THE ETHICS OF THE FAMILY IN SENECA

by

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A dissertation submitted to the

Graduate School-New Brunswick

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfilment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Classics

Written under the direction of

Dr. Leah Kronenberg

And approved by

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New Brunswick, New Jersey

May, 2011

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Seneca, a Roman philosopher of the first century AD, provides our best source for understanding Stoicism under the early Roman empire. Seneca's writing focuses heavily on the family, especially the consolations addressed to people mourning the loss of relatives. My dissertation focuses on family relationships in Seneca's philosophical writing. I seek to explain how Seneca's emphasis on correct familial conduct is not only compatible with the sage's self-sufficiency, but enriches our understanding of how the Stoic wise man attains virtue. I argue that throughout his philosophical works, Seneca demonstrates the importance of the family to the sage as a resource for moral development.

Chapter I considers the nature of motherhood and a mother's relationship to her children. Through two case studies, we see that a mother provides her children with the model from which one may learn how to become a Stoic sage. Chapter II turns to the "Consolation to Polybius" and examines the relationship between brothers. Seneca

reminds Polybius of his duty to his surviving brothers, and of the supportive network they provide him in his grief for his biological brother's death.

Chapter III examines Seneca's conception of marriage as a site of stability and a relationship which should result in a couple's mutual progress towards virtue. It includes the first discussion in English of the fragmentary evidence for Seneca's "On Marriage". Chapter IV examines how Seneca uses the imperial family as an example of how not to act within familial relationships. Their failings remind the reader that only the Stoic sage is capable of virtue; worldly power does not lead to moral perfection

Chapter V considers the picture of family relationships found in the "Moral Epistles". Seneca writes for a philosophically-inclined reader, and so focuses on helping the reader acquire a virtuous disposition. However, he does not omit the practical implications of Stoic virtue for the family. He introduces discussion of familial topics as the collection progresses and the reader advances on the path to becoming a Stoic wise man. Even this work, which primarily discusses the sage's internal disposition, ultimately reconciles the sage with his family.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been the result of not only my work, but a great deal of patience and support on the part of others. It is my pleasure to acknowledge them.

I owe a considerable debt to my supervisor, Leah Kronenberg, for her consistent encouragement and enthusiasm for this project as well as her wise advice. I am also grateful to the other members of my thesis committee. Malcolm Schofield provided insightful and penetrating comments which always made my argument stronger. Serena Connolly brought a keen historical eye to my work, which has enriched its depth and scope. Alan Code offered thoughtful and elegant suggestions on how best to unify and finesse the final product.

This would not be the dissertation it is without the support of my writing group, *Kai Ta Loipa*: Caroline Bishop, Lauren Donovan, Isabel Köster and Darcy Krasne. They have given generously of their time and knowledge, and pushed me to bring my work up to their high standards. Their camaraderie and friendship has helped me get through this process.

For their academic and moral support, I thank Penelope Goodman, Ann Raia, Tony Keen, Rebecca Kennedy, James Ker and Victoria Moul. The Classics Department of Rutgers has provided me with a supportive environment among both faculty and graduate students over the last six years, and I am grateful for the time I have spent there.

The Graduate School at Rutgers-New Brunswick generously supported me with a University and Bevier Fellowship during the 2009-2010 academic year, during which I wrote the majority of the thesis.

Finally, as this is a dissertation about family, I thank my parents, Bill and Erika, and my brother George for their unfailing confidence in me. I also thank Geoff, who has spent the last three years living with a dissertating graduate student, for always being there when I needed him.

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Introduction

Seneca has recently become the centre of considerable scholarly effort after many years of not being taken seriously as a Stoic philosopher. While there has been interest in both the specifically Stoic doctrinal content and the rhetorical style of his work, one significant aspect of his writing remains neglected, namely his philosophical approach to the family. For instance, he writes consolatory literature with strong Stoic underpinnings to a mother mourning the death of her son, and to a man mourning the death of his brother. It is impossible to read Seneca's work without an awareness of the role that familial relationships play in it, yet to date no monograph examines the function of the family as a core theme in his philosophy, or considers how he applies his Stoicism to the subject.

Stoicism suffers a tension which I believe Seneca's work helps us resolve, particularly if we focus on how he presents familial relationships. On the one hand, Stoics claim that that the Stoic sage, the person who has achieved perfect virtue, will be completely self-sufficient, needing nothing outside themselves to be virtuous and thus attain happiness; on the other hand the sage's duties, which must by definition be *kata phusin* or 'according to nature', involve raising a family and sustaining a network of friends and relations.[1] Contrary to Nussbaum's assertion that the Stoics "persistently deny the importance of externals for flourishing" (2002b: 48), I believe that Seneca in fact provides evidence that at least one Stoic emphasized the centrality of the family in moral development. His writings consistently portray the family as an environment where an

[1] The importance of the natural impulse to have children and care for them is outlined in great detail by Cato, the Stoic speaker, in Cicero's *De Finibus* 3.62. Stobaeus (*SVF* 3.686) records that the Stoics believe that one marries and has children because it is part of the nature of a rational, communal and social animal.

aspiring sage learns how to achieve virtue. Without the foundation of family, virtue struggles to establish a foothold and flourish.

Seneca and Stoicism

Although historically Roman philosophy has been considered somehow less serious or original than Greek philosophy, recent scholarship has shown that Roman philosophers made a distinctive contribution to their own schools.[2] Seneca, too, does more than mimic his Greek predecessors or produce an eclectic synthesis of whatever doctrines appeal to him. Rather, he engages vigorously with Stoicism throughout his life, as "an original and innovative exponent of Stoic doctrine" who, Inwood argues, makes his main contribution through "a sensitivity to the value of first-hand experience in ethics and moral psychology" (2005: 3). Reydams-Schils has used Seneca as one source for the emergence of the self as "a mediator between philosophical and traditional values" among the Roman Stoics; she also asks whether his work demonstrates an allowance for moderated grief that Cicero's accounts of the Stoic position did not include (2005: 1; 134-41). While Seneca operated within the framework of the Stoic school, he was comfortable developing his own approach to doctrine and making Stoicism accessible and useful to his Roman peers.[3] As Roller puts it, "throughout his ethical prose he places Stoic ethics in dialogue with traditional ethical discourse, urging his audience to embrace the former and reject the latter" (2001: 63). While I would not go so far as to say Seneca

[2] See, for instance, the *Philosophia Togata* collections (Barnes and Griffin 1989 and 1997) and Reydams-Schils 2005 on the Roman Stoics.

[3] Stoicism as a philosophical system was receptive to changes and developments, rather than remaining statically obedient to the principles originally outlined by Zeno. For instance, Sedley 2003: 20-24 outlines the reorientation of Stoicism back to its Platonic roots which Posidonius and Panaetius undertook around the late second century B.C.

always urges his audience towards Stoicism, at the very least he frequently juxtaposes the two moral systems to make pointed contrasts that speak for themselves.

He wrote in an astonishingly wide range of genres throughout his life, from the *consolatio* to epistles, the lengthy and (perhaps overly) exhaustive *De Beneficiis*, a two-book treatise on *clementia* for the young Nero, a three-book treatise on anger for his older brother Novatus, and several other essays on similarly moral themes.[4] His philosophical work is always firmly grounded in Stoic philosophy. Stoicism had by this stage become rather popular at Rome. It did not unequivocally bar its adherents from taking political office, and thus fit in well with the goals of the senatorial class who had the leisure for study. Indeed, Stoic convictions often provided justification for standing up to the power of the emperor, as in the case of Thrasea Paetus. Cato also served as a favourite Stoic exemplar.[5]

Because of the wide range of Seneca's writing, it is difficult to give a brief summary of the current state of scholarship; even the bibliography on just the *Epistulae Morales*, for instance, is considerable. Accordingly, I will sum up scholarship as

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[4] Dating Seneca's works is notoriously difficult, but Griffin 1992: 396 gives a useful outline of the dates, and I refer the reader to her appendix on dating for the arguments concerning the dates I outline in this note. Broadly speaking, the *Consolatio ad Marciam* was composed under Gaius; the *Consolatio ad Polybium* and *ad Helviam* were written during Seneca's exile, so between A.D. 41 and A.D. 49. *De Ira* was complete by A.D. 52. *De Brevitate Vitae* was written between A.D. 48 and A.D. 55; *De Constantia Sapientis*, *De Tranquillitate Animi* and *De Otio* were complete before A.D. 64. Works written under Nero but before Seneca's retirement include *De Clementia*, *De Vita Beata* and *De Beneficiis*. The *Naturales Quaestiones* and *Epistulae Morales* both date from after Seneca's retirement in A.D. 62 but before his death. This outline excludes Seneca's literary accomplishments, as he also wrote many tragic plays and the notorious satire on the death of Claudius, the *Apocolocyntosis*. We have no firm dates for the composition of any of the tragedies, although the *Apocolocyntosis* is assumed to date from November or December A.D. 54, around the time of Claudius' death. Those interested in a more detailed account of Seneca's biography should turn to Griffin 1992, the standard biography of Seneca which has yet to be surpassed.

[5] Our impression of Thrasea's Stoicism comes from Tactius' portrait of him, for instance the depiction of his death at *Annales* 16.34. A later set of trials under Domitian of a group including Helvidius Priscus, Herennius Senecio, Junius Mauricus, Quintus Junius Arulenus Rusticus, Arria (widow of Thrasea Paetus) and Fannia (his daughter) are sometimes misleadingly referred to as the 'Stoic Resistance'. As Gill notes, while it is not the case "that Stoicism is doctrinally opposed to imperial or monarchic rule as such", it did provided "a theoretical basis for those who wanted to signal their opposition, on ethical grounds, to the conduct of specific emperors" (2000: 598). For more on these trials, see Rogers 1960.

appropriate in the following chapters, but I will make a few comments on the overall picture here. There is no doubt that Senecan studies is currently experiencing something of a renaissance in the Anglophone academic world.[6] Volk and William's edited volume *Seeing Seneca Whole* draws together essays on philosophy, politics and poetry (2006). Bartsch and Wray have collected a similar volume, *Seneca and the Self*, examining the question of ethical selfhood in the corpus (2009). Fitch presides over the collection of the essays, selected from the best of the last forty years, found in the volume dedicated to Seneca in the *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies* series (2008). Braund's new edition of *De Clementia* is a welcome addition to the shelves (2009), as is Henderson's *Morals and Villas in Seneca's Letters: Places to Dwell* (2004).

There are two trends to note here. The first is the popularity of essay collections, as much a function of modern pressures of scholarship as anything else; the second is the tendency to settle on a limited theme or single work rather than attempt a broad survey of a topic through Seneca's oeuvre.[7] These works also fall, mainly, into the category of either literary or historical studies which build on the work done by Griffin 1992 and Veyne (e.g. 2003). Philosophical scholarship on Seneca in particular has suffered from a tendency to pick out snippets of his work to support an investigation of a wider question within Stoicism. For instance, he appears in discussions of Stoic logic, psychological dualism and the passions, but as part of the supporting cast for the idea under discussion

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[6] As a consequence, most of the work I reference in this dissertation will be in English. This is not to say that scholars writing in other languages are not also working on Seneca. There has been a great deal of German scholarship concerned with structural issues in both the dialogues and particularly the *Epistulae Morales* (for instance Cancik 1967, Schönegg 1999, and Hachmann 2006). Italian scholars have also been active in manuscript criticism and the production of new editions (for example, Vico 1969, Lentano 1997, Vottero 1998 and Bellandi 2004). However, at the present moment, research into the social history of the family, Stoic ethics and Seneca more generally is primarily published in English.

[7] The work of Motto and Clark deserves mention here; since the 1960s, they have produced articles on very limited topics with titles such as "Seneca on friendship" (1993b) which survey passages without providing much in the way of deeper analysis.

rather than as the central focus of research.[8] The exception to this trend is Inwood, who has produced a number of works with Seneca at the centre of the intellectual picture (1995, 2005, 2007a, 2007b).

Some work has looked at Seneca's depiction of human relationships, although it has been more interested in questions of slavery and friendship than of the family. For instance, Bradley 1986 gives the authoritative analysis of the relationship between historical circumstances of slave ownership and Seneca's account of the bond between slave and master in Letter 47.[9] More recently, Edwards 2009 analyses the parallels between slavery and the control of self drawn throughout the Senecan corpus. Friendship has been discussed mainly in the context of the *Epistulae Morales* and the relationship between Lucilius and Seneca; indeed, as so often in philosophy, friendships between men eclipse other relationships in this text, and indeed most texts.[10] As Moller puts it, "although friendship has been fairly widely discussed among philosophers, marriage has not, despite its obvious importance. (If Aristotle had made some remarks about marriage instead of friendship would things have been the other way around?)" (2005: 283-4). His observation applies not just to marriage, the specific topic of his argument, but to the family in general.

There is one small, rather strange way in which treatments of Seneca almost discuss the family but in practice never quite do. The strange elision occurs in discussions of Letter 121, which provides a central piece of evidence for our understanding of

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[8] Inwood 2005 provides a thorough overview of these topics and more; on the question of the passions, see Graver 2007.

[9] I will always refer to letters from the *Epistulae Morales* as Letter X, rather than *Epistula* X *vel sim.*, in the remainder of the introduction and the chapters that follow.

[10] Reydams-Schils 2005: 69 discusses the Stoic categorization of friends as falling somewhere between Good and indifferents.

oikeiōsis theory.[11] I will deal with *oikeiōsis* at some length in chapter one, and a brief definition comes later in this introduction, but at this stage it is enough to say that *oikeiōsis* can be considered as the building block of human relations.[12] The first stage, which Letter 121 describes, is the process through which babies begin to realise that their bodies belong to them, and thus that looking after their arms and legs is in their own best interest. More advanced stages involve our realisation that the interests of other humans are also our interests; a parent's relationship to a child is often used as the classic example of assimilating someone else's interests to our own. So *oikeiōsis* begins in the basic bond between parent and child, and is a key stage in moral development that ultimately lets humans achieve virtue. Yet vital questions have not been asked of Seneca, or of the Stoics more generally. Given this link between *oikeiōsis*, the parent-child relationship and the attainment of virtue, what is the correct way for a family to operate? How should family members relate to each other? And where does the sage fit into this picture?

You will note that the question 'what about women?' does *not* appear in the above list. Stoicism's insistence that men and women have the same capacity for achieving virtue has lead some scholars to question how this doctrine corresponds to Seneca's perceived misogynistic streak.[13] These analyses usually base their conclusions on

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[11] For instance, Kerferd 1972 offers an outline of the doctrine and how it relates to the fundamental principles of Stoicism, but only mentions the family in relation to the Hierocles passage. Inwood 1985: 189-97 uses Letter 121 as evidence for the primary impulse that drives *oikeiōsis*, but does not examine the wider context within which that impulse takes place. Brunschwig 1986: 135-9 analyses the evidence for the 'cradle argument' from observing child behaviour in Letter 121, but not the context in which the child is observed. Jackson-McCabe 2004: 337-9 examines the relevant passage only for evidence on whether humanity's tendency towards goodness is innate or acquired.

[12] The brief Stoic glossary in this introduction begins at page 18; the lengthier discussion in chapter one can be found at pages 31-4.

[13] For instance, Lavery concludes that "women in general are depicted as irrational, unrealistic, angry, cowardly, childish, extravagant, unstable and immoral" (1997: 9). See also Mauch 1997: 26-66.

Seneca's language, which uses adjectives such as *muliebris* in a pejorative sense, and argue from that for Seneca's belief in women's "natural inferiority" (Lavery 1997: 5). I wish to raise two issues here. First, the question asked is anachronistic, and frankly not particularly interesting. We should not express surprise that Seneca thought of women differently to us, nor that he occupies the mental landscape of his own time rather than ours.[14] Second, thinking about women, and women alone, can only get you so far in understanding Seneca's structure of thought. Women do not exist in a cultural or intellectual vacuum; they form part of society at large, and need to be studied in their wider context to be properly understood.

Seneca's philosophical work is rich with material that shows just how much he values the family and its relationship to philosophy. Even the basic facts about his writing demonstrate a concern with familial relationships. For instance, the *Consolatio ad Helviam* is written to his own mother, and meditates at length on her family's role in alleviating her grief while he is in exile. The *Consolatio ad Polybium* offers consolation to Polybius on the death of his brother, as does the *Consolatio ad Marciam* to Marcia on the death of her son. Admittedly, the *consolatio* genre normally addresses the death of the addressee's loved one, but the fact that Seneca's early work contains three of these compositions suggests a keen appreciation of the importance of such loss. Later work also continues to examine familial themes. For instance, *De Clementia* repeatedly emphasises how a good emperor should be like a father towards his citizens. The theme

[14] I do not mean to imply that philosophers do not sometimes believe things which are contrary to the more widely-held social mores of their times, or that there is no value in examining whether Seneca's view of women is consistent throughout his work. However, expressing surprise that Seneca was not a feminist seems profoundly unproductive.

of familial ethics runs deep in Seneca's writing, and my purpose in this study is to give it the attention it deserves.

The strategy of turning to the family grew from my own frustration with research on the status of women in philosophy, which in turn drew me to the question of the role of the family. While academic work on literature and history has a nuanced approach to women, their function in literary texts and historical experience, the comprehensive framework in which women exist is understudied in ancient philosophy. This is, in part, the result of a problem that the source material poses which scholars of literature and history do not encounter. Philosophical texts construct a system of thought that is designed to work as a unified whole. If you remove an element from that whole, then it becomes unintelligible and enfeebled. Working on, for example, a literary character can sometimes, although not always, avoid this problem. Work on the poems of Catullus that include Lesbia does not inevitably suffer if considered without reference to the non-Lesbia poems. Similarly, the story of Lucretia is often examined as a unit independent of the first book of Livy, let alone the entire *Ab Urbe Condita*. However, removing women from the philosophical framework in which they appear segregates them from their context, which limits the usefulness of work done on them in isolation.[15] The question remains - within what kind of framework do women exist in ancient philosophical texts?

