 79-81. His hypothetical reconstruction has its defects. He does not allow for the quaestorship to have been held in 32/33, his *terminus post quem* being one year later. He does not explain the 18-month gap between this (Dec. 33) and the possible commencement of a "campagne électorale" in the spring of 32, which detracts from his general attempt to show that his career was interrupted "dans son cours". Griffin also accepts 33 as the earliest date for the quaestorship, but her *terminus ante quem* differs by some four years, since she does not think that Seneca necessarily held other posts before his exile. In so doing she passes over the evidence of *honores* in 5.4.
72. Had he meant one office, he could have used *honorem* in both instances. Cf. OLD, s.v. *honor*<sup>1</sup> § 5.
73. Dio 59.19.7. Although this is admittedly a "novelistic" (Stewart, *art.cit.* 70) anecdote which "lacks substance and plausibility" (Griffin, 53), it probably contains enough truth to confirm that Seneca was in the Senate by this time (Griffin, 43-44).

74. p.50. While Grimal and Waltz (cf. *Vie*, 53) fall into the category of those who are criticized by Griffin for yielding to "the temptation to eke out knowledge with imagination" for the pre-exilic biography of Seneca (p.34), she herself entertains the conjecture (p.46, n.3) that Seneca held the military tribunate as a sinecure, and offers her own idea that he gained the *latus clavus* as a direct gift from the emperor.
75. As Griffin herself points out, e.g., pp.49-50.
76. Stewart (*art.cit*) deals with the notion of social connections as political stumbling-blocks.
77. Tac. Ann. 12.8. This important passage is worth quoting in full: *at Agrippina, ne malis tantum facinoribus notesceret, veniam exilii pro Annaeo Seneca, simul praeturam impetrat, laetum in publicum rata ob claritudinem studiorum eius, utque Domitii pueritia tali magistro adolesceret et consiliis eiusdem ad spem dominationis uterentur, quia Seneca fidus in Agrippinam memoria beneficii et infensus Claudio dolore iniuriae credebatur.*
78. v. *supra*. n.42. The tense of *intenderet* lessens the force of the suggestion.
79. Cf. n.62. Another geographical error is the idea that the settlers of Massilia came from Phocis, rather than Phocaea (7.8. Cf. Herod. 1.165ff.).
80. For Marcellus' exile, v. Cic. *Brutus*, 249-50, and the commentary of A.E. Douglas (*M. Tulli Ciceronis Brutus* [Oxford, 1966], 183-184).
81. Clemency is very much a Senecan theme. Indeed, Seneca gave a four-fold definition of it (Griffin, 157) which was original (*ibid*, 170).
82. As their writings reveal. Cf. *Tristia* V.10; *Ad Fam.* XIV passim; *Att.* III.12.2. These all express depression.
83. *maxime...laudandus est, qui...consoletur se cum conscientia optimae mentis tum etiam usurpatione et renovatione doctrinae.* (*Brut.* 250). Douglas considers *conscientia optimae mentis* to mean "patriotism" in its context.
84. Hadas' translation, borrowed from Duff, *comm.* 256.

85. The intercession may have been prompted by Agrippina -- the *beneficium* of Ann. 12.8 which obligated him to her service as Nero's tutor, v. G.W. Clarke, "Seneca the Younger under Caligula," *Latomus* 24 (1965), 62-69; Griffin (p.60) favours this idea.
86. *transeo tot pericula, tot metus, quos sine intervallo in te incursantis pertulisti* (2.5). Stewart writes, "These words have never been thought worthy of comment, probably on the ground that they were 'pure rhetoric', and yet they must surely refer to the period when the circle of which Seneca and his mother were a part was suffering from the well-founded suspicions of Caligula" (*art.cit.*, 81). That this vagueness of expression is controlled by political factors is more likely than Griffin's proposal that "fears for losses in the family" (p.57, n.1) is meant by such a word as *pericula*.
87. Cf. n.66. A more technical definition of *exilium* could hardly have been treated as an inappropriate remark. Rather it is omitted because legal terms are out of place in the literary atmosphere of the *consolatio* genre.
88. Not surprisingly, much has been said about this (amongst others, v. A. Gercke, *Seneca-Studien*, 288; Duff, xxxiii-xxxiv; Kamp, *CJ* 32 [1937], 529-33; Griffin, 59). Ovid had requested his wife to ask politely for Livia's intervention in giving him a milder place of exile (*Ex Ponto* III.1.147-152); Terentia, so far as we know, did not act at a political level for Cicero, but laboured to manage business and family affairs (cf. *Ad Fam.* XIV.1.5). Seneca's wife may have performed a similar function in Rome, but that does not really explain her absence from the dialogue. There may have been some quarrel either between Seneca and her, or between the wife and Helvia, which has been discreetly wrapped in silence. We would know for certain that she accompanied him to Corsica if we could find new evidence to date the whole of *De Ira* to the exile (since it mentions an *uxor*, III.36).