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[15] I do not mean to imply that work on women in philosophy is a wasted enterprise. Some important work has been done here. For instance, Bluestone 1987 gives a pertinent account of the role of women in Plato's ideal state. Asmis 1996 sums up the state of Stoic thought on women. Freeland 2000 raises the question of how feminism fits within the wider philosophical project, and vice versa. Nussbaum 2002a examines the "incomplete feminism" of Musonius Rufus, and in some ways illustrates the limits of asking such a question of the ancient texts. It seems to me that, while these works make important contributions, we have now, in the words of Pauline Schmitt-Pantel, reached a methodological impasse ("La difference des sexes", 105, in *Une Histoire des femmes est-elle possible?* ed. M. Perrot, 1984; quoted in translation by Katz 1992: 81).

The answer is that they appear within the context of the family, and the richness of relationships (including those between men) which exist there.

Some might object that the family itself should not be isolated from the wider framework in which *it* appears. Reydams-Schils, for instance, points out that Stoic discussions of politics and family life both revolve around a central question of whether the Stoic sage should be detached from or involved with the world around him; however, academic inquiry has separated out the elements of the world into the family and political spheres, and mistakenly considers them as two distinct conceptual strands (Reydams-Schils 2005: 7). I agree that philosophical ideas of the family have been connected to the political sphere at least as far back as Plato, and Milnor has conclusively shown that during the Augustan period, even among non-Stoics, the world of the family was viewed as irrevocably linked to public life and civic identity (2005). However, I would also contend that this preoccupation has allowed the political realm to overwhelm the ethical sphere. Examining the family exclusively within the context of its political function prevents us from stepping back and considering its operation as an individual unit, or as something that ancient philosophers thought about as an issue in its own right. Seneca gives us the evidence both to study the family independently of the political sphere, and to look at how politics pertains to the family rather than how the family pertains to politics.

I should note here that my investigation extends only to the corpus of Seneca *Philosophus*, and will not cover the works of Seneca *Dramaticus*. This is not because the dramatic works have nothing to offer a student of familial ethics. On the contrary, their plots are predicated upon precisely the nuances of relations within families. For instance,

in the *Medea* alone, the plot is driven by tensions between parents and children, husband and wife, son-in-law and father-in-law, and divorced wife and new wife. Neither do I think that there is some kind of impermeable barrier between Seneca's mental identity as philosopher and literary author. Indeed, the title of the essay collection *Seeing Seneca Whole* indicates the importance of avoiding such false binary thinking (Volk and Williams 2006).

Much excellent work on the tragedies has shown that through the medium of drama, Seneca plays out various dilemmas and workings out of Stoic doctrine in the actions of his characters.[16] However, three reasons lead me to decide to stay within the borders of Seneca *Philosophus* for this study. The first is purely practical: the scholarly approach to plays differs significantly to that taken to prose. The questions of character motivation that are so central to the dramatic corpus are inappropriate for the one-sided genre of a treatise, and even for the notional dialogue between Seneca and Lucilius in the *Epistulae Morales*. A related second reason rests on the fact that Seneca does not speak in his own voice in the tragedies, but in the voices of his characters; untangling what Seneca 'really' thinks using his characterisation for evidence of his personal philosophical position seems fruitless at best and downright dangerous at worst.[17] The third reason is more intellectually pragmatic. It seems to me that it is impossible to analyse the ethics of the family operating in the tragedies without first understanding what Seneca's

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[16] See, for instance, Star 2006, Nussbaum 1994: 439-83, Rosenmeyer 1989, Tanner 1985 and Boyle 1983. Hine 2004 explores more broadly the various approaches to how Seneca's Stoicism should affect our interpretation of the tragedies, that is, whether they operate in a Stoic world, an anti-Stoic world, or a world untouched by Stoicism.

[17] In some ways, this point mirrors a further concern in working with Seneca Philosophus, which is the degree to which he is 'sincere' or adopts a deliberate persona in his writing. The question of sincerity is a vexed one, especially given the accusations of hypocrisy levelled against Seneca by his contemporaries. However, even if Seneca Philosophus *is* adopting a persona, it appears to be a philosophically consistent one; see pages 15-16 below.

understanding of the ethics of the family was in a purely philosophical context. In this, my work differs from scholars who have examined, for instance, the conception of the passions or the Stoic understanding of natural science, where the basic doctrines are already well-understood and sufficiently studied, and thus can be applied to the tragedies without any extra intellectual preparation. I am, in effect, starting from an earlier stage, and need to construct the theoretical framework before applying it. I hope to return to the tragedies with the conclusions of this study in the future but, for now, will refrain from engaging with them.

Defining the Family

The Latin word *familia* does not mean exactly the same as the English word 'family', despite the tempting closeness of the cognates.[18] The Roman construct of *familia* was primarily a legal one.[19] Saller 1984 has shown that the legal definition of *familia* encompasses only those blood relatives who are agnates, or related through the male line, and not cognates, or relatives through the female line. Equally, a woman married without *manus* remained part of her father's *familia*, not her husband's, and thus was not legally part of her children's *familia* either.[20] The *familia* could also be defined as those under control of the *paterfamilias*, the oldest and most senior male. This definition included the slaves belonging to a household as well as those biologically related to each other through the male line. Indeed, *familia* could refer specifically to the slaves alone.

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[18] For more on the etymological problems of *familia*, see Milnor 2005:19.
[19] Gardner 1998 explores the concept of the *familia*, as the Romans defined it, in both law and every-day life.
[20] In Seneca's time, it was the norm for a woman not to enter into a *manus* marriage. Treggiari notes that although *manus* marriage was a strong institution at the time of Plautus, by the time of Cicero it seems to have waned, but it is hard to give a more certain chronology (1991: 443).

The technical meanings of *familia* in comparison to our sense of 'family' mean that before I can start discussing the ethics of relationships between people in the family, I need to clarify precisely whom I define as the family.

Naturally it would be anachronistic to apply the idea of the modern nuclear family to Seneca, as this concept did not form part of his intellectual landscape. Romans could also identify themselves as members of a *gens*, which invoked both historical and ethnic associations.[21] Membership of a *gens* could lead to certain inherited rights or priesthoods, and indeed was the gateway to patrician status when it still held political weight in the Republic. Membership of a *gens* lost some functional importance when the Roman political system rearranged itself around an emperor, but the *gens* remained one way of defining identity and relationships. A sense of heritage could be tied up with a place as much as with ancestry, and those elements of family history were often used to considerable political advantage. A Roman thinking of 'family' in practical terms could thus be considering his biological family, the people who lived in the same house, the people who belong to the same *gens*, or those whom the law defined as legally forming his family. Notions of family in Seneca's period were also influenced by legislation, particularly that of Augustus and his laws concerning marriage and adultery.[22] The nature of the historical Roman family still poses many complicated questions for researchers, and much necessary work on this subject remains to be done. [23]

However, I am interested in Seneca's philosophical ideas about living ethically within a biological family; I am not attempting to recreate the lived cultural system of

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[21] For more on ethnic identity in Rome, particularly in the Republic, see Farney 2007.
[22] I will treat Augustus' legislative program in considerably more detail where appropriate in subsequent chapters. See chapter three, pages 118-9 and chapter four, pages 164-6.
[23] For more on the Roman family, see George 2005, Rawson and Weaver 1997, Dixon 1992, Bradley 1991a and 1991b and Rawson 1986b.

familial relationships from Seneca's texts in the way one might use legal texts or inscriptions.[24] The complications which inheritance strategies like adoption might introduce into these relationships form no part of Seneca's discourse; for his purposes, the structure of family remains simple. I shall therefore use the philosophical conception of the family to structure my thinking. I argue that three central relationships form the core of Seneca's view of the family. The first element of familial ethics is the relationship between husband and wife; the second is the relationship between parents and children; the third is the relationship between siblings. Seneca has plenty to say about all three of these pairs, either by commenting directly on particular relationships or by making general statements about how they should ideally function.

In some ways, this topic is similar to that which Foucault explored in *The History of Sexuality*. In volume three, *The Care of Self*, he argued that marriage gained a new ethical importance in the early empire, and that Stoic writers played a prominent role in redefining "a modality of relations between" husband and wife (1986: 150).[25] The main qualities of this redefinition were an emphasis on the relationship between spouses as the central element of a family; the nature of the husband as a reciprocal rather than dominant figure; and an increasing awareness of the question of marital sex and how to approach it (1986: 148-9). While the texts that we have from the Roman Stoics do provide us with more information about the marital relationship, I believe Foucault makes two errors here. Firstly, he looks at discussions of marriage without considering

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[24] For work which does take this approach, see, for example, Saller 1997.

[25] Veyne's analysis agrees with this conclusion, but makes many of the same errors as Foucault in terms of selective use of source material (1987:33-49) . Classicists have thoroughly critiqued Foucault's methodology and engagement with classical texts. For examples of this kind of work, see Goldhill 1995 and the essays collected in Larmour, Miller and Platter 1998. For a critique of the influence of Foucault upon classical scholarship itself, see Richlin 1991.

their roots in older theory. For instance, *oikeiōsis* seems to have developed as an idea early in the history of the Stoa. As I mentioned above, one of the key pieces of evidence for that theory is the existence and nature of the parent-child relationship, which in turn cannot exist without marriage. An awareness of the importance of marriage does not spring out of nowhere. Secondly, Foucault overvalues the marital relationship as the primary one in the Stoic moral universe. As I hope my study will show, Seneca viewed all familial relationships as important in the sage's moral development, not just marriage. The family as a whole has a vital role to play in the environment it provides for us as we journey towards virtue, and marriage is only one part of that picture.

The Texts in Question

Seneca writes philosophy for Romans in Latin. In this endeavour, he follows the path of Lucretius, who put Epicurean doctrine into Latin epic, and Cicero, who recorded doctrines of Stoics, Epicureans and Academics in his dialogues, creating a Latin vocabulary for philosophy in the process.[26] Seneca is as positive as Cicero about the ability of Latin to communicate philosophically, and his output provides us with a unique insight into Roman Stoicism in the early imperial period.[27] While Cicero may have done his best to record Stoic doctrine accurately in order to respond to it with Academic scepticism, Seneca writes as a disciple of the school, and one with an interest in developing its doctrine.[28] As Brad Inwood comments, he has "a strong inclination to

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[26] For more on both Cicero's direct translations from Greek and his attempts to render concepts in Latin, see Powell 1995. Cicero himself discusses the topic in *De Finibus* 1.1-10 and *Tusculanae Disputationes* 2.5-9.
[27] See Richardson-Hay 2006: 297 for Seneca's belief "in Latin's strength as a philosophical language".
[28] Inwood 2007a: xix notes that "it is still quite common to see Seneca treated as an eclectic philosopher, someone who picks and chooses his inspirations not on the basis of a commitment to the central doctrines of Stoicism and not on the basis of a conviction about the intellectual coherence of the views he adopts": I

think for himself in the context of an intellectual climate teeming with influences from other schools" (2005: 2). His work both provides guidance to those interested in Stoicism and explores ethical questions of immediate relevance to his audience.

The question of audience affects how we read each of Seneca's works. Despite the ostensibly intimate context of composition, especially for the *consolationes* such as the one addressed to his own mother, Seneca seems always to have kept the outcome of publication in view. In fact, his literary eminence supposedly played a large part in Agrippina's decision to ask for his recall from exile in order to tutor Nero (Tacitus *Annales* 12.8), and presumably the publication of the *consolationes* nourished that reputation. Seneca thus tries to balance the need of two audiences – one who would be familiar with at least the basic notions of Stoicism, and thus would appreciate his incorporation of Stoic philosophy into his argument, and another audience without that philosophical background in whom the Stoic content would not resonate. His writing thus cannot rely upon Stoicism exclusively to make its point, but tries to make philosophy accessible to his readers, regardless of which genre he happens to be composing.

This consistency in his philosophical stance forms part of an overall aim to maintain a coherent overall authorial identity across genre boundaries, as Ker 2006 has convincingly shown. The consolatory texts, although they operate from a primarily Stoic framework, do not offer explicit doctrinal discourse. The treatises on anger and *clementia* work through a mainly exemplary approach, although their ethics rest on a Stoic

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agree with him that this is a misguided position, although thankfully this view seems to have lost popularity among Senecan specialists over the last two decades. See chapter five, page 214, footnote 10 for further discussion. I discuss the issue there because the *Epistulae Morales* have most frequently provided the fodder for the judgements of eclecticism.

understanding of the nature of the world.[29] However, the *Epistulae Morales* address a reader who explicitly desires philosophical instruction and therefore presumably is more committed to Stoicism. Seneca thus develops doctrine further than his other extant works. The letter form offers a unique chance to open a didactic conversation, and Seneca enthusiastically takes advantage of the opportunity.[30] That said, the *Epistulae Morales* represent the exception rather than the rule. In general, Stoic doctrine is embedded within texts rather than explicitly spelt out, in comparison to the very deliberate theoretical summaries that Cicero provides in his dialogues; Seneca provides us with practical examples of his theory rather than just an outline.

Questions of dating have been taken as far as they can, given the scant evidence we have to hand.[31] Although I will deal with the works in approximately chronological order, beginning with the *consolationes* and ending with the *Epistulae Morales*, I am not interested in questions of chronological development of thought. Rather, I will approach the texts thematically, and focus on the core issues of familial ethics that each one demonstrates. This approach naturally leads to an emphasis on some works over others. The *De Beneficiis*, for example, will appear infrequently as it focuses on relationships between people who, in the main, are not family members. I also attempt to incorporate passages that discuss the family in the context of the texts in which they appear. Although snippets of Seneca have often been deployed to prove points without reference to the wider works from which they are taken, I believe that this approach to the material leads

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[29] Stoic ethics are based in Stoic physics and Stoic logic as part of a coherent worldview. Diogenes Laertius 7.39-21 outlines the Stoic division of philosophy into three segments: ethics, physics and logic. Each of the three depends on the others in order to make sense within the Stoic system; Diogenes Laertius gives the image of an egg, with logic being the shell, ethics the egg-white, and physics the yolk. As Reydams-Schils 2005: 3 rightly notes, the Roman Stoics do prioritise ethics over the other two branches; however, they do not ignore them completely.

[30] For more on the letter form, see chapter five, pages 209-14.

[31] For issues of dating, see footnote 4 in this introduction and Griffin 1992: 395-411.

to a false understanding of Seneca's overall arguments. By looking at the appearance of familial themes in works as a whole, I aim to show the importance that Seneca attaches to the family in his philosophical corpus.

In order to preserve the integrity of the individual texts, in the main I will organise my chapter by work rather than by familial relationship.[32] Each work I examine has a pivotal relationship at its centre. For instance, the *Consolatio ad Helviam* revolves around the relationship between mother and son, although other familial relationships appear and are discussed within the context of the larger framing narrative. This organisational structure avoids picking passages piecemeal out of larger works, and respects the wider context in which they appear. The one exception to this rule is my discussion of *exempla* of the imperial family; as *exempla* are supposed to function as rhetorically free-standing examples, hypothetically suitable for any context, they suffer less from being studied independently of the text in which they appear. However, it is more appropriate to examine relationships which construct and frame texts like the *consolationes* and the *De Matrimonio* within the milieu of those works, rather than attempting to collate, for instance, all the references to mothers in the Senecan corpus. While that might provide an interesting catalogue, it would not give any great insight into the ways in which Seneca sees the family functioning in day to day life.

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[32] I use the following editions for each text: *De Beneficiis* – Basore 1935; *De Brevitate Vitae* – Williams 2003; *De Clementia* – Braund 2009; *De Consolatione ad Helviam* – Reynolds 1977; *De Consolatione ad Marciam* – Reynolds 1977; *De Consolatione ad Polybium* – Reynolds 1977; *De Constantia Sapientis* – Reynolds 1977; *De Ira* - Reynolds 1977; *De Matrimonio* – Vottero 1998; *De Otio* – Williams 2003; *De Providentia* – Reynolds 1977; *Epistulae Morales* – Reynolds 1965.

A Brief Stoic Primer

Before I begin, I want to introduce some basic philosophical concepts that I will return to in more detail in later chapters.[33] Our sources for Stoicism are fragmented, to say the least, although many early Stoics are quoted verbatim in later authors. Of the considerable corpus of work attributed to Chrysippus, a prominent pupil of Zeno and Cleanthes, only the titles survive (listed in Diogenes Laertius 7.189-202). Cicero provides our main substantial source. While he is not a Stoic himself, he does provide what appear to be faithful outlines of Stoic theory in his dialogues in order to honourably disagree with them. Other writers who cite the Stoics, such as Plutarch, are less generous. They often present small passages in polemical contexts deliberately to refute Stoic ideas. The quotation collection of Stobaeus from the fifth century A.D provides a compilation of excerpts of moral wisdom for his son, and contains many Stoic snippets that appealed to him.[34] We also have writings that survive from Stoics from the Roman period, like Epictetus, Musonius Rufus and Seneca himself. These texts do discuss doctrine, and help us understand the general direction of the arguments. While this fragmentation of our sources means that "Hellenistic philosophy is a jigsaw" (Long and Sedley 1987: 9), it is possible to reconstruct a basic picture of the major concepts which supported Stoic systems of thought.[35]

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[33] This is not the place for a full summary of the history of the Stoic school and its doctrines, and of necessity my summary is somewhat simplified; I will go into further detail in the relevant chapters as necessary. For introductory information to the Stoics, see Rist 1969, Long 1995, Inwood 2003 and Brennan 2005.

[34] These kinds of evidence provide our sources for the thought of Posidonius and Panaetius, two key figures in the development of Stoic thought from what is sometimes called the Middle Stoa, around the second century B.C. They are usually accredited with directing the school's moral philosophy away from the ethics of the wise man alone to the ethics of the *proficiens*. Whatever their contribution was, it is considered to have had significant impact upon the school.