Otherwise, she may have died prior to 41.

89. *Seneca's Troades*, p.15.

90. Cf. *supra*, n.16.

CONCLUSION

We have observed that the *Ad Helviam* belongs to the longstanding genre of *consolatio*, and to the subsection of that genre which deals with exile. Seneca has also drawn on a wide variety of philosophical sources, as was regular in a work of consolation, in developing his arguments. The effect of tradition can be seen both in the overall structure of the work and in the argumentation, but this does not exclude innovations. The author should also be credited with originality in his conception of his own situation as a kind of death, which permits him to blend features from the *consolatio mortis* and the *consolatio exilii*. The skill with which Seneca has composed his treatise is further revealed through a variety of stylistic qualities, which class this work with the best of Seneca's prose, and indeed, make it one of the finest, if not the finest, of extant consolations.

We have also seen that there are at least six different reasons which have been suggested for the composition of the *Ad Helviam*, although a systematic analysis of them has not previously been made. Beyond the motif of consolation (both of Helvia and himself) runs a didactic thread, as it does in almost all of Seneca's prose. In addition to this, the writer's purpose encompasses his desire to defend himself against the adultery charge on which he was banished, to bolster his literary reputation, and ultimately to set the scene for his return to political life in Rome. We may cautiously believe in the reality of the declared intention, confidently espouse the view that these ulterior motives are present in the dialogue, and accept that although some of the purposes are more self-centred than others, all may have actually co-existed in the writer's mind at the time.

It remains to be said that it is *through* the use and refashioning of generic material that Seneca achieves his objectives. Through placing the

arguments on his own situation before those regarding Helvia's, he achieves self-projection, and probably self-consolation too. His use of philosophical language which was fitting for *consolationes* allows him to avoid embarrassment of the authorities which had banished him, while clearly implying his own innocence, and quietly asking for recall. As regards a didactic purpose, it is clear that the *consolatio* genre was very much allied to philosophy, and could thus be used even as a means of proselytising; as was traditional, Seneca expounds a variety of views, together with a personal confession (5.1ff.) of his progress along the pathway of philosophy.

Seneca's elegant approach served his social and political ends, and was not, as was the case in some treatises on grief and exile, an end in itself. The polished nature of the work contributed to his concern to increase his literary reputation at Rome with an ultimate view to recall. Like Plutarch's *consolatio* to his wife, the *Ad Helviam* was a genuine personal communication which became part of the published *opera* of the author. But Seneca had more complex reasons than Plutarch for writing, and the skill which he displayed, not only in handling *topoi* with some originality, but in casting the whole work in a rhetorically appetizing and logically structured framework, helped him to move towards his goals. The influence of genre, then, is subordinated to the personal aims of the writer, and made to serve those aims.

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APPENDIX A

SYNOPSIS OF THE AD HELVIAM

A.	Introduction (motives for, and method of, consolation)	1.1-3.2
B.	Division of material ([i] I am not unhappy; [ii] neither have you any cause to be)	4.1-3
C.	Argumentation	5.1-19.7
1.	Introductory argument (happiness lies in the mind)	5.1-6
2.	The disadvantages ( <i>incommoda</i> ) which the exile must face	6.1-13.8
(i)	Exile defined (merely a <i>loci commutatio</i> , plus the seeming <i>incommoda</i> of <i>paupertas</i> and <i>ignominial contemptus</i> )	6.1
(ii)	<i>Loci commutatio</i>	6.2-9.8
a)	The mixed population in Rome, Corsica, and elsewhere	6.2-6.5
b)	Man's natural instinct to change his place of residence	6.6-6.8
c)	Mass migration (the Greek colonists, the founders of Rome; the peoples of Corsica)	7.1-10
d)	<i>Natura</i> and one's own <i>virtus</i> nullify seeming locational disadvantages (witness Marcellus in exile)	8.1-9.8
(iii)	<i>Paupertas</i>	10.1-12.7
a)	Food is easily obtained (attack on Apicius and gluttony in general)	10.1-11
b)	Simplicity in clothing and furniture is best (attack on luxury)	11.1-4
c)	The mind is the only true source of riches (Platonic view of body and mind)	11.5-7
d)	Examples of noble poverty (poets, philosophers, and heroes from Roman history)	12.1-7
(iv)	<i>Ignominia/contemptus</i>	13.1-8
a)	To conquer one vice is to conquer all	13.1-3
b)	Disgrace cannot touch the <i>sapiens</i> (examples of Socrates, Cato, and Aristides)	13.4-8

3. The disadvantages which Helvia must face	14.1-19.7
(i) Diagnosis of potential problems	14.2-15.3
a) Helvia's loss of a <i>praesidium</i> in Seneca	14.2-3
b) The <i>desiderium</i> which grips the mother	15.1-3
(ii) Remedies	15.4-19.7
a) The experience of past suffering is a help	15.4
b) The fact that you are a woman does not excuse you (examples of Roman <i>matronae</i> )	16.1-7
c) Reason is the real remedy, not diversion, for each <i>affectus</i>	17.1-5
d) The encouragement and consolation of relatives (Novatus and Mela; Marcus and Novatilla; Galeria)	18.1-19.7
D. Conclusion. Self-portrait of a contented exile	20.1-2

APPENDIX B

M. Rozelaar and the *Ad Helviam*.

Although Marc Rozelaar's work on Seneca (v. bibliography) has been poorly received, it deserves mention since so much of what it concludes about Seneca is based on the *Ad Helviam*. His *Gesamtdarstellung*, which arises out of his more specific article on Seneca's personality, is a sympathetic and brave attempt to deliver the philosopher from the verdicts of inconsistency which history has delivered upon him. Modern psychological theory is considered the key to open the door to Seneca's personality.

Since the *Ad Helviam* sheds much light on the family relationships of Seneca, Rozelaar uses it as his *point du départ* for a Freudian reconstruction of Seneca's childhood, its perversions, and his consequently troubled and neurotic (*sic*) later life. It is significant that in his article (which I will quote rather than the book for the sake of convenience, since it is written in English and its content is intrinsically the same as that of the book) Rozelaar cites only two other works of Senecan scholarship. One of these is E. Phillips Barker's *OCD* article (1st edition), and the other C.J. Herington's article on Senecan tragedy (*Arion* 5 [1966], 422-471); neither of them focus at any length on the prose works. This is likely to invite charges of haste and superficiality, as has been the case with his book (v. M.T. Griffin's review in *CR* 30 [1980], 28-31 -- which directs adverse criticisms at practically every chapter of the work).

Rozelaar quarries such evidence as he can to demonstrate that Helvia was likely to be an overprotecting mother, and that as a result Seneca carried weaknesses throughout his life. The close rapport which he tries to establish with D.M. Levy's views on maternal overprotection have at first an air of impressiveness. But the writer ought to confess that the psycho-analytic tests

which he is applying represent only one school of thought, and one which is contested to this day (cf. the review of K. Abel, *REL* 57 [1979], 486-488).

Much more importantly, his handling of source material is "uncritical" (Griffin). He talks, for example, of "the remark of the emperor Trajan" about the *quinquennium* of Nero and Seneca's part in it (Aurel. Victor. *Caesares* 5.2; *Epit.* 5.3) without any caveat as to its authenticity. His "wilful" abuse of Seneca's writings, and his speculative and "romantic" reconstruction, as Griffin puts it, often concern the *Ad Helviam*.