[35] Long and Sedley 1987 is an excellent collection of primary sources, in both translation and the original language, with commentary, that lays out the basic principles of Stoicism as well as other Hellenistic

The Stoic sage has already appeared in this introduction, and will be one of the central figures in this work. The Stoics believe that the sage is the only human who truly achieves virtue, and thus happiness; everyone else is a ***proficiens*** or someone approaching virtue. It is, however, not easy to become a sage. Indeed, it was said that the sage was as rare as the phoenix (Alexander, *De Fato* 196.24-197.3, L&S 61N). The Stoics define virtue as the equivalent of acting in accordance with reason, that is, of always following the rational path of action and not being controlled by irrational movements of the mind.[36] They also describe virtue in terms of acting in accordance with nature (*kata phusin*). Nature is considered analogous to reason, as the creator of the world, so acting in accordance with nature is by definition rational behaviour.[37] The sage is the only person who will always act in accordance with reason, and thus earns the label 'virtuous'. Everyone else inevitably either acts following irrational impulses, or performs the correct actions without the correct moral intentions; in neither of these cases are they acting truly virtuously.[38]

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philosophical schools, and is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in discovering more about the sources and ideas than what I outline here. Following convention, I refer to Long and Sedley as L&S when directing the reader to relevant sections.

[36] The cultural understanding of *virtus* shifted during the change from Republic to Empire. Where under the Republic *virtus* had been defined primarily in terms of military accomplishment, under the principate it came to incorporate a private dimension. As Habinek puts it, "while its military connotations weaken, virtue's ethical significance broadens and deepens. Stoicism, in particular, provides a discourse of virtue that is often hard to distinguish from what we might call political analysis. ... It encouraged acceptance of the world as one found it (i.e. "nature") yet identified responsibilities specific to specific social roles" (2000: 288). McDonnell 2006 charts the relationship of *virtus* to masculinity under the Republic, and how the idea began to shift when the nature of military service changed under the principate. Roller 2001: 97-108 analyses how Seneca's writing performs a role in shifting *virtus* from a public, externally demonstrated, purely military quality to an internal one defined by a Stoic moral framework.

[37] The direct Latin translation of *kata phusin* is *secundam naturam*. Other words for nature that the Roman Stoics used include *ratio* and *deus*.

[38] For primary sources on the Stoic wise man, see L&S 59 and 66.

The Stoics call the irrational impulses that guide our actions **the passions** or *pathē*.[39] These movements of the soul are not governed by reason, and thus action caused by them is not virtuous. The four primary passions are appetite, fear, distress and pleasure. The correct approach to them is to extirpate them and replace them with the *eupatheiai*, or acceptable emotions with which to experience life. The language of extirpation can lead to accusations of heartlessness, although this interpretation misunderstands the doctrine.[40] The *pathē* arise from a mistaken value judgement about **indifferents** or *adiaphora*. The Stoics argue that the only truly important and good thing in the world is virtue, and thus its pursuit should be our only concern; everything else, for instance political power or wealth, is an indifferent. A person experiences the *pathē* when they consider the pursuit of an indifferent more important than the pursuit of virtue, and thus misjudge its importance. This is not to say that the Stoic has no guidelines about what to seek in life. Those indifferents which are *kata phusin* or according to nature, such as good health and an adequate diet, are known as **preferred indifferents**; all things being equal, the Stoic sage will select them over the alternatives, such as starvation and sickness. However, they should not take priority over the pursuit of virtue. If behaving in accordance with reason means becoming ill, or even committing suicide, then the sage will prioritise behaving rationally over retaining the indifferent. For instance, if the sage had to choose between being killed or betraying his friends, and the rational course of action was to die, then the sage would willingly die despite life being a preferred indifferent. According to this scheme, friends and family members are classified as preferred indifferents. They are *kata phusin* and should be obtained if possible, but they

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[39] For primary sources on the *pathē* and *eupatheiai*, see L&S 65.
[40] See Irwin 1998 for an outline of the case made for extirpation inevitably leading to heartlessness. I discuss the topic further in chapter two, pages 88-90.

are not in and of themselves necessary for virtue if the virtuous course of action dictates, for example, that reasons of health make it impossible for the sage to marry or have children.[41]

Another key Stoic theory which I have already mentioned is ***oikeiōsis***, sometimes inadequately translated into English as 'assimilation'.[42] This process enables one's sense of self to expand out from an individual's perspective to embrace the whole community of virtuous people, via the intermediate step of assimilating one's family's interests to oneself. Strictly speaking, there are two processes to which the name *oikeiōsis* refers. The first is that through which a human baby gradually realises that her limbs belongs to her, and that thus she has an interest in their well-being; the second takes that concept of self-interest and extends it from the individual out to those closest to you, so that their interests become your own. This process, ideally, continues to expand, until the sage considers the interests of all humanity to be the same as her own.[43]

One consequence of the completed process of *oikeiōsis* is the ***cosmopolis***.[44] Stoics define the *cosmopolis* as a universal city which contains all beings who have perfect grasp of reason; this includes the gods (who are, by definition, embodiments of reason in the Stoic scheme of things) as well as virtuous sages. Arguably, every human being has the potential to join the *cosmopolis*, although that membership is only activated by full exercise of reason; the *cosmopolis* thus exists, although its citizens may be small in

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[41] For primary sources on indifferents, see L&S 58. None of the sources specifically cite family as one of the indifferents, and instead choose such examples as noble/ignoble birth, health/sickness, wealth/poverty, beauty/ugliness and so on.
[42] See Inwood 1999: 677 n.8 for the issues involved in translating this word accurately.
[43] For more on *oikeiōsis*, see chapter one, pages 31-4.
[44] For more on the *cosmopolis*, see chapter two, pages 76-8.

number.[45] Within the *cosmopolis*, there is no need for hierarchical institutions of enforcing order, such as law courts. Each citizen is completely in tune with reason, and thus will always behave in a rational (and thus lawful) fashion without the need for external governance. The fulfilment of *oikeiōsis* would also mean that each citizen would consider each other citizen's interests to be their own, and thus would not commit crimes that would effectively harm themselves. The *cosmopolis* provides a sense of identity grounded in a person's nature as a rational human being, rather than in allegiances to temporal cities and lords which are ultimately indifferent to the pursuit of virtue.

Finally, I should explain the function of the ***exemplum*** in Roman moralistic writing.[46] *Exempla* did not begin as a Stoic didactic device; originally they appear to have been used by the Academics and only gain ground in our Stoic sources after Panaetius (Sedley 1999: 150-1). Roman moral education, philosophical or otherwise, relied heavily on the appropriate deployment of examples or *exempla* of previous outstanding moral behaviour, and upon its arrival at Rome, Stoicism also seems to have adopted this strategy. These *exempla* formed part of school curricula and were offered as models of behaviour worth emulating by the young boys who would grow up to be Roman citizens. People who featured in *exempla* did not have to be morally perfect in *every* way – it was enough for one aspect of their behaviour to be laudable, and that aspect would be the focus of the *exemplum*. Roman philosophy, unsurprisingly, also relied upon *exempla* to communicate models of behaviour that should be emulated. One of the most popular *exempla* was Cato, who had gained the reputation of being a Stoic sage; obviously his

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[45] Zeno's original concept of the *cosmopolis* seems to have been rather like Plato's concept of the ideal city, in that he envisaged a perfect community. Later developments in *cosmopolis* theory which extend this idea to the *cosmos* as city by virtue of it acting as a shared habitation, however large, advance this concept. For more on the *cosmos* as community, see Schofield 1991: 67-74.

[46] For more on the *exemplum*, see Mayer 2008, Roller 2004, Skidmore 1996 and Maslakov 1984.

demonstrations of sage-like behaviour provided the didactic tradition with an attractive source for Stoic *exempla*. Seneca too relies upon *exempla* to provide moral guidance but, as we shall see, he draws many of his examples from the family rather than historical figures.

Summary of Chapters

My overall aim in this work is to show that Seneca considers the pursuit of virtue to be fundamentally grounded in the family. While the sage may still be virtuous, and the *proficiens* reach virtue, outside a familial framework, Seneca implies that it is certainly easier to become virtuous within that structure. Indeed, as Inwood has astutely noted, "the philosophical environment in which Seneca worked was in the beginning a home environment, or at least not an institutional one" (2005: 10). He himself began his pursuit of philosophy within the boundaries of his family, and thus learnt from those around him, as well as from the teachers with whom he studied.

Each chapter of this thesis operates as an independent unit, and thus readers only interested in (as it might be) mothers, brothers , marriage, the imperial family or the *Epistulae Morales* can turn their undivided attention to the appropriate chapter. However, I hope that reading from beginning to end will create a sense of the building blocks of the family that Seneca works with, and that the independent chapters will mutually reinforce my overall argument. I start with the most basic block, that between mother and child; then progress to the relationship between siblings; and then to the artificially created

relationship of marriage.[47] This prepares the ground for a more abstract look at both the role of *exempla* and the appearance of the family in the *Epistulae Morales*.

Chapter one examines the *Consolatio ad Marciam* and the *Consolatio ad Helviam*, both addressed to women in their role as mothers, and examines the significance of motherhood in those texts. Stoicism adds a fundamental extra element of consolation for Marcia in Seneca's deployment of *oikeiōsis* theory. Seneca also connects the procreative role of a mother to nature's creative role in bringing the universe into being; mothers and nature share a common role of begetting and relinquishing offspring. In the *Consolatio ad Helviam*, Seneca depicts his own relationship with his mother and provides his own family as a practical example of how a mother should relate to her children. Her fulfilment of *oikeiōsis* extends out from her consideration of her own children to that of her grandchildren, modelling the practicalities of these kinds of relationships. Seneca also explores Helvia's relationship with his aunt, providing a further example of how family members model virtuous behaviour for us, and shows how Helvia both learns and teaches within the environment of the family. The two women are never depicted as perfect sages, but they serve to demonstrate ideal behaviour. Through these two case studies, we see how a mother is instrumental in providing her children with the model from which one may learn how to become a Stoic sage.

Chapter two shifts its focus from the parental to the fraternal relationship. The *Consolatio ad Polybium* provides the main source material. Although Seneca partially revisits the consolatory themes found in the *ad Marciam* and *ad Helviam*, he adds a new element to the mix, more appropriate for a man who is mourning his brother than a

[47] The obvious relationship that is missing from this study is the father-child relationship. I have chosen not to devote a chapter to this relationship because it is not the central focus of any single text, and does not appear to play such a pivotal role in Seneca's conception of the family.

mother mourning her son. Seneca uses the model of the *cosmopolis* to show that all humans are in fact Polybius' brothers in reason, and thus he has obligations to them that surpass those to the brother who has died. One element of this consolatory tactic is to suggest that Polybius take especial comfort from the emperor Claudius, who functions as a symbolic figure of reason within the consolation, enabling the fraternal relationships that sustain Polybius in his grief. Finally, through manipulating the force of the bond between brothers in the *cosmopolis*, Seneca strengthens his own implicit plea for recall from exile; he suggests that Polybius has a moral obligation to him as a brother in reason to save him from banishment. The framework provided by Polybius' brothers, both biological and spiritual, gives Seneca the opportunity to model secure relationships that can survive the external shocks of fate, and provide moral support for those within the network.

Chapter three examines Seneca's view on marriage, an artificially created rather than biological familial connection and one thus subject to slightly different considerations. The source material mainly comes from the *De Matrimonio*, which is a problematic text. It survives only through quotations in Jerome's polemical *Adversus Jovinianum*, which have obviously been tailored to suit Jerome's argument for the superiority of virginity over marriage. This chapter provides a much needed English summary and discussion of the evidence, and proceeds to outline what we can extrapolate from the surviving fragments about Seneca's views on marriage. This reconstruction is obviously a cautious and partial one, but reveals important insights into the role Seneca believes marriage plays in the life of a sage, especially given the tendency of some

modern scholarship to pigeonhole Seneca as a misogynist.[48] The analysis is supported by passages taken from elsewhere in Seneca's work on the subject of marriage, including accounts of Seneca's own relationship with his wife. Marriage seems to be portrayed as providing an important site of ethical stability, and the *De Matrimonio* appears to recognise that women are equally as capable of attaining virtue as men.

Chapter four turns to the most prominent family in Seneca's works, the imperial family, and asks what their depiction tells us about Seneca's familial ethics. The imperial family are often used as an *exemplum* for correct moral behaviour in a given situation, which follows Augustus' efforts to make his family a model of good conduct for the Roman populace to emulate. However, Seneca also frequently undercuts the supposedly perfect imperial family through the way in which he constructs his *exempla*, thus problematising their carefully constructed public image. The imperial family turns out to be an example of how *not* to do familial relationships, and of what happens when the ethical support network a family should provide is destroyed by the pursuit of political power rather than of virtue. Their failings serve to remind the reader that only the Stoic sage is capable of virtue; worldly power is not enough to ensure moral perfection.

Chapter five closes this study by considering the representation of the family found in the *Epistulae Morales*, Seneca's final work and his most philosophically meticulous. Familial relationships, along with other distracting external indifferents, are stripped out of the twelve letters that form the programmatic first book, only to be slowly reintroduced throughout the first half of the corpus in ways that caution the reader against relying on familial networks more than the individual self. However, when the collection reaches its midpoint and continues to progress through Seneca's didactic curriculum,

[48] Examples of this trend can be found in Engel 2003, Hill 2001, Asmis 1996 and Manning 1973.

slowly the family begins to take on a role in moral development – one that is hedged about by caution, and not as wholly positive as the depiction found in other works, but still an important part of a sage's moral landscape. The letters withhold the conventional family until Seneca's pupil, the reader of the collection, has built up sufficient philosophical expertise to avoid being misled. He has been purified by his philosophical journey through the *Epistulae Morales*, and thus by the close of our extant collection can begin to reintroduce the concept of the family into his intellectual and moral life in its proper place.

Given the importance of the family elsewhere in Seneca's work, the approach found in the *Epistulae Morales* initially appears confusing and contradictory. One possible explanation for the apparent change in attitude towards the family in the letters lies in the lateness of the work; Seneca's ideas may have changed over time, and the *Epistulae Morales* may represent an inclination to a less sympathetic view of the family. However, substantiating that kind of claim is very difficult given the issues with securely identifying the chronology of Seneca's works. Instead, I prefer to attribute this change in approach to differences in genre and audience. Seneca writes the *Epistulae Morales* for a reader who is really serious about beginning the journey towards virtue. For that to happen, Seneca has to focus almost exclusively on his pupil's inner state, in order to ensure that a proper foundation for virtue exists within the soul. However, what is said about the family, as it is gradually reintroduced into the letters and begins to feature in the reader's moral universe, remains consistent with the importance Seneca places on the family in his other works as a part of the overall moral structure that surrounds the sage. The *Epistulae Morales* thus presents a more nuanced and theoretically sophisticated

depiction of the ideal relationship between the sage and the family, but one that does not fundamentally conflict with his earlier works.

The conceptual thread that runs through these chapters shows that Seneca constructs the family as a fundamental part of how we learn to be moral human beings.[49] Through our interaction with our families, we gain the ability to discern what is good and what is virtuous, and, in an ideal world, have models of behaviour to emulate and thus come close to achieving virtue. The importance of the family as a supportive environment for moral development has not yet received its full due from scholars of Stoicism; I hope that my work will bring an acknowledgement of its importance one step closer. I do not claim that the Stoics thought achieving virtue without a family was an impossible endeavour. However, Seneca's arguments suggest that achieving virtue *within* the family was the much preferred option.

I hope that this study will not only provide insight into Seneca as an individual writer, but also serve as a starting point for a consideration of familial ethics in Stoicism as a whole. At the present moment, there is no full treatment of the issues surrounding the family in Stoicism, particularly marriage and parenthood, or that compares the approaches of the Hellenistic schools. The fragmented picture of *oikeiōsis* and the question of gender equality needs to be pieced into a full understanding of how the school as a whole approached the issue of the family and behaviour within the context of those relationships. Seneca's obvious concerns with such questions are an excellent place to start this investigation.

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[49] I assume throughout this work that virtue is inherently teachable, that is, that it is possible for a person to learn how to be virtuous. This subject is still under some debate; for an outline of the argument in Stoicism and Seneca in particular, see Inwood 2005: 271-301.

Chapter One: Model Mothers

Two of Seneca's extant consolatory texts, the *De consolatione ad Marciam* and the *De consolatione ad Helviam*, address mothers mourning the loss of their sons. Seneca uses the Stoic idea of *oikeiōsis* to structure his conception of the family in both these works, using it to provide an extra element of solace to the grieving mothers through its explanation of how familial relationships function.[1] In these texts, he also sets up the family as the central location for ethical education. I argue that within these consolations, Seneca envisions the role of the mother within the family as the initial impetus for the Stoic disciple's journey towards perfect virtue.

The *ad Marciam* and *ad Helviam* have suffered considerable scholarly neglect, as has the more general genre of the consolation.[2] *Consolationes* were meant to provide comfort to those who were suffering; Cicero observes they might be offered those bearing poverty, an inglorious life, exile, the destruction of their country, slavery, lameness, and blindness (*Tusculanae Disputationes* 3.81), although the most common form was addressed to those mourning the death of a close relative. Each philosophical school had its own consolatory arguments, many of which became standard tropes. Work

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[1] See Inwood 1999: 677 n.8 for an insightful analysis of the difficulty in translating this technical term from the Greek. I will transliterate it rather than attempt a translation throughout. See also my discussion of *oikeiōsis* in the Introduction at page 21 and later in this chapter at pages 31-4.

[2] The consolatory genre was well-established by Seneca's period, and had a lively Roman incarnation. The founder of the genre is often considered to be Crantor. His περὶ πένθους is quoted in Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* 1.115, and is considered one of the major sources for that book. However, Stowell 1999: 12-20 makes a strong case for caution in viewing Crantor as the originator of a new genre, although obviously his work was well-respected. Cicero himself, she suggests, could be responsible for the birth of the genre. He often composes in consolatory mode in his letters as well as in his more traditionally philosophical writing. For instance, in *Epistulae ad familiares* 4.3, he attempts to comfort Servius Sulpicius Rufus in his despair over the political situation at Rome. He also composed a now lost *Consolatio ad se* on the death of his daughter Tullia, in which he claimed to follow Crantor (Pliny, *Naturalis Historia praef.*22). For more on the *consolatio* as a literary genre, see Manning 1981: 12-20; for an ancient perspective on the characteristics a consolation should have, see Cicero, *Tusculanae disputationes* 3.79.

on the *ad Marciam* and *ad Helviam*, as excellent examples of the genre, tends to focus on the kinds of consolatory technique they use and the influence of rhetoric upon them.[3]

Although Manning saw that it was necessary to move beyond a simply rhetorical approach and to consider the psychological structure of the *ad Marciam* (1981: 9), there is still more to explore within the consolations. While scholars acknowledge that Seneca tailors his *exempla* to the individual addressee, the addressee may impact the content of the consolations in other ways.[4] That is, nobody has asked what it means if Seneca chooses to put certain images and arguments not just in front of Marcia and Helvia, but in front of mothers who are mourning the loss of their sons.[5] Does the familial relationship between the addressee and the man she has lost make her more susceptible to certain kinds of arguments? Do some consolatory techniques work specifically for a mother, and not for anyone else? What does the portrayal of the maternal role in these texts tell us about Seneca's broader thoughts on mothers and sons? The centrality of motherhood to Marcia and Helvia's identities as recipients of these consolations makes these questions significant for our interpretation of the works more generally.

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[3] The only recent book-length treatments are Stowell's 1999 doctoral thesis, which focuses on the *ad Marciam* as consolation while seeking to question the uniformity of that genre, and Manning's commentary, also on the *ad Marciam* (1981). Other scholarship either uses a tight focus on one particular element of a particular work, or cites the consolations as supporting evidence in a wider discussion of Seneca or Stoicism. For instance, Traglia holds that the impression given by the *ad Marciam* was one of a "rhetorical declamation" (1965: 7). Ferrill argues that the *ad Helviam* functioned as a subtle plea for recall, despite its supposed consolatory purpose (1966). Griffin sets the context for both consolations within the wider frame of Seneca's life (1992). Shelton examines how the arguments at the beginning of the *ad Marciam* are tailored to the recipient and her particularly intransigent grief (1995). Inwood focuses on the *ad Marciam* to discuss Seneca's approach to the question of human mortality (2005).

[4] For example, Mayer 2008: 309 comments that in the *ad Marciam*, Seneca "dwells on women and on the imperial household to appeal to his addressee". Shelton argues that "in the *Consolatio ad Marciam*, Seneca introduces elements of form and content which indicate that his choice of material was governed by the particular needs of his addressee" (1995: 158).

[5] Seneca's oeuvre does include other consolatory works. The *De Consolatione Ad Polybium* will be the subject of chapter two. The two other examples are Letter 63 and Letter 99 from the *Epistulae Morales*, which for methodological reasons I will not discuss separately from the entire corpus; see chapter 5, pages 267-71 for my analysis of these texts.

In addition, little work has been done on how motherhood fits into Stoicism's philosophical framework. Seneca sets his consolation in the context of a world which operates on Stoic principles.[6] As the theoretical framework of these works is Stoic in nature, *oikeiōsis* helps to inform the way that the family functions in them. *Oikeiōsis* describes the process which gives an individual the ability to love others.[7] This process starts at the very beginning of one's existence, with the awareness of self and a desire to preserve that self as best fits the constitution of the individual. It guarantees our natural connection to our mothers; in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, the Stoic spokesman Balbus argues that nature's intention to implant some instinct of self-preservation in each creature is shown by the way that a baby mammal instantly turns to its mother's breast (2.128).[8] The initial realisation of concern for one's own well-being then transitions into a concern for the well-being of others. As Blundell notes, the archetypal example of this relationship is the concern of parents for their child's well-being (1990: 222). The role of parent gives the individual insight into what it is to consider another's interests as assimilated to one's own. This concept can then be applied to other relationships, but it is within the family that one develops this skill. Even if one never becomes a parent, as Engberg-Pedersen rightly observes, every child will have the experience of being loved for their own sake that will lead to the ability to empathise with that capability to care for

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[6] For instance, the *ad Marciam* contains explicit references to the *cosmopolis* (18.1) and the conflagration that will destroy the world (26.5-7), and is focused around the central Stoic doctrine that death is not an evil; the *ad Helviam* is similarly focused around the precept that exile is not an evil, and again relies upon Stoic notions of the cosmic city to make that point.

[7] The fundamental primary Stoic texts that discuss *oikeiōsis* are Diogenes Laertius 7.85; Cicero *De Finibus* 3.76ff; Seneca Letter 121.11-12; and Hierocles' discussion, found at Stobaeus 4.671,7 – 673,11 = LS 57G. L&S 57 collects these passages. See also the discussion in the introduction, page 21.

[8] For a discussion of what this passage contributes to our understanding of social *oikeiōsis*, see Jackson-McCabe 2004: 344-5.

something outside one's self (1990: 124). Regardless of one's eventual familial situation, the core of the capacity to care for others begins with the parent-child relationship.

The Stoic Hierocles used an image of concentric circles to express this idea (Stobaeus 4.671,7 – 673,11 = LS 57G).[9] He wrote that the smallest circle is the one that includes the individual and the individual alone; the second circle, which encloses the first, contains parents, siblings, spouse and children; the third circle contains more distant relations, like grandparents, uncles and aunts; the fourth circle contains any remaining relatives. The circles continue, gradually expanding to include neighbours, then members of the same tribe, then inhabitants of the same city, until finally the whole human race is included in these circles. The process of *oikeiōsis* brings the inhabitants of each circle closer towards the centre, until ultimately the Stoic sage can consider the interests of all humanity as integrated to his own. This reflects the distinction between what has been called 'personal' and 'social' *oikeiōsis*; the former is the process an infant goes through to care about their own well-being, while the latter is the process through which one considers things outside oneself *oikeion*.[10] My discussion in this chapter is concerned exclusively with 'social' *oikeiōsis*, and the ways in which Stoicism encourages us to relate to the world outside ourselves.

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[9] This description is visualized in figure 1, page 48.

[10] Inwood 1983 introduces this distinction, although the two types of *oikeiōsis* had been recognised before that; see, for instance, Pembroke 1971 and Kerferd 1972. For recent discussions focusing more on 'social' *oikeiōsis* than 'personal' *oikeiōsis*, see Reydams-Schils 2002 and Brennan 2005: 154-168. The ancient sources provide limited discussion of 'social' *oikeiōsis*, and are more interested in how 'personal' *oikeiōsis* helps to determine what is according to nature and thus is also a good; Gill 2006: 43-4 explores this train of thought. Cicero's discussion at *De Finibus* 3.62-4 is commonly interpreted as illustrating the development of social *oikeiōsis* from the parent-child relationship up to the community of rational beings, and so explaining how the family provides the building blocks that enable society to exist; see, for instance, Engberg-Pedersen 1986: 156-63 and Long 1995: 172-4. However, Schofield 1995: 195-205 argues that Cicero uses the parent-child relationship to demonstrate that humans are capable of forming attachments to *everybody* else equally, not that we begin with assimilating family members and then move outwards as depicted in Hierocles' model. One might also compare this account to that found at *De Finibus* 5.24-7, which approaches the phenomenon of self-love from the Academic perspective.

I highlight mothers in this chapter, rather than fathers, for two reasons. Firstly, and most obviously, Marcia and Helvia are both mothers. Had Seneca addressed consolations to fathers, then they would be the subject of this chapter. However, the choice of addressee signals that Seneca felt there was something significant about motherhood which we should explore further. Secondly, the maternal role in Stoicism is underpinned by the Stoic belief that women had the same capacity for virtue as men. Seneca himself says as much to Marcia (*ad Marciam* 16.1):

> Par illis, mihi crede, vigor, par ad honesta, libeat <modo>, facultas est; dolorem laboremque ex aequo, si consuevere, patiuntur.
>
> Believe me, should it please [women], there is equal strength, equal ability for worthy deeds in their possession; if they are accustomed to it, they can endure grief and pain on equal terms.

Stoic doctrine considered that women and men had the same natural desire to be virtuous in every way.[11] This principle has ramifications for Seneca's choice to address women in their specific role as mothers, and suggests that their personal journeys towards virtue are relevant to this social role. Combined with the keystone position of *oikeiōsis* in the moral development of a human being, the specific role of mothers as opposed to parents in general deserves attention.

Oikeiōsis, then, is an intrinsic part of the mother-son relationship that these two consolations address.[12] Equally, the construction of the family and its internal dynamics

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[11] See, for instance, Musonius Rufus 3, ΟΤΙ ΚΑΙ ΓΥΝΑΞΙ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΘΗΤΕΟΝ: "moreover, the desire and appropriateness of nature towards virtue do not only occur in men but also in women; for no less is it the nature of women than of men to be pleased by good and just deeds, and to reject the opposite of these things" (ἔτι δὲ ὄρεξις καὶ οἰκείωσις φύσει πρὸς ἀρετὴν οὐ μονον γίνεται τοῖς ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ γυναιξίν · οὐδὲν γὰρ ἧττον αὗταί γε τῶν ἀνδρῶν τοῖς μὲν καλοίς και δικοίοις ἔργοις ἀρέσκεσθαι πεφύκασι, τὰ δ' ἐναντία τούτων προβάλλεσθαι, Hense 1905: 9.8-13. All references to Musonius are given by page and line number).

[12] As Seneca does not address the mother-daughter relationship with the same degree of focus that he does the mother-son relationship, I would not like to say that my conclusions in this chapter are directly transferable to mothers and daughters; however, given the foundational basis of both relationships in the parent-child relationship, I see no reason that they should not be substantially similar.

in the texts reveals much about the nature and operation of the family in Seneca's ideal Stoic universe. Stoicism offers a structure of familial relationships fundamentally different from that found in the social and cultural norms of Roman society at large. Yet how does Seneca deploy this alternative way of viewing our familial identity? He certainly does not begin with a detailed explanation of *oikeiōsis,* or describe any theoretical underpinnings of his consolatory strategy. The knowledge that *oikeiōsis* must be at work in both texts comes from an appreciation that they operate in a wider Stoic framework instead of specific exposition. Seneca approaches the question more subtly; neither consolation is written as a technical treatise on Stoicism, but as a functional piece of therapeutic writing in which explicit doctrinal didacticism would be horribly out of place.[13] Instead, he applies the theory as a practical strategy that strengthens our ability to moderate our grief at the loss of a relative and makes the family the ideal site for ethical formation.

De Consolatione ad Marciam

Ad Marciam was composed before Seneca went into exile near the end of A.D. 41.[14] Marcia was the daughter of the historian Cremutius Cordus, who committed suicide when accused of treason in A.D. 25.[15] We do not know much else about Marcia's family life. A reference to her son being left as a pupil (*pupillus relictus*, 24.1) implies that his father had died and appointed tutors in his will for his son (Manning 1981: 139). Seneca

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[13] Avoiding explicit doctrinal discussion is not unusual in the Roman Stoics. For instance, Musonius Rufus appears to take the same approach, avoiding technical vocabulary as much as possible. See Lutz 1947: 24-26 for a further discussion of his style.
[14] For more on dating issues, see Manning 1981:1-4 and Griffin 1992: 397.
[15] Tacitus records the prosecution and suicide of Cordus at *Annales* 4.34-35. For more on the background to and cause of the charge, see Rogers 1965. For information on Cordus as a historian and the context in which he was writing, see Gowing 2005:32-3.

mentions that Marcia gave birth to four children (16.5); only two daughters survive at the time of composition, along with "so many" grandchildren (*tot nepotes, duas filias*, 16.8). We do not know the precise age at which her son, Metilius, died, nor the circumstances of his death.[16] While there is no reason to doubt that Seneca's consolation to Marcia is genuinely intended to be a consolation, rather than motivated by any political considerations, Manning correctly points out that he must be writing for a wider audience than just Marcia herself;[17] for "this would explain why he would address her in a published work rather than in a strictly private letter of condolence" (1981: 6).

The structure of the consolation marks itself out as unusual, for immediately after his introductory address to Marcia, Seneca proclaims he is reversing the normal order of things so that *exempla* appear before *praecepta* (2.1).[18] He proceeds to depict the *exempla* of Livia and Octavia, in their grief for their sons, and recounts the speech that the philosopher Areus made to Livia as she mourned. Seneca next moves to *praecepta* and discusses how Nature has ordered the world, and the place of grief in that order. He tightens his focus on Marcia's specific grief for her son, and gives more *exempla* of both fathers and mothers who have lost sons before reminding her of her place in the world as a mortal. He then reassures her that Metilius suffers nothing as a result of being dead, either by losing out on what he would have experienced had he lived or through suffering death. He closes the *consolatio* with an address from Cordus to Marcia, reassuring her that both he and her son are happy in death. Normally, consolations are written shortly

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[16] Manning 1981: 3-4 outlines the inconclusive internal evidence for Metilius' age at his death.
[17] Stewart 1953 argued that the *ad Marciam* was written as an attempt to disassociate Seneca from the faction of Sejanus, who were in danger after Sejanus' fall from favour and death. Manning 1981: 4-5 debunks this opinion on the basis of the available prosopographical evidence. Griffin 1992: 22-23 also disagrees with Stewart, given the difficulties with ascribing a fixed date to the text.
[18] Manning 1981: 8-11 provides a more detailed analysis of the consolation's structure.

after a bereavement to help allay grief once the initial shock of loss has occurred. In Marcia's case, her son died three years ago, thus necessitating Seneca's use of unconventional consolatory strategies.

While we cannot know the exact specifics of Marcia's family composition, we can tell that she was a devoted mother, strongly affected by her son's death three years after the event. Seneca writes a consolation to her in order to relieve her of this overly long-held grief. He primarily aims to convince her of the Stoic doctrine that death is not an evil.[19] However, it is important to remember that this work is specifically targeted at its addressee; Marcia's identity as mother informs the arguments and images that Seneca puts before her. Despite the wider readership who implicitly also have access to Seneca's arguments through publication, the text itself always remains focused on Marcia as its primary recipient.

A sceptical reader might ask whether a Stoic can write an effective consolation to a grieving mother in the first place. The Stoics have often been accused of an inhuman approach to the relationship between parent and child. The oft-cited passage is Epictetus 3.24.84-5, which suggests that one should think of a child like a jug that could be broken at any minute, and as such not become too attached to it.[20] Seneca seems to risk the same

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[19]It is worth acknowledging that not only the Stoics believed that death was not an evil. The belief was shared also by the Epicureans and other philosophical schools, although on different grounds.

[20] "Whenever you become attached to something, do not think of it as something that cannot be taken away, but as one of those sorts of things like an earthenware jug or a glass wine-cup, so that whenever it breaks, remembering it you will not be troubled. So also in this life – if you kiss your child, your brother, your friend, never freely give way to your fantasy completely, nor let your merriment go forward however far it likes, but bring them back, prevent them, like those who stand by those celebrating a triumph, and remind them over and over that they are mortal" (ὅταν τινὶ προσπάχῃς, ὡς οὐδενὶ τῶν ἀναφαιρέτων, ἀλλά τινι τοιούτῳ γένει, οἷόν ἐστι χύτρα, οἷον ὑάλινον ποτήριον, ἵν' ὅταν καταγῇ, μεμνημένος μὴ ταραχθῇς. οὕτως καὶ ἐνθάδ', ἐὰν παιδίον σαυτοῦ καταφιλῇς, ἐὰν ἀδελφόν, ἐὰν φίλον, μηδέποτε ἐπιδῷς τὴν φαντασίαν εἰς ἅπαν μηδὲ τὴν διάχυσιν ἐάσῃς προελθεῖν ἐφ' ὅσον αὐτὴ θέλει, ἀλλ' ἀντίσπασον, κώλυσον, οἷον οἱ τοῖς θριαμβεύουσιν εφεστῶτες ὄπισθεν καὶ ὑπομιμνήσκοντες, ὅτι ἄνθρωποί εἰσιν). Of course, to take this passage as indicating that the sage is incapable of feeling love for

accusation of cruelty through his apparent approach to motherhood in the *ad Marciam*. In particular, 10.5 appears to hold unnecessarily harsh implications for what it means to be a mother:

> Si mortuum tibi filium doles, eius temporis quo natus est crimen est; mors enim illi denuntiata nascenti est; in hanc legem genitus <est>, hoc illum fatum ab utero statim prosequebatur.
>
> If you grieve that your son is dead, the charge belongs to that time at which he was born; for death was foretold to him as he was born; into this law he was born, this very fate was pursuing him immediately from the womb.

Traditional readings of this passage tend to view it as an example of the usual tropes found in consolations. For Manning, "Seneca turns again to the particular position of Marcia and uses a natural extension of the idea that all men must die (Eur. *Alcestis* 782), namely that all men are destined for death at the hour of their birth. This development was also a consolatory commonplace" (1981: 66). Manning sees nothing particularly special about this passage; Seneca merely trots out a rote element of the consolatory genre. Yet Seneca is addressing not just a woman mourning for a man, but a mother mourning for her son. The womb from which Metilius emerges is hers, not an abstract and distant image.

This point makes the passage take on an accusatory tone. Metilius was not born as an independent agent, unconnected to any other human. Marcia was responsible for physically bringing her son into the world, and thus is intimately connected to the hour of his birth. By saying that the *crimen* of Metilius' death rests upon the moment of his birth, with all the legal associations that word carries, Seneca implicitly accuses Marcia of

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his or her children is unjustified; all Epictetus is advocating is an awareness of the mortality of that which one loves. See Long 2002: 249 for further analysis. For a further discussion of the problem of inhumanity, see Irwin 1998.

being guilty of causing her own son's death by giving birth to him.[21] The woman who brings us into the world, on this reading, is also the ultimate agent of our destruction. It appears that there is no consolation to be found here; the role of the mother is one of slayer rather than of life-giver. *Ad Marciam* 11.1 is no gentler about the responsibility that accrues to Marcia:

> Mortalis nata es mortalesque peperisti: putre ipsa fluidumque corpus et causis [morbos] repetita sperasti tam inbecilla materia solida et aeterna gestasse?
>
> You were born mortal, and you gave birth to mortals. Did you, a rotten and feeble body, repeatedly assailed by diseases, hope to give birth to firm and eternal matter from such weak stuff?[22]

Not only is the mother herself responsible for the moment of her child's death through the action of bringing the child into the world, but her very body is scorned as decaying and contaminated. She passes on her disease of mortality to her offspring.