Rozelaar accuses Seneca of an "erotic" relationship with his mother (*art.*, p.85), and of homosexuality. Added to Dio's charges of pederasty and adultery (with Julia and Agrippina), it leaves little room for Stoic *virtus*. It is odd that Rozelaar, whose stance is basically sympathetic, should also be so ready to accept that Seneca was an accessory to the murders of Agrippina and Burrus. This imputes to the philosopher "une hypocrisie poussée à un degré incroyable" (Abel) about which we should be "inquiet et même sceptique". As he searches for erotic elements in the relationship between mother and son, he cites three statements from the *Ad Helviam* (*complexu careo; non conspectu eius, non sermone possum frui; conloquiorum...inexplebilis eram* -- 15.1-2). But it is much more likely that the last two of these deal with the mutual philosophical interests of mother and son (which Rozelaar had just mentioned), and the first one is a long way from proving an Oedipus complex. More probably, Seneca wished to portray (with rhetorical exaggeration) his *pietas* to society, not merely express it to his mother; this may also be part of his apology against the adultery charge.

There are times when, if he does not overlook contrary evidence, Rozelaar at least dismisses it without fair argument. He admits that Seneca says that the mother's love was shared equally by her three sons (*Ad Helv.* 18.1), but then proceeds to argue unconvincingly that all the other evidence points to

Seneca as a favourite son. He does not explain how Seneca could have been so attached to Helvia if he spent most of his time in Rome and Egypt separated from her. Here again, he assures us that Helvia's stepsister, who nursed Seneca through convalescence in Egypt, was also overprotective, and thus consolidated Seneca's maladjustment. Further, the "petulant and narrow-minded" greybeard of Rozelaar's making (p.84) contrasts with the *optimus pater* (17.4; cf. *Ep.* 78.2: *indulgentissimus*) who was *carissimus* to Helvia (2.5).

Rozelaar is guilty of *petitio principii* on many occasions, and his indiscriminate use of sources leads us to conclude that what is good in his work is not original, and what is original is not good. It is for this reason that Griffin has suggested that he should have written an historical novel.

APPENDIX' C

QUINTILIAN X.1.125-131: Translated by H.E. Butler.

I have deliberately postponed the discussion of Seneca in connexion with the various departments of literature owing to the fact that there is a general, though false, impression that I condemn and even detest him. It is true that I had occasion to pass censure upon him when I was endeavouring to recall students from a depraved style, weakened by every kind of error, to a severer standard of taste. But at that time Seneca's works were in the hands of every young man, and my aim was not to ban his reading altogether, but to prevent his being preferred to authors superior to himself, but whom he was never tired of disparaging; for, being conscious of the fact that his own style was very different from theirs, he was afraid that he would fail to please those who admired them. But the young men loved him rather than imitated him, and fell as far below him as he fell below the ancients. For I only wish they had equalled or at least approached his level. But he pleased them for his faults alone, and each individual sought to imitate such of those faults as lay within his capacity to reproduce: and then brought reproach on his master by boasting that he spoke in the genuine Senecan manner. Seneca had many excellent qualities, a quick and fertile intelligence with great industry and wide knowledge, though as regards the last quality he was often led into error by those whom he had entrusted with the task of investigating certain subjects on his behalf. He dealt with almost every department of knowledge; for speeches, poems, letters and dialogues all circulate under his name. In philosophy he showed a lack of critical power, but was none the less quite admirable in his denunciations of vice. His works contain a number of striking general reflexions and much that is worth reading for edification; but his style is for the most part corrupt and exceedingly dangerous, for the very reason that its vices are so many and attractive.

One could wish that, while he relied on his own intelligence, he had allowed himself to be guided by the taste of others. For if he had only despised all unnatural expressions and had not been so passionately fond of all that was incorrect, if he had not felt such affection for all that was his own, and had not impaired the solidity of his matter by striving after epigrammatic brevity, he would have won the approval of the learned instead of the enthusiasm of boys. But even as it is, he deserves to be read by those whose powers have been formed and firmly moulded on the standards of a severer taste, if only because he will exercise their critical faculties in distinguishing between his merits and his defects. For, as I have said, there is much in him which we may approve, much even that we may admire. Only we must be careful in our selection: would he had been as careful himself. For his genius deserved to be devoted to better aims, since what it does actually aim at, it succeeds in achieving.

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Title of Thesis

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SENECA'S AD HELVIAM: ITS CONTENT AND PURPOSE  
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