The Stoic context for this passage could provide one way of softening this apparently harsh approach. It is not just mothers and sons, after all, to whom this point applies. All humans are ultimately fleshly and perishable beings, doomed to destruction. Death is an inevitable and fated part of life, and should not be feared. Seneca will eventually warm to this theme, emphasising that death came to Metilius at the right time, at the height of his happiness, while it should have come earlier to others who suffered because their deaths came too late to prevent their misfortunes (20.4-6). We could easily follow Stowell and take 11.1 as a rhetorical flourish; she comments, "in a characteristically vehement passage, Seneca reminds Marcia and all mothers not only of our ultimate mortality … but more particularly of the sheer fragility of the human body"

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[21] The primary meaning of *crimen* listed in the TLL is 'accusation' or 'reproach'; however, the second meaning given is that of 'crime', and it is this second meaning that I believe operates in this passage. For examples of other passages using the word in this sense, see Cicero *In Verrem* 3.49, *Pro Caelio* 71 and *De Oratore* 2.199; Virgil, *Aeneid* 2.65 and 7.339; Seneca, *Agamemnon* 149, and *Medea* 192, 647.

[22] For the translation of *causis [morbos] repetita*, see Manning 1981: 68.

(1999: 193). True, this section highlights the frailty of the human form, which will become even more apparent when compared to the majesty of the heavens with which the consolation will end. Yet the question remains – what is the impact of this passage upon a mother?

The key to interpreting Seneca's blunt approach to the fragility of mortal mothers and their children comes during his explanation of what death actually is. As he has established that excessive mourning is inappropriate, Seneca wishes to tackle Marcia's mistaken belief that death is an evil, and that those who are dead suffer by virtue of being dead. After explaining that our demise releases us from suffering, Seneca offers a vigorous commendation of death (20.1):

> O ignaros malorum suorum, quibus non mors ut optimum inventum naturae laudatur expectaturque, sive felicitatem includit, sive calamitatem repellit, sive satietatem ac lasitudinem senis terminat, sive iuvenile aevum dum meliora sperantur in flore deducit, sive pueritiam ante duriores gradus revocat, omnibus finis, multis remedium, quibusdam votum, de nullis melius merita quam de iis ad quos venit antequam invocaretur!
>
> O men ignorant of their own evils, by whom death is not praised and awaited as the best discovery of nature – whether it shuts off good fortune, or repels disaster, whether it finishes the satiety and exhaustion of the old man, or leads away the young life in bloom while better things are being hoped for, whether it calls back boyhood before harder steps – to all it is the end, to many it is a cure, to some a prayer, more deserved for none other than those to whom it comes before it is prayed for!

Death is not the evil that we might have judged it from Seneca's earlier description of bodies that are decrepit and frangible. Indeed, the whole purpose of this consolation is to prove to Marcia that Metilius' death is not something to grieve over.[23] To be subject to death is not unbearable – in fact, exactly the opposite is true. Death has the power to free

[23] Life and death were indifferents to the Stoics, in that in and of themselves they neither contributed to nor detracted from one's pursuit of virtue, the only good. To mistake an indifferent for a good and pursue it as such, or indeed to mistake it for an evil and react accordingly, are actions that lead to mistaken judgments and irrational behaviour; see Brennan 1998 for further details.

us from our sufferings and should be considered the best discovery of nature (*optimum inventum naturae*).

The word 'nature' puts this passage in its Stoic context.[24] Stoics believed that nature was providential, and that it ordered creation for the best possible ends.[25] Death therefore does not exist as an unfortunate corollary of the creation process, but as part of the providential organisation of the world. Balbus, Cicero's Stoic spokesman in *De Natura Deorum*, likens nature to a craftsman who not only creates an object, but plans out that object's purpose and use in detail before doing so (2.57-8). In the Stoic universe of the *ad Marciam*, death is not arbitrary, or assigned by the cruel whim of fate. It is a central element of Nature's perfect design.

When framed in these terms, Seneca's remarks on the inevitability of death in 10.5 lose their bitterness and, in fact, completely reverse their implication. By bringing Metilius into the world, Marcia became the agent for him to experience Nature's greatest discovery and the divinity of the world. The mother is still responsible for the death of her child, but death has become a constructive rather than a destructive experience. Marcia opened up an opportunity to her son through her own mortality that otherwise would have been inaccessible to him.

Seneca further develops the imagery of birth and procreation in the consolation by drawing a parallel between the roles played by nature and by mothers. The Stoics had

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[24] *Natura* is the standard translation of the Greek word *phusis*, which played an important role in the Stoic understanding of the universe. Seneca even goes so far as to personify Nature and have her warn the human race of the risks that come with giving birth to children, including the chance that they will die before their parents (17.7). He deals with the idea more fully in the *Naturales Quaestiones*; for further discussion, see Rosenmeyer 2000.

[25] For example, as recorded in Diogenes Laertius' passage describing the foundations of *oikeiōsis*, the Stoics argued that nature finds means that best suit an individual animal's constitution rather than applying a "one size fits all" approach (7.86). Similarly, in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*, the Stoic Balbus takes great pains to demonstrate that the world is governed by divine providence, and that nature controls things most excellently (2.73-153).

long held that parenthood was intertwined with the fabric of creation. As Reydams-Schils puts it, "in the earliest Stoic accounts, the human process of procreation is already inextricably intertwined with the process of generation in the universe as a whole" (2005: 123). Begetting a child is a mirror of the creation process nature engaged in when creating the world;[26] to bring forth a child physically is to mirror that process even more precisely. Although Seneca does not explicitly make this point in the *ad Marciam*, he draws the parallel in the *ad Helviam* (8.4):

> Mundus hic, **quo nihil neque maius neque ornatius rerum natura genuit**, <et> animus contemplator admiratorque mundi, pars eius magnificentissima, propria nobis et perpetua et tam diu nobiscum mansura sunt quam diu ipsi manebimus.
>
> This world, **than which the nature of things has given birth to nothing greater nor more ornate**, and the mind, the contemplator and admirer of the world, its most magnificent part, particular to us, both are perpetual and will remain with us for as long as we ourselves remain.

Seneca uses *genuit* to describe the action of creation that the *rerum natura* performs precisely because it is the parallel of the process of giving birth to offspring.[27] This is an experience only accessible to mothers like Marcia; the act of birth is something they uniquely share with nature. This adds a further layer to Seneca's consolation for Marcia as mother. By analysing Seneca's language in his redefinition of death as nature's best discovery, we see that he gives the consolation more strength by appealing directly to her maternal role. Marcia can take comfort in the fact that by giving birth to her son and accepting his death, she replicates the actions that nature performs on the universal

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[26] The Stoics held that both men and women were active partners in conception, although the evidence is somewhat ambiguous as to what they felt each partner provided to the process. Reydams-Schils 2005: 123-6 analyses the evidence and various options.

[27] This is, of course, a common image. Parallels can be found in Ovid's description of the rebirth of the animals following the flood (*Metamorphoses* 1.416-437), and Lucretius' description of *Venus genetrix* (*De Rerum Natura* 1.1-20). Indeed, there seems to be an explicit allusion to Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* in the language Seneca uses, although the phrase itself is also a standard way of naming nature. Nugent 1994 argues that Lucretius does something similar to Seneca with the female body, not only associating it with the generative body, but also with mortality; as she puts it, "that which is largely identified with birth will not escape a corresponding association with death" (1994: 205).

scale.[28] Her awareness of the goodness of nature means that hopefully she will view death as an integral part of the wider plan for the world. As nature is providential, death is not an evil, and neither is her own role as mother. Giving birth to a mortal son does not demean her. Rather, it inscribes her in the perfectly ordered system of creation within the world, from which she can draw strength.

Moreover, Seneca's portrait of mother as nature has deeper implications for the Stoic understanding of the family. As I outlined in my introductory discussion of *oikeiōsis*, the relationship between mother and child is the key stepping stone that begins that process. However, when Cicero's Balbus explains *oikeiōsis* with evidence from animal behaviour, he deliberately clarifies that the system was formed not for the irrational animals he describes, but for those with reason (*De Natura Deorum* 2.133); the relationship between human mother and child is more complex than that between animals. I would argue that not only is Marcia able to take consolation in her similarity to nature, but she also demonstrates that, conversely, mothers perform the role of nature. There exists a special connection between humans and nature, because of humans' possession of reason, that suggests a mother's emulation of reason towards her child provides something more than the examples taken from animals suggest.

It is hard to argue this point conclusively, as the early Stoics did not seem to have any particular theory of child development despite their interest in children's primary impulses (Inwood 1985: 187). However, it is well accepted both that infants demonstrate 'personal' *oikeiōsis* while mothers demonstrate 'social' *oikeiosis*, and that these two types

[28] Reydams-Schils 2005: 125-6 explores "where and how … the chains of divine fatherhood and human procreation intersect", but does not bring mothers into the cosmic picture.

of *oikeiōsis* represent a continuous development rather than two separate processes.[29] The very earliest relationship a baby has, with its mother, mirrors nature's relationship to all living things. Because of the continuity of the *oikeiōsis* process between the pre-rational and rational stage, or childhood and adulthood, presumably that initial bond creates a lasting impact. While the baby's own state of *oikeiōsis* is primarily concerned with its relationship to itself, its relationship with its mother provides a foundational experience for the journey towards achieving virtue. As we grow and mature, we continue to learn through other means, such as our observation of the physical properties of the world and our relationships with siblings; as we gain control of our reason, we begin to understand more clearly how to act in accordance with nature (*kata phusin*). However, the initial relationship with our mother ensures that "all children have been influenced in a way that makes it possible that they should *themselves* step out of the circle of self-centeredness" and onto the path of virtue (Engberg-Pedersen 1990: 124). Our relationship with our mother not only gives us the initial experience that will eventually aid us in expanding our definition of what is *oikeion* to ourselves, but also demonstrates to us fundamental facts about nature, our relationship to the world and virtuous behaviour.

Enlarging the Circle of Love

While Seneca on the one hand emphasises Marcia's identity as a mother, he also downplays it in a surprising way – he devotes an unexpectedly large amount of discussion to Marcia's father, Cordus. Seneca rebukes Marcia for her lengthy mourning in part because she has previously navigated the death of close family members without

[29] See page 32 for the distinction between 'personal' and 'social' *oikeiōsis*. For the development of one sort of *oikeiōsis* into another, see, for instance, Reydams-Schils 2002: 221-6.

indulging herself in this way. According to Tacitus, her father, the historian Cremutius Cordus, was prosecuted for treason because he praised Brutus and Cassius in his historical writings; he starved himself to death and his books were burnt by the senatorial order (*Annales* 4.34-5). Marcia later reintroduced them into public circulation after the fall of Sejanus, who had been the force behind her father's prosecution.[30] Seneca expands the outline Tacitus gives us with touching family detail – Marcia's unwillingness to accept her father's choice of suicide, her brave endurance of his death, and her role in ensuring that his works were published again when circumstances permitted it (*ad Marciam* 2-3). This portrait of previous brave endurance stands in stark contrast to her current obsession with grief. Cordus' prominence has been explained by hypothesising that Seneca wishes to remind Marcia of her previous fortitude when she faced her father's death, inspiring her to follow her own example and recover the self-control she displayed in the past. As Mauch observes, by confronting Marcia with her own *exemplum*, Seneca obliges her to once more find her previous strength of character (1997: 80).[31]

This reading does not address the puzzle of why Cordus' death and not that of Metilius takes centre stage in the consolation, and why Marcia's role as daughter should be prominent when she is in fact addressed as a mother. Seneca is supposed to be healing Marcia's grief on the death of her son, yet it takes him a considerable amount of preparation to mention Metilius, and even then he only does so implicitly (*ad Marciam* 1.5):

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[30]Marcia was not the only relative to gain fame by salvaging a relative's literary works. In letter 7.19, Pliny praises Fannia for saving the books of her husband.

[31] This is the usual approach taken to the deployment of Cordus in the consolation. For instance, Vico describes Cordus as a much loved and venerated figure (*amata e venerata*, 1969: 144). Hallett emphasises the "deep affection" Marcia felt for her father and how his appearance in heaven at the close of the consolation shows the emotional relationship between a Roman father and daughter (1984: 62, 109). Stowell argues that Cordus' death is used as an *exemplum* of correct reasoning (1999: 135-6).

> Alii itaque molliter agant et blandiantur, ego confligere cum tuo maerore constitui et defessos exhaustosque oculos, si verum vis magis iam ex consuetudine quam ex desiderio fluentis, continebo, si fieri potuerit, favente te remediis tuis, si minus, vel invita, teneas licet et amplexeris dolorem tuum, quem tibi in filii locum superstitem fecisti.
>
> And so others may handle things gently and coax; I have decided to disagree with your grief, and I will restrain those tired eyes exhausted from crying, if you want to know the truth, more now out of habit than due to longing; if it can be done, with you supporting your own cures, and if not, or if you are unwilling, you may hold and embrace your grief, which you have made survive for you in your son's place.

Marcia's son, the cause of this extravagant and apparently unconquerable grief, is mentioned in passing and almost carelessly. This is in marked contrast to the *de Consolatione ad Polybium*, where the praise of Polybius' brother, while less effusive than the eventual praise of Metilius, is placed much earlier in the text. Certainly Seneca has no intention of dwelling on Metilius at this point, for he goes on to enumerate the ways this grief has held on to Marcia's heart despite the attempts of all her friends at consolation. Any further discussion of Metilius and his character is deferred until the end of the text. Marcia's grief has almost become a living creature, physically replacing her son; she holds on to it out of habit (*ex consuetudine*), almost theatrically extending her grief as an object to which she can devote herself in her son's absence. It is as if Marcia cannot bear to lose the final token of her son, but Seneca suggests philosophy will have the solution. He offers to control the immoderate performance of Marcia's loss (*continebo*), whether she cooperates or not – but the focus is on Marcia's current unacceptable conduct, not her relationship with her son.

We should ask why it is appropriate for the consolation to feature Marcia's father so prominently while Metilius, the cause of grief, appears so little. After all, Seneca could have discussed both men at length rather than concentrating on Marcia's father to the

extent that he does. Cordus not only appears in the introduction, but continues to appear throughout the consolation, until he closes it by delivering his final address from the heavens. He seems to supplant Metilius, who should be at the centre of the text, a fact which is perhaps related to Marcia's ability to adopt a proper attitude to her father's death but not to her son's. We learn far more about the circumstances of Cordus' death than we do about Metilius' (22.4-7). Seneca's detailed account of Cordus' suicide is sandwiched between two sections in praise of Metilius – precisely where we would expect a discussion of *his* death, not his grandfather's. Seneca does not, of course, place Cordus in this prominent position arbitrarily. The usual explanation, as I noted, is that reminding Marcia of her previous fortitude should inspire her to reassume her previous demeanour, but this account does not fully explain the strange prominence given to Cordus in comparison to the broad effacement of Metilius.

The anti-*exemplum* of Octavia, engulfed in excessive mourning for Marcellus, might explain why Seneca avoids naming Metilius.[32] Octavia could never bear to hear her son's name mentioned in her presence after his death (2.4). By avoiding Metilius' name, Seneca could simply anticipate Marcia's violent and painful reaction to its invocation. He may judge that although he wishes to fight Marcia's grief, a more gentle initial engagement is necessary to ultimately dispel her sorrow. Two things speak against this as a satisfactory explanation. Firstly, Seneca clearly has little patience for women who avoid the names of their dead sons, hence his praise for Livia, who took great pleasure in hearing her son Drusus spoken about after his death (3.2). Secondly, such an explanation implies that Marcia is sufficiently delicate to be wounded by any mention of the dead, but disregards the emphatic inclusion of Marcia's bravery and endurance at the suicide of her

[32] I discuss the concept of an anti-*exemplum* in more detail in chapter four, pages 173-5.

father. Moreover, Seneca cannot be reminding Marcia of her past behaviour to encourage her to replicate it; there is clearly some obstruction that prevents her from applying the lessons of her earlier experience, or else Seneca would not need to compose the consolation. We must account for Seneca's decision to minimise his discussion of Metilius and focus on Cordus in another way.

I would suggest that his motivation comes from a practical application of the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* that I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, and specifically from the image of concentric circles that Hierocles used to illustrate the theory. The traditional Roman conception of social roles contains a strong hierarchical sense of order. For instance, the *paterfamilias* holds ultimate power over his household and a daughter is forever marked by her father's name.[33] In this type of organisation, the relationship between father and child is central, but so is the expectation that the father will predecease his offspring, so that his son may in turn become a *paterfamilias*. According to traditional social mores, Metilius' death is a tragedy because he dies before achieving his full social potential, and predeceases his mother, if not also his father.

By contrast, in the Stoic understanding, the role of child is almost incidental to one's identity. During childhood, an individual is pre-rational and learning to love herself rather than focusing on the people around her. At the age when social roles begin to function in any wider context, an adult begins to have grasp of her reason; she can thus begin to process the correct function of relationships between her and other people, and start the process of *oikeiōsis*. As Hierocles' circle image shows, the people in the circle

[33] As Hallett notes, a Roman woman was given the feminine form of her father's family name regardless of marriage (1984: 67). She would therefore always have been known as her father's daughter, despite any other changes that might take place in her familial status. For more on the importance and role of the *pater familias*, see Eyben 1996, Harlow 1998, Saller 1999 and Cantarella 2002-3.

closest to the individual are immediate blood relatives - parents, siblings, spouse and children (γονεῖς ἀδελφοὶ γυνὴ παῖδες, Stobaeus 4.671,7 – 673,11 = LS 57G; see figure 1).[34] For an individual who begins to assimilate the interests of others to her own, the parent-child relationship occupies the same circle of proximity as the child-parent relationship. Her reactions concerning the fortunes of her parents, and indeed their deaths, should be the same as those of her children, for they stand in the same relation to her. Thus the roles of mother and daughter become equivalent; the relationships a woman has with her parents and her children will, in terms of *oikeiōsis*, be functionally identical.

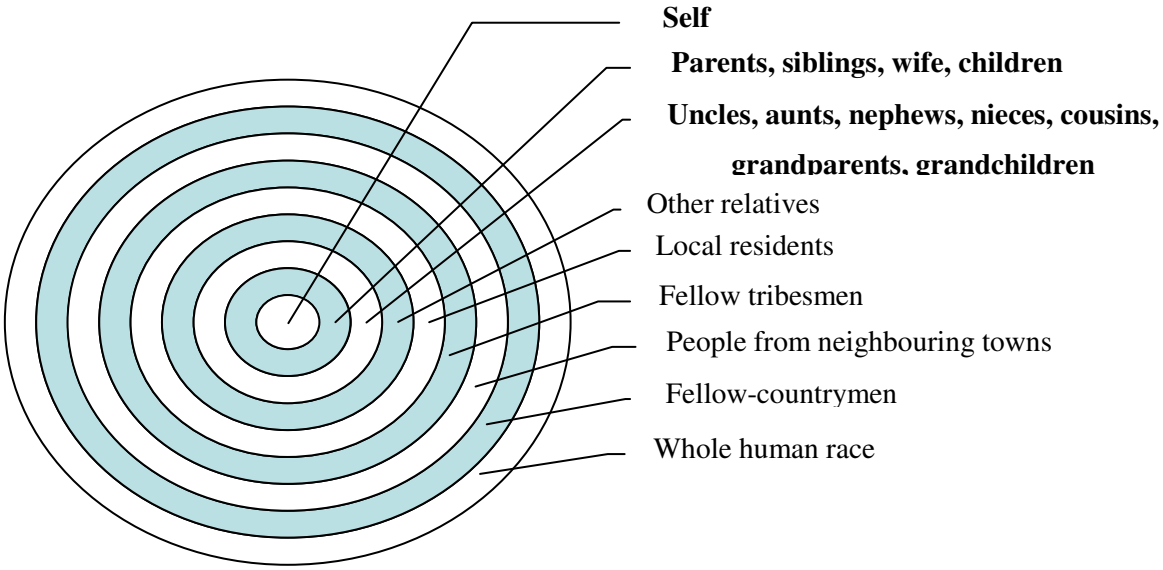

Figure 1 – a visualisation of the circles in Hierocles' description of *oikeiōsis* (Stobaeus 4.671,7 – 673,11 = LS 57G)

I should note that there is a developmental aspect to this process. I do not mean to suggest that the relationship that Marcia has to her father and her son was functionally identical when she was a toddler and her son was yet unborn; similarly, her relationships

[34] I deliberately translate *gunē* as 'spouse' here rather than as wife. Although Hierocles was clearly writing with a male reader in mind, there is no reason that the process of *oikeiōsis* could not be performed successfully by a woman. The Stoics believed that women had the same capacity for virtue as men, and *oikeiōsis* is clearly a step towards virtue. For a Stoic discussion of the questions at stake here, see Musonius Rufus III, ΟΤΙ ΚΑΙ ΓΥΝΑΙΞΙ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΘΗΤΕΟΝ. See also my discussion at page 33.

could not have been functionally identical while her own son was still a child in the prerational stage. However, the *oikeiōsis* process is relative to the developmental stages that humans go through; the nature of relationships develops and changes over time in line with natural human development. However, once everyone involved in the process reaches adulthood, as Cordus, Marcia and Metilius have done, then the relationships can become functionally identical. The consolation targets this state of affairs, when all participants are adults. Marcia herself has also reached a certain developmental stage – not only has she left the prerational phase, but she has gained sufficient control of herself and her passions to move out of the innermost circle and into the first circle beyond it. She only needs to have reached this early stage of moral development for her close familial relationships to be functionally identical.

The prominence Seneca gives to Cordus is consistent with *oikeiōsis* theory and aims to demonstrate to Marcia that she should grieve for her father and her son in the same way, not differently. Seneca does this by highlighting the similarities between the two men and their characters in the latter stages of the consolation. This strategy begins at *ad Marciam* 22.7, after Seneca has described the final days of Cordus' life and his decision to commit suicide to escape the enmity of Sejanus:

> Fles, quod alicui tuorum mori necesse fuit? paene non licuit.
>
> You cry, because it was necessary for one of your own family to die? One was almost not allowed to.[35]

For the first time, Seneca explicitly draws a parellel between the grief Marcia feels for her son and her reaction to her father's death; she mourns Metilius' death, but Cordus' death was nearly taken out of his hands. As part of a wider attack on Marcia's

[35] This comment seems to be a reference to the fact that Sejanus could have prevented Cordus from committing suicide in order to have him legally condemned and executed.

misconceived ideas about the nature of death, it creates a direct connection between the two men. After a brief general discussion of the soul's longing to be free from the confines of the body, which could apply to any human soul, Seneca begins a detailed portrait of Metilius. Before this point, there have been some general mentions of the sort of pleasures mothers receive from their children and some brief praise of Metilius, although always integrated into a wider argument about the nature of grief or death.[36] This is the first and only passage to paint a picture of Metilius that explains Marcia's grief at losing him, and why she considered him worthy of such extravagant mourning.

In presenting the first substantial portrait of Metilius, chapter 24 once more takes care to draw comparisons between the boy and his grandfather (24.2):

> Numquam e conspectu tuo recessit; sub oculis tuis studia formavit excellentis ingeni et aequaturi avum nisi obstitisset verecundia, quae multorum profectus silentio pressit.
>
> He never retired from your sight; beneath your eyes he shaped his studies with an excellent character that even would have compared to his grandfather, if modesty, which overwhelms the progress of many men with silence, had not stood in the way.

By drawing an explicit connection between the similarity of the characters and intellectual ability of the two men, Seneca subtly prompts recollection of the other parallels between them, such as their relative position to Marcia. In fact, he also creates a link between Marcia and her father that has not previously existed. At the very beginning of the consolation, Seneca spoke of the gift of study, given to Marcia by her father, which she had rejected as a remedy for her grief (*studia, hereditarium et paternum bonum*, 1.6). The repetition of *studia* in these passages gently creates a mirror image between the two

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[36] For example, the paired stories of Octavia and Livia discuss the pleasures a mother may or may not choose to receive from their children in grief within the wider framework of mourning (2.1-3.3). Children are also mentioned among the list of borrowed things that we enjoy, which also includes things like a spacious *atrium* and wealth (10.1); consequently, the pleasures of children should be snatched while they are available (10.4).

relationships. Just as Marcia was encouraged by her father in her intellectual pursuits, so she encouraged her son. The recurrence of the mentoring role creates a point of reference between the two relationships that has previously been completely absent from the consolation. Seneca begins to provide Marcia with concrete ways in which she can see the two relationships as comparable, building on the theoretical equivalence found in *oikeiōsis*. Her relationship to the two men is equally balanced in terms of her assimilation of their needs to her own, and the other parallels between the relationships help strengthen that sense of their similarity.

The crowning moment of this comparative strategy comes at the end of the consolation, just before the prosopopoeia of Cordus himself. Seneca deliberately directs Marcia to behave as if both her father and son were watching her (25.3):[37]

> Sic itaque te, Marcia, gere, tamquam sub oculis patris filique posita, non illorum quos noveras, sed tanto excelsiorum et in summo locatorum.
>
> And so, Marcia, conduct yourself in such a way as if you were placed beneath the eyes of your father and your son – not as you knew them, but so much more exalted and stationed in the highest heaven.

The fact that both men watch Marcia with an interest in her welfare also works with *oikeiōsis* theory. We have thus far viewed Marcia's family from Marcia's point of view – that is, as if she were at the centre of the circles. But we should also note that if we place Metilius or Cordus in the centre, then their relation to Marcia is identical. They both consider her to be in that group of relatives who are closest to the individual yet are not the individual, and so both view her interests as their own.[38] When Seneca invites Marcia to imagine her father and son looking down on her, taking an interest in her actions, it is

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[37] This scene relies heavily on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* as its model. For more details, see Manning 1981: 133 and Armisen-Marchetti 2007. The introduction of Metilius as a third person in the scene seems to be Seneca's main innovation in the trope.

[38] The relationship between the two men, on the concentric circles model, is more distant. They occupy the next circle out, which contains both grandparents and grandchildren.

not because she should submit to their guidance of her life even after their deaths. It is because her actions are of genuine interest to them. Just as she should consider her relationships with them equivalent, they both look upon her interests as equivalent to their own and will be affected by them in the same way. While they will both be glad at her calm acceptance of Cordus' death, they will be equally grieved at her continued sorrow for Metilius.

The parallel between Cordus' and Metilius' lives in the heavens, where they share the same blissful existence (25.1-2), underscores the similarities between their life stories. Cordus' death, although caused by his political enemies, saved him from further suffering; Metilius' death, although earlier than Roman society expected, also saved him from that suffering. The loss of a young adult son within the normal social framework would be devastating, especially given the promise that Metilius had already shown – but the glory of his life in the heavens, in the company of his grandfather, is correspondingly intense. He is not excluded from the happiness he would have as a mortal. He is in fact happier in death, as he can see the structure of the world more clearly and does not suffer from the pain caused by false beliefs. The afterlife shared by the two men also corresponds to their relationship to Marcia. In the circle system of *oikeiōsis* depicted by Hierocles, they both stand in the circle adjacent to Marcia's self. Marcia's ability to cope with Metilius' death comes not just from the fact that she conducted herself well when her father died, but rather that she has successfully conquered the loss of a relative in that first adjacent circle. Seneca does not ask her to draw a parallel between a daughter losing a father, an acceptable social phenomenon, and a mother losing a son, a socially disastrous one. Rather, he asks her to look at the loss of a previous relative who is related

to her in the same degree as another relative she has also lost, and to use the parallels there to help her balance her perceptions correctly. When he says that he will help her current wound mend by showing her the scar of one that was equally great (*aeque magni vulneris cicatricem*, 1.5), the equality of the two losses comes from a deep level of the social structure to which all humans belong rather than the severity of pain they inflicted.

The prosopopoeia of Cordus, in which Seneca invites Marcia to imagine her father questioning her about her continued mourning and misconceptions of the nature of death, is the final push in the consolation, designed to be the ultimate consolatory argument.[39] The whole purpose of the consolation has been to relieve Marcia of her grief so that she does not become like Octavia, who would not listen to anybody. Livia, by contrast, listened to the philosopher Areus, whose words Seneca reports at considerable length (4.2-5.6).[40] One could read Areus as the *alter ego* of Seneca himself, but Seneca does not put much trust in his own words. Instead, he defers Cordus' appeal to his daughter to the very conclusion of the work, where it will have most force. If Marcia will not listen to anyone, and she is at risk of becoming isolated, there is only one person whose voice she will listen to – that of Cordus, her beloved father. He is the only person who has the force of both authority and experience on his side; her extraordinary love for him, whom she loved as much as her children, will make her listen to his voice (*quem non minus quam liberos dilexisti*, 1.2). This explains Seneca's choice to give Cordus, not Metilius, the final speech which lays how the heavenly dead see the world, and the strategy of indirection that has deferred this forceful approach for so long. By preparing

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[39] For more on the Stoic background to this scene, see Manning 1981: 133 and Reydams-Schils 2005: 35-6.
[40] Shelton 1995 analyses the first six sections of the *ad Marciam* in detail, including the *exempla* of Octavia and Livia, and how these passages are meant to persuade Marcia that grief will destroy her son's memory rather than preserve it.

Marcia gradually for these words in her father's voice, Seneca has ensured they will have the greatest possible consolatory force.

In this use of Cordus and Marcia's family history, we see Seneca applying the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* practically to relieve grief. This is not some abstruse philosophical discussion of theory. Rather, Seneca takes the theoretical model and applies it strategically. He takes the fact that Marcia stands in the same degree of separation in her relationships to Cordus and Metilius and develops that similarity to show how she can use her previous experience to emerge from her current pain. Her role as mother and role as daughter complement each other, rather than one taking precedence over the other. The underpinning of the Stoic model lies behind the emphasis on the parallels drawn between the two men elsewhere in the consolation, and strengthens Marcia's ability to approach the two situations in the same way. For those readers who are not mothers, the same lesson applies to our relationships with anyone in the first circle beyond ourselves. One relationship is not necessarily more privileged than another, and we should have the same response to people who stand in that relation to ourselves.[41] Returning to the basics of Stoic theory helps us to dispel our false beliefs, correct our perceptions about our families, and thus make them a source of comfort rather than emotional turmoil.

De Consolatione ad Helviam

The consolation to Helvia offers a different perspective on the role of motherhood in the Stoic universe. To begin with, Seneca is writing to his mother after an undefined

[41] Wilcox would argue that the effect of the consolation on a reader who is not a mother, in the case of both the *ad Marciam* and the *ad Helviam*, would be one of shame – that is, if "Marcia and Helvia can also meet these masculine standards [of behaviour] or exceed them, how much more shameful for a male reader of Seneca's consolation who fails to conquer grief?" (2006: 93).

period of exile on Corsica, in an attempt to comfort her about his own absence.[42] He does not write to offer advice on how to behave correctly following the death of a loved son – as Seneca's portrait of his mother's family life shows, she has more than enough experience in mourning her dead appropriately. This text instead addresses the problem of the correct response to a son's exile: how one should mourn the living, if one should mourn them at all. Seneca believes that Helvia should not feel grief or pity for him in his absence, either on her own account or because he suffers, as he is perfectly content where he is (although the sincerity of this last sentiment is clearly rather strained).[43]

The *ad Helviam*, like the *ad Marciam*, takes place in a Stoic universe. The Stoic school frequently discusses the dialogue's main theme, the topic of exile. One of the occasions when the Stoic sage would not lose his happiness would be upon being sent into exile, and Musonius Rufus even has a fragment titled ΟΤΙ ΟΥ ΚΑΚΟΝ Η ΦΥΓΗ ("That exile is not an evil", 9). Yet the *ad Helviam* also presents Seneca's vision of a satisfactory working relationship between mother and son. The text presents a pattern for the ideal mother, and shows how this model influences the behaviour of the ideal grandmother and aunt as well. From examining these paradigms, we can draw some more practical conclusions about the operation of families in Seneca's moral universe.

The work opens by explaining why Seneca is composing it, and acknowledges the unusual circumstances of its composition. He wishes to offer condolence in part because of Helvia's previous personal misfortunes, which he details at some length, and in part to

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[42] The motives for writing the consolation to Helvia are notoriously unclear. Stewart 1953 suggests that it may have been an attempt to distance Seneca from Sejanus after the latter's fall from favour, but Manning 1981: 5-6 is unconvinced, suggesting it is a genuine *consolatio* written to Helvia, although intended to appeal to a wider readership. For more on the question of dating, see Ferrill 1966 and Griffin 1992: 395-398.

[43] Ferrill argues that the vigorous descriptions of wounds and violence towards the body and the account of the sufferings undergone by Seneca's family before his exile, from 2.1-3.2, reflect the underlying strains of exile (1966: 255).

make this latest grief less painful. He begins by making it clear that he is not suffering in exile, which is what he assumes she most wishes to hear. He proves that he has always been prepared for the twists and turns of fate, and outlines in detail why exile, poverty and death are not the evils that men suppose them to be. Having removed these concerns from Helvia's mind, he turns to her relationship with him and his brothers, and once more recounts the series of events that led up to his exile. He praises her character, provides *exempla* of other women who lost their sons, and suggests she should console herself through the study of philosophy. He then directs her to family members who can comfort her, most of all her sister. He closes the work by once more reassuring her that he is perfectly happy, especially as his mind is free to pursue philosophical thought.

Although initially Helvia recedes into the background as Seneca expounds at length on the theme of exile, the consolation sharpens its focus on her through the question of whether she is pained by Seneca's absence because she has lost some support (*praesidium aliquod*, *ad Helviam* 14.1) along with him, or because she is unable to bear her sense of loss for him (*desiderium ipsum*) on her own.[44] Seneca swiftly dismisses the first option, emphasizing that Helvia never sought to advance her own cause through her children (14.3):

> Tu liberorum tuorum bonis plurimum gavisa es, minimum usa; tu liberalitati nostrae semper imposuisti modum, cum tuae non imponeres; tu filia familiae locupletibus filiis ultro contulisti; tu patrimonia nostra sic administrasti ut tamquam in tuis laborares, tamquam alienis abstineres; tu gratiae nostrae, tamquam alienis rebus utereris, pepercisti, et ex honoribus nostris nihil ad te nisi voluptas et inpensa pertinuit.

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[44] Seneca also used *desiderium* to describe Marcia's longing for her dead son (*ad Marciam* 1.5). I disagree with Fantham's opinion that "it is remarkable how much of *ad Helviam* is focussed away from Seneca, from exile, and from Corsica" (2007: 176-7); given that the text is a consolation for Helvia, it is only fitting that she should occupy a considerable portion of it. The Romans saw death and exile as cultural equivalents in some ways, hence the appropriateness for their both being topics of a consolation. The essays collected in Gaertner 2007 provide an overview of literary and philosophical treatments of exile.

> You rejoiced greatly in the possessions of your children but used them minimally; you always placed a limit on our generosity, when you did not place it on your own; you, the daughter of a family, gave gifts to your wealthy sons of your own accord; you administered our inheritance in such a way that you worked as if on your own affairs, but you kept away as if from a stranger's possessions; you were sparing with our service, as if you were using a stranger's things, and from our honours nothing reached you except pleasure and expenditure.

Helvia's relationship with her children is commended for its lack of self-interest; she acted in the interests of her sons at all times. Seneca singles out for especial praise her administration of their patrimony as if it were her own property rather than theirs.[45] Once more, her behaviour echoes the concept embodied in *oikeiōsis*, that a parent should consider the interests of a child to be her own interests, but adds an interesting dimension to that idea. One way of constructing a practical application of *oikeiōsis* would be a situation where a parent views a child's interests as the same as their own interests, where that is tantamount to those two sets of interests being identical. So, in this instance, Helvia could have managed the property of her children to their benefit, and to hers. Under such an interpretation of *oikeiōsis*, there would have been no conflict of interest, as the interests of Helvia's children and of Helvia would have been identical; whatever Helvia did in her own interest would also have been in the interest of her children, as the two sets of interests were equivalent. However, Seneca does not just praise Helvia's

[45] For the legal details of leaving inheritances, see Borkowski & du Plessis 2005: 208-248. Although Helvia could not legally administer her son's estate herself directly, as she was disqualified as a woman from acting as their *tutor*, there were a number of legal strategies that could be used to give her control of her husband's property until their children came of age. Two methods mentioned by Gardner are to disinherit the children and make the wife the heir in the will, subject to a *fideicommissum* that the property should be handed over to the children when they came of age, or to make the children heirs but give the mother usufruct of the property for a set period; this would have made her responsible for the maintenance of the property, and also given her the right to any profits from the estate (1986: 153-4). Given the way Seneca describes his mother's decision not to use the possessions of her children, I am tempted to assume she was given usufruct of the inheritance, although this is obviously conjecture. For a mother's legal incapacity to manage her son's estate, see *Digest* 3.5.30.6 and 26.1.18. For more on the relationship between a mother and a tutor responsible for her children, see Gardner 1998: 241-52.

management of the property as if it were her own, but also her abstention from use of it as if it were a stranger's.[46]

This passage thus provides a more complex illustration of how *oikeiōsis* might operate in the reconciliation of the interests of parent and child beyond the creation of a set of identical shared interests.[47] Helvia is capable of acting in the best interests of her sons disinterestedly. She did not *harm* her own interests by assiduously looking after her sons' property, but the success of that property was in and of itself sufficient for her to be satisfied with the outcome. Seneca expresses the same idea when he talks about the brothers' political achievements – Helvia takes pleasure and pride in them even though she does not personally gain anything from them. This scenario is consistent with a more sophisticated interpretation of *oikeiōsis*; a parent can act in a child's best interests and view the positive outcome of that action as pleasant to themselves, but without acting in such a way that guarantees an outcome directly benefiting them materially.

Having dismissed the fear of losing benefits as a cause of Helvia's grief, Seneca turns to the second possibility – that she simply cannot control her longing for his presence (15.1):

> 'Ergo complexu fili carissimi careo; non conspectu eius, non sermone possum frui. Ubi est ille quo viso tristem vultum relaxavi, in quo omnes sollicitudines

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[46] A woman could be charged for unauthorized administration of an estate, despite the legal restrictions placed on her more generally (*Digest* 3.5.3.1-3). For a wider look at some of the duties of a *tutor* or *curator*, and ways to deal with the problems that arose from their appointment, see Borkowski & du Plessis 2005: 139-50.

[47] The problem with a reductive reading of *oikeiōsis* is that it runs the risk of becoming meaningless as one incorporates more and more people into a unified group. If the process is supposed to create a set of shared interests which apply equally to everyone within a group, it quickly becomes difficult to reconcile differences of interests. For instance, if it is in one person's interest for a certain piece of land to be sold but in another person's interest for it not to be, how does the person attempting to assimilate both persons' interests to their own reconcile this conflict? By extension of this logic, under this system the Stoic sage will face considerable problems identifying interests which apply to all individuals within the human race. One suspects that the only workable propositions would be tautologies such as 'happiness is good' and 'unhappiness is bad'. Helvia's example differs as she is able to dispassionately separate her own interests from her sons' interests, and take pleasure in their success regardless of her own situation.

> 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?'
>
> "Therefore I lack the embrace of my dearest son; I can't enjoy the sight of him or his conversation. Where is he, at whose appearance I relaxed my sad face, in whom I laid to rest all my worries? Where are the conversations which I could never have enough of? Where the studies which I took part in more gladly than a woman, more intimately than a mother? Where is that meeting? Where that always boyish joy at the sight of his mother?"

The kind of intimacy painted here is not typical of relationships between mothers and sons, at least not as far as Seneca is concerned. His description of family life in the *ad Marciam* made it clear that sons would rarely have been able to be this intimate with their mothers, either because they lived in separate houses or because of a son's service in the military (*ad Marciam* 24.2).[48] By contrast, Helvia desires a relationship based on frequent association, intellectual conversation and mutual trust. The role of confidant that Seneca plays for his mother is paralleled by the maternal respect he feels towards her: their ability to share intellectual discussion in a way that transcends the parent/child relationship is not familiar to us from other texts.

Seneca appears to set a high value on his mother's ability to engage with him on an intellectual level, going so far as to encourage her in her philosophical studies. He explicitly contradicts his father's views on the subject (17.4):

> Utinam quidem virorum optimus, pater meus, minus maiorum consuetudini deditus voluisset te praeceptis sapientiae erudiri potius quam inbui! non parandum tibi nunc esset auxilium contra fortunam sed proferendum. Propter istas quae litteris non ad sapientiam utuntur sed ad luxuriam instruuntur minus te indulgere studiis passus est.

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[48] "Think, Marcia, how rarely women who live in different houses see their children; reflect how many years perish and are spent in worry for those mothers whose sons are in the army; you will know that this time had been much extended, from which you lost nothing" (*computa, Marcia, quam raro liberos uideant quae in diuersis domibus habitant; cogita tot illos perire annos matribus et per sollicitudinem exigi quibus filios in exercitu habent: scies multum patuisse hoc tempus ex quo nil perdidisti*).

> Certainly, would that the best of men, my father, less given to the custom of our ancestors, had wished you to be instructed in the precepts of wisdom rather than merely dipped in them! Assistance against fortune would not now have to be prepared for you, but only brought out; because of those women, who do not use literature according to wisdom but are fitted out for luxury, he suffered you less to satisfy yourself with study.

Seneca's father objected to his wife dedicating herself to philosophical instruction in case she used it for vanity rather than for intellectual development.[49] The conflict between father and son here does not arise from the different natures of their relationships with Helvia. Rather, Seneca's insistence that his mother should study philosophy brings us back to the Stoic conception of the difference between the sexes. For the Stoics, part of one's ability to become virtuous was based upon using reason to overcome the irrational parts of the soul, and making rational decisions about what was important in the world. Without the tools to engage their reason, women would be denied the opportunity to fulfil their natural capacity for virtue.

When Seneca advises his mother to return to her studies, he takes a Stoic world-view at odds with the traditionalism of his father and accepts that such activity is appropriate for a woman aiming for virtue. The implications of this view are significant for the blueprint of the ideal Stoic mother, embodied in Helvia, that this text constructs. The Stoic mother must actively pursue virtue herself and make use of education as a means to that end. Such education will not run the risk of being used in a frivolous way, as Seneca's father feared. Rather, it will give the student the resilience and strength that Seneca promises Helvia in the face of her current adversity (17.3-5). Through philosophical studies, the ideal mother can share not only her son's conversation, but also

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[49] Anxiety about women using intellect for show rather than substance was a common theme in Roman writing of the late Republic and early Empire. A particularly apt example is Horace *Epode* 8.15-6: *Quid quod libelli Stoici inter sericos / iacere pulvillos amant?*

his pursuit of virtue. The ethical bond between parent and child is a deeper level of intimacy that is otherwise restricted by the mother's lack of education.

Indeed, Seneca draws explicit parallels between himself and his mother in the consolation in their shared role as exiles. Williams has noted that Seneca portrays his mother as an exile from philosophy, who is now able to regain the territory she was forbidden from entering; he observes that "Seneca constructs for Helvia the same philosophical safe haven that sustains him on Corsica, and in which they are united despite (and across) their separation" (2006: 168). However, Williams does not comment on the connection that Seneca draws between the consolations of philosophy and the consolation of her close family. Seneca does not describe the family only as a support system, as Williams suggests, but suggests it is an equivalent to philosophy. To be fair, the family provides more direct consolation to Helvia, as Seneca says he points her to them while she journeys towards the safe harbour of philosophy (18.1).[50] It is easier for Helvia to take comfort in the immediacy of her relations in the short term than it is to instantly gain solace from resuming her philosophical studies. Nonetheless, given the Stoic theory of *oikeiōsis* and the importance of the family in achieving virtue, it would be foolish to suggest that Seneca points Helvia towards her family as a mechanism of consolation to be discarded as soon as she gets her teeth into philosophy properly.

When Helvia reaches the destination to which her son has directed her, she will begin to understand the true nature of her relationship with her sons, and indeed all her relations. This will augment her already formidable character and bring her still closer to

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[50] "But because you need certain supports to lean on until you reach that port which study promises you, I wish in the meantime to show you your consolations" (*sed quia, dum in illum portum quem tibi studia promittunt pervenis, adminiculis quibus innitaris opus est, volo interim solacia tibi tua ostendere*). Seneca goes on to list the family members to whom Helvia should turn, clearly indicating that they will substitute for philosophy until such a time as Helvia is able to take full advantage of it.

being the perfect Stoic mother. Seneca wishes to idealise not only her nature as mother, but also her role as grandmother. He directs her to take consolation not just in her sons who are not in exile, but in the company of her grandchildren as well. It is clear that he expects her to take a direct hand in the raising of the two children mentioned, Marcus and Novatilla (18.4-8).[51] Indeed, he tells her to take the place of the mother Novatilla has recently lost and shape the child's character accordingly (18.8):

> Nunc mores eius compone, nunc forma: altius praecepta descendunt quae teneris inprimuntur aetatibus. Tuis adsuescat sermonibus, ad tuum fingatur arbitrium: multum illi dabis, etiam si nihil dederis praeter exemplum.
>
> Now order her character, now form it; the precepts which are impressed during youthful stages of life sink in deeper. Let her become accustomed to your conversation, let her be shaped according to your choice; you will give much to her, even if you give her nothing but your example.

This injunction influences the Stoic ideal of both mother and grandmother. Forming a child's character through the judicious application of familial *exempla* is, of course, a time-honoured Roman tradition. An adult's character could be further developed through consideration of suitable historical figures, and both consolations are full of such persuasive devices.[52] What Seneca recommends here, however, deserves note because he is asking a grandmother to step into the shoes of a deceased mother and provide a young girl with moral guidance in her absence. Again, the family provides a practical case study in place of dry theoretical abstractions.[53] This implies that the grandmother should have an interest in the child; she should not merely leave her to the mercies of her father, and

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[51] Although the identity of these children is not absolutely certain, it is possible to make some reasonable conjectures. Marcus is normally assumed to be the poet Lucan, son of Seneca's younger brother Mela. Novatilla is assumed to be the daughter of Seneca's older brother, Annaeus Novatus. For more on this topic, see Griffin 1992: 58.

[52] For more on Seneca's use of *exempla*, see Mayer 2008. For a treatment of the use of *exempla* in Roman literature more generally, see Maslakov 1984, Skidmore 1996 and Roller 2004.

[53] We might compare this to Epictetus 1.11, where he excoriates an official for leaving his sick daughter to be tended by slaves because he is afraid she might die. Epictetus takes this 'teachable moment' to correct the official's misapprehension that it is anything but our own decisions that drive our own behaviour, but he does not use it as a place for discussing the family itself in any further detail.

indeed of her stepmother if her father chooses to remarry. This is superficially not a startling observation, given that Novatilla is related to Helvia through the paternal line, and that she therefore belongs to the *familia* headed by Helvia's eldest son following the death of his father. The interesting thing from the perspective of Stoic familial ethics is that Helvia is asked to impress the pattern of her own behaviour onto Novatilla's conduct. In taking upon herself the duties of a mother, Helvia assumes the same parenting role she had in raising her three sons.

A grandmother, then, can take on the role of mother, which presumably means taking on all the interests of a child in a way that is functionally disconnected from the material interests of the grandmother herself, just as Helvia administered the estates of her sons without personal tangible profit. Seneca invites Helvia to put *oikeiōsis* into practice once more – to move beyond the second circle drawn by Hierocles, in which her children were contained, and to draw closer to herself the members of the third circle, which includes grandchildren (see figure 1, page 48). By asking her to perform the same duties for her granddaughter as she did for her sons, Seneca gives Helvia a substantive way of putting ethical theory into practice. The strong links between the duties that Seneca calls Helvia to perform and the theory that she will learn during her studies underline the fact that there is no benefit in studying philosophy if one does not apply the lessons it teaches, or indeed in acting according to doctrine without understanding what that doctrine is.

Family as *Exemplum*

In his attempts to give Helvia practical evidence of the theory which will give her the most philosophical benefit, Seneca even provides her with her very own *exemplum* to model the way he is asking her to behave towards Novatilla. It is striking that the *exempla* Seneca evokes most frequently are not from history, as they were in the *ad Marciam*, but from his own immediate family – in this case, he turns his mother's eyes to his aunt.[54] Seneca praises his aunt's character by recounting her behaviour towards him in his own time of need (19.2):

> Illius manibus in urbem perlatus sum, illius pio maternoque nutricio per longum tempus aeger convalui; illa pro quaestura mea gratiam suam extendit et, quae ne sermonis quidem aut clarae salutationis sustinuit audaciam, pro me vicit indulgentia verecundiam.
>
> I was carried into the city in her hands, I recovered because of her pious and maternal nursing through a long period of illness; she extended her influence on behalf of my quaestorship and she, who could not even endure the boldness of conversation or a loud greeting, conquered modesty for me with her kindness.

The use of the word *materno* is key here. Seneca's aunt steps into the role of mother for her nephew exactly as Seneca asks Helvia to step into the role of mother for Novatilla, without any concern for her own interests. Moreover, the aunt performs many different kinds of duties for Seneca. She tends to him when he is ill but also takes steps to support him in his political activity, thus demonstrating that there are many ways to express familial devotion.

The aunt also possesses the cardinal virtues which were considered key for the wise man to embody. She exhibits prudence, moderation, courage and justice, both

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[54] Unfortunately, our evidence about the identity of Seneca's aunt is thin. Seneca refers to her as *sororem tuam* (19.1), which clearly indicates that whatever the biological or legal circumstances, Helvia considered her to be a sister. We know she was married to C. Galerius, who was prefect of Egypt, and that Seneca spent time with them during that posting. We do not, however, know in precisely what way she was related to Helvia, or what her name was. Griffin 1972: 7 n.81 provides a summary of the possibilities. Corbier 1991 explores the issue further, favouring the explanation that the aunt was a uterine half-sister to Helvia who came to Helvia's father's house with her mother.

implicitly and explicitly, as Seneca describes her life to Helvia.[55] As Favez rightly noted, this praise is written not so much for Helvia's benefit as for the secondary readership unacquainted with the aunt's history (1918: xx). However, Seneca shapes and shades his aunt's life so that her moral character and devotion to her family are brought to the fore. He specifically mentions her virtues of *modestia* (19.2) and *prudentia* (19.4), and her recovery of her husband's body from the shipwreck that killed him vividly demonstrates her virtues of courage and justice (19.7). The aunt's practical use of her ethical merits echoes the examples given by Musonius Rufus when he argues that daughters should receive the same education as sons (IV). For instance, a woman who lives justly will manage her household well; she will exercise self-control and thereby avoid gluttony and drunkenness; and through courage she will be able to repel attack. Williams has described the aunt as "an empowering model of virtue, of strong and intelligent detachment from the world," yet also says that she embodies a "quasi-philosophical decorum" (2006: 170). I would argue that Seneca makes her more than only "quasi-philosophical". Certainly Seneca does not explicitly set out how she fulfils each of the four cardinal virtues, but as I have noted before, overt doctrinal didacticism is unsuitable for the consolatory context. Instead of providing an essay on abstract moral virtue, Seneca gives Helvia a compelling personalised *exemplum* and encourages her to grow towards the virtues of the Stoic sage, even before she has resumed her studies.

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[55] These are listed as virtues by Stobaeus 2.58.5-15 = L&S 60K. Plutarch (*De Stoicorum repugnantiis* 1034C = L&S 61C) says that Zeno and Plato both acknowledged these four separate virtues which, although inseparable from virtue as a whole, formed four distinct and different qualities (ἀρετὰς ὁ Ζήνων ἀπολείπει πλείονας κατὰ διαφοράς, ὥσπερ ὁ Πλάτων, οἷον φρόνησιν ἀνδρείαν σωφροσύνην δικαιοσύνην, ὡς ἀχωρίστους μὲν οὔσας ἑτέρας δὲ καὶ διαφερούσας ἀλλήλων).

One vital question still needs to be addressed – why does Seneca tell Helvia to look to an *exemplum* from her own family?[56] How does the family contribute to ethical development on this level as far as Seneca and Stoicism are concerned? The family was a perfectly good place to source *exempla*, and this is not the only place Seneca makes use of what Cicero called the *domesticum exemplum*.[57] Yet this particular *exemplum* is developed at considerable length and depth in comparison to the historical figures that Seneca has already called to Helvia's attention. He could have return to historical *exempla*, as he has already used the stories of Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, and Rutilia, who followed her son Cotta into exile, for Helvia's edification (16.6-7), yet he does not do so. The cynical response is that this is hardly a surprise, since there *is* no appropriate collection of historical examples to draw on here. As Seneca himself notes in the opening of the consolation, he writes under unusual circumstances (*in re nova*, 1.2). The sceptic may argue that Seneca turns to his aunt as an easy example that is close to hand, that does not require any deep research, and that will appeal to the wider readership of the consolation because of the shipwreck anecdote.[58] Although this approach has the merits of simplicity, it does not do justice to Seneca's meticulous attention to detail in his composition. To say he chooses an *exemplum* because it is the most convenient contradicts all other evidence of his attempts to tailor the consolation to the recipient.

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[56] Wilcox does not include Seneca's aunt in her detailed discussion of male and female *exempla* in both the *ad Helviam* and the *ad Marciam*, and relegates discussion of the passage to a footnote (2006: 98, n.20).
[57] Cicero, *Pro Murena* 66. For further details, see Mayer 2008: 301.
[58] Seneca's decision to make his aunt into such a striking *exemplum* would fit well with his decision about how to present his own death as a source of exemplary material. Reydams-Schils 2005: 171-175 analyses the various accounts of Seneca's death scene and how it is set up as a philosophical lesson, particularly in Tacitus. Mayer 2008: 300 suggests that "in death Seneca crowned his lifelong engagement with *exempla* by becoming one himself". If we accept that Seneca wished his death to be observed as a moral paradigm, then it becomes easy to argue that during his life, he may also have viewed his family as the source of other *exempla*.

Seneca chooses to direct Helvia to her sister as a model of the virtues because it is from our family that we learn how to be virtuous. This is a consequence of the theory of *oikeiōsis*: by learning to model behaviour that was shown to us, we in turn model that behaviour for those learning it. As Inwood has noted, *oikeiōsis* "lies at the foundation of our entire system of moral attachments, including our commitments to virtue and fair treatment of all other human beings" (2007: 170). It is the fundamental method through which we learn what it is to act justly towards one another. The most obvious manifestation of this is that a child experiences a parent's unconditional love for her and then in turn replicates that unconditional love for her own child. But the lessons learnt in the human family clearly go deeper than that. After all, Hierocles placed parents, siblings, spouse *and* children in the second of his concentric circles, not merely parents and children. Just as children learn how to exhibit virtuous behaviour from their parents, spouses and siblings can learn virtuous behaviour from each other.

Now the suitability of Seneca's aunt as *exemplum extraordinaire* becomes clear. She belongs to those members of the family nearest to Helvia's self, in a relationship with her that is equivalent to her relationships with her parents and her children.[59] She therefore stands in a privileged position of intimacy to Helvia that extends beyond the mere fact of their kin relationship.[60] Seneca even uses language that encourages Helvia to become as close to her sister as she can (19.3):

> Illi te quantum potes iunge, illius artissimis amplexibus alliga. [...] Tu ad illam te, quidquid cogitaveris, confer; sive servare istum habitum voles sive deponere, apud illam invenies vel finem doloris tui vel comitem.

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[59] It is also the equivalent of the relationship Helvia had with her now deceased husband.
[60] Given the rather tangential nature of their genealogical relationship (see footnote 54), the importance of the affective bonds is even more pronounced.

> Unite yourself to her, as much as you can; wind yourself around her with the closest embraces. [...] Bring to her yourself, whatever you might be thinking; whether you want to preserve that state of yours or put it down, in her you will find either an end or a companion for your grief.

Seneca appears to suggest that Helvia become the mirror image of her sister, making her behaviour as close an imitation of her sister's model as she can. Naturally, this advice fits the general *exemplum* model. However, there are two important points to note here that speak specifically to the Stoic context of Seneca's advice. The first is that Seneca's aunt is an *exemplum* to be imitated in her entirety, not merely in her ability to cope with grief. Indeed, her specific misfortune of losing her husband at sea has very little in common with Helvia's loss of Seneca to exile. Instead, her character as a whole is the object of imitation. By attempting to emulate her disposition and her possession of the cardinal virtues, Helvia will not only overcome her grief, but also progress along the path to virtue.

The second is that the aunt is a far more appropriate *exemplum* for Helvia than, say, Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, precisely *because* of their close family relationship. While Cornelia may occupy the same social role as Helvia, her sister is a more accessible and appropriate model according to the theory of *oikeiōsis*. The process of *oikeiōsis* actually makes sense of Seneca's injunction that Helvia should bring her sister to herself at 19.3, for the language he uses echoes that with which the *proficiens* is exhorted to bring people closest to her into the innermost circle of Hierocles' diagram. It is far easier for Helvia to reach out into her immediately adjacent circle of family to grasp models than it is for her to extend her imagination out to far more distant figures of history, regardless of their ethical merits. Because of the intimacy of our relationship with the members of our immediate family, they give us the most easily imitated *exempla*, not

just at the beginning of our lives, but throughout it.[61] Seneca appears to be unique in the Stoic sources by giving us such intimate real life examples of people to whom his addressees should turn for this moral encouragement in a way that goes beyond the normal use of *exempla* in the consolatory genre.

Not only does Seneca turn to his family to find an *exemplum* for Helvia, but he also turns his family into an *exemplum* for his more general reader. The *ad Helviam* presents us with a picture of a family untroubled by internal conflict. Indeed, Seneca specifically praises Helvia for not being torn between her obligations of mother and daughter (*tu filia familiae locupletibus filiis ultro contulisti*, 14.3). Helvia's position within her family is supported on all sides by an appreciation of how familial relationships should interlock together, and by the obligations of one family member towards another. She does not expect unrealistic things from others or herself, and in turn is not the subject of unreasonable demands; neither does she favour her identity as mother, daughter or sister to the detriment of her other roles. Her family appears to conform to the model prescribed by *oikeiōsis*.

This harmony is remarkable given the turmoil of Helvia's family life, which Seneca depicts in meticulous detail at the beginning of the consolation. She has never known peace in the external circumstances of her family (2.4-5). Helvia's mother died giving birth to her. She grew up under a stepmother. She lost her brother, followed in thirty days by her husband. She has buried three grandchildren, the most recent of whom

[61] It is fair to ask how we *know* that our relatives are providing us with *exempla* worthy of imitation. After all, not every sister is like Seneca's aunt, and not every mother is like Helvia, as I will discuss further in chapter four. However, in this particular situation, Seneca has outlined how his aunt has demonstrated the four cardinal virtues and thus provides a worthy model for emulation. We may assume that in families which operate as smoothly and correctly as Seneca's does in this idealized representation, there would be no question about whether a family member should be emulated. The discernment that the individual would need to apply in order to correctly judge the condition of her relatives in day-to-day life must be developed through the process of internalization described in the *Epistulae Morales* and that I discuss in chapter five.

was Seneca's own son. Twenty days after this grandchild's death, news of Seneca's exile arrived. Despite all of this disruption, she and her family still manage to maintain ethical equilibrium. There is nothing in the structure of their relationship that needs attention from Seneca's consolatory therapy. Equally, she does not need the kind of advice Marcia did, as she has mastered the art of correctly managing her grief for the death of a loved one. Instead, she needs guidance on how to cope with this most unusual of situations, the loss of a living son, from an unusual consoler, the son himself. Seneca advises her to turn back to her family, which has stood stable despite its outward buffeting, and take her consolation from them.

In this way, the family exactly replicates the condition of the Stoic sage. The Stoic wise man is always happy. He never suffers from the external assaults of fate, and happiness is always in his power.[62] This view was based on the idea that happiness was solely constituted by acting in accordance with virtue and that, conversely, unhappiness was acting in accordance with vice. Such a definition led to the famous paradox that a sage would be happy even undergoing torture, an idea that Seneca himself explores in Letter 85.27.[63] Regardless of external turmoil and trouble, the sage still retains his emotional equilibrium and continues to act in a virtuous way. Seneca's own family models precisely this behaviour, a practical demonstration unrivalled in other Stoic texts. Despite a turbulent past history and divisions from exile and death, it is still possible for a family to create the environment in which virtue can be pursued by all its members, from the senior figures like Helvia, who are well advanced in their ethical growth, to children

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[62] See, for instance, Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.82: *Stoicorum quidem facilis conclusio est; qui cum finem bonorum esse senserint congruere naturae cumque ea convenienter vivere, cum id sit in sapientis situm non officio solum, verum etiam potestate, sequatur necesse est, ut, cuius in potestate summum bonum, in eiusdem vita beata sit. Ita fit semper vita beata sapientis.*

[63] See also, for instance, the discussion at Cicero *De Finibus* 3.42 and 5.83-5.

just beginning their journey like Novatilla. The truly stable family, like the Stoic sage, does not suffer from the external events that affect its members; it creates an environment in which virtue is always possible.

Conclusion

If we examine the two consolations from the standpoint of Stoic theory rather than as examples of a rhetorical genre, we see that the theory of *oikeiōsis* runs deeply through both of them. Seneca's Stoic world view applies just as profoundly to the fabric of the consolations and the nature of the relationships they address as it does to more obvious surface features. The correct conception of death in connection with a mother's role in giving life to her son added an extra layer of consolation for Marcia. An awareness of the nature of motherhood as equivalent to being a daughter according to *oikeiōsis* also helped her access the attitude she had previously demonstrated when grieving her father. Helvia not only provided the pattern for an ideal mother, but also modelled how an individual might continue her pursuit of virtue within a family context, and indeed explained why the family was the right place for that search to take place. We also saw how a mother, and the family, provide the location for learning about how to be a Stoic, either through providing an introduction to the characteristics of nature or supplying us with moral *exempla*. The Stoic doctrines implicitly underlying the assumptions Seneca makes in his consolations add a crucial dimension to the comfort he offers to Helvia and Marcia, but also reveal more to us about how those doctrines should be applied practically in the case of mothers and to the family as a whole. The importance of the family as a ethically supportive environment forms a central plan of both these

consolations, as well as the one that Seneca wrote for Polybius, to which we will now turn.

Chapter Two: A Band of Brothers

Seneca's *De Consolatione Ad Polybium* uses the relationship between brothers as a central consolatory motif. In this chapter, I will argue that Seneca models this relationship on the Stoic *cosmopolis*, and so continues his project of basing the ethics of the family on Stoic principles. The Stoic *cosmopolis* contained all beings who had perfect grasp of reason; Seneca uses this model to show how brothers provide a community akin to that between the wise, and the importance of this community in the family framework. The support of brothers allows Polybius to survive his grief, showing the practical significance of such relationships. Furthermore, Seneca explores the role of the emperor within the consolation, and strengthens his own implicit plea for recall by marking himself out as one of Polybius' brothers in reason. The identity of brother, originally based on a biological accident, extends to encompass all rational beings, so that the ethical relationship of one brother to another becomes equivalent to one's relationship with the world at large.

The *De Consolatione Ad Polybium* was written during Seneca's exile on Corsica, and was addressed to Claudius' freedman, Polybius. The ostensible purpose of the work is to console Polybius on the recent death of his brother. According to Suetonius, Polybius was one of Claudius' freedmen, second only to Narcissus, who often used to walk between the two consuls (*qui saepe inter duos consules ambulabat*, *Vita Divi Claudii* 28). The consolation provides the minimal information that survives about his family life. We can extrapolate that he had at least three brothers, one of whom died and two or more who survived. Similar to the *ad Marciam*, the text contains no specific

information about how Polybius' brother died, or even his name. The extant manuscripts of the consolation also begin *in medias res*. The introductory address is missing, although it is not clear how much more has been lost.

Polybius was *magister a libellis*, the freedman in charge of petitions and complaints addressed to Claudius. As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that the consolation is conspicuously laden with overt and excessive praise of the emperor. Indeed, much scholarly interest in the *ad Polybium* has centred on how to interpret the tribute paid to the emperor within the wider consolatory framework, and the work has often been dismissed because of its excessively reverential tone. Duff felt it necessary to comment that "excuses can be made for Seneca's weakness", but concluded that this period of his life was "stained first by flattery of little men in great power" (1915: xxv-xxvi). One solution to this embarrassment was to claim that the *ad Polybium* had been forged by someone attempting to undermine Seneca's reputation.[1] Griffin summed up a more modern and moderate view when she said that "no one would maintain that the Consolation to Polybius was designed solely to cheer up Polybius" (1992: 20-1). Scholarship has moved a little beyond outright condemnation of the more purple passages of the consolation and consideration of the text's intended audience.[2] However, no work

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[1]For the history of scholarship on the authenticity of the *ad Polybium*, see Atkinson1985: 860-4.

[2] Rudich suggests that Seneca's glorification "should not be necessarily seen as a display of hypocrisy and insincerity"; it may be based on "genuine wishful thinking" as the exile hopes Caesar will display the *clementia* he is so lauded for (1987: 106). Mayer has commented on the choice of Claudius as the chief provider of consolation, with the imperial family taking "the lion's share of the *exempla*" (2008: 308-9). Kurth explores the Stoic underlay to some extent, explaining how the emperor's person is incorporated into the group of people who are owed *pietas* in a Stoic conception of the universe (1994: 96). Fantham 2007 has explored the thematic treatment of exile in comparison to the *ad Helviam*. There has also been concern about the precise dating of the text. In Griffin's opinion, it must have been composed shortly before Claudius' conquest of Britain in A.D. 44 (1992: 396). This dating is based on Seneca's wish in 13.2 that Claudius might "open up Britain" (*Britanniam aperiat*), which she takes as a reference to Claudius' forthcoming triumph. For a summary of the issues surrounding whether the text was meant as a purely private communication to Polybius with no view to publication, or whether Seneca composed it with a larger readership in mind, see Atkinson 1985: 865-66. In my opinion, the consolation was originally written

has yet considered the way that Seneca's deployment of the *cosmopolis* and its relevance to brothers must affect our reading of Claudius' role in Polybius' consolation.

The view that the *ad Polybium* is riddled with sycophancy and hypocrisy has obstructed serious examination of the work in its entirety. Some scholars have used passages from the *ad Polybium* to explore a theme either in Seneca or in the Roman Stoics more generally;[3] they have not addressed whether the text as an independent artefact has a coherent philosophical message. They do, however, acknowledge that Seneca is writing within a Stoic framework, in the same way that he composed the *ad Marciam* and *ad Helviam*, and thus that it is worth mining for evidence of Stoic thought and doctrine. Rather than take individual elements of the consolation as parts of a larger puzzle, I will show how the text itself is philosophically consistent and contributes to our understanding of Stoic approaches to the family.

I am not suggesting that Seneca did *not* have any ulterior motive in writing this consolation. The sheer volume of passages devoted solely to Caesar and his many accomplishments forestalls any such claim. However, previous studies have underestimated how Seneca's use of the *cosmopolis* theory and its relevance to brothers not only functions as a consolatory strategy but also strengthens Seneca's case for his recall by emphasizing his place in the community of the wise. Recognising the role of the *cosmopolis* helps to reconcile the conflict that has made the *ad Polybium* appear a work

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with publication in mind, although I am not sure whether that publication took place at the same time as the document was sent to Polybius or a little later. It certainly seems reasonable to suggest the work was published before Seneca's recall from exile, and that it may have contributed to Agrippina's decision to have him recalled because of his scholarly reputation (*ob claritudinem studiorum eius*, Tacitus *Annales* 12.8).

[3] As Atkinson notes, the main areas of interest have been the text's rhetorical strategies and how Seneca adapts and deploys the Stoic theory of the emotions (1985: 871-2). Inwood has touched upon how natural law is presented in the text, especially as regards the time of one's death (2005: 237-9), and Reydams-Schils has explored the issue of grief and the wise man's response to it (2005: 136-7).

at best undermined by its two conflicting purposes, to console and to petition for recall, and at worse cynically opportunistic.

The *Cosmopolis*

The theory of the *cosmopolis* had been with Stoicism from its inception.[4] Zeno, the founder of the school, wrote a *Republic* in reply to Plato on the best organisation of a city.[5] By Seneca's time, the Stoics believed that "the true city is the cosmic city" (Schofield 1991: 93); that is, the community of wise and morally good people create a single city within the universe.[6] Seneca expresses his own view of the *cosmopolis* in *De Otio* (4.1):

> Duas res publicas animo complectamur, alteram magnam et vere publicam, qua di atque homines continentur, in qua non ad hunc angulum respicimus aut ad illum sed terminos civitatis nostrae cum sole metimur, alteram cui nos adscripsit condicio nascendi.
>
> Let us conceive of two states in our minds, the one great and truly common, in which gods and men are contained, in which we don't focus on this or that little corner, but measure the borders of our state with the sun; the other, to which the accident of birth has appointed us.

He continues this theme by asserting that we owe our greatest allegiance to the greater state which constitutes men and gods, and that it provides the community within which

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[4] There does not appear to have been a direct Latin equivalent for the word *cosmopolis*; a variation on state or city seems to have been the preferred translation. For instance, in the passage of *De Otio* on this page, Seneca refers to the *res publica*. Cicero, at *De Natura Deorum* 2.154, refers to the *mundus quasi communis deorum atque hominum domus, aut* ***urbs*** *utrorumque*.

[5] Although what survives of that work is fragmentary, it seems clear that Zeno was more concerned with creating the structure for a physical community along communistic principles than laying the groundwork for a more abstract society; his follower, Chrysippus, seems to have been responsible for developing this into the idea of the cosmic city. Schofield 1991: 22-92 explores the question of Zeno's original intentions and the later developments.

[6] The question of what differentiates a community from a city is moot; as Schofield notes, "the thesis that those who share right reason make up a community is for a Stoic just the same as the thesis that they constitute a city" (1991: 73).

we may enquire into ethical questions.[7] One of these questions is what the nature of god is (*deus*, 4.2); a man's contemplation of such issues ensures that god's creation is not without a witness. The Stoics used the word 'god' interchangeably with reason, fate and even Zeus (Diogenes Laertius 7.135). The equivalence between god and reason, in that god is totally rational and thus perfect, means that the contemplation of the nature of god is the same as the contemplation of reason itself. The cosmic city, then, is a place for mutual enquiry into moral issues among the wise, where the primary activity is that of intellectual discovery, so that men may participate in reasoned contemplation. This act brings them closer to the things god has created (*tanta eius opera*, 4.2) and, by implication, draws them nearer to god, and thus reason itself. After all, the wise man is the man who acts virtuously, and to act virtuously is to act in accordance with reason (Stobaeus 2.66.14-67.4, LS 61G).

Wise men who belong to the *cosmopolis* thus relate to each other on the basis of their shared primary activity, the contemplation of reason. Their behaviour towards each other will also be fully rational. As the condition for membership of the *cosmopolis* is the perfect use of reason, citizens of the universal city will always act in ways that are perfectly just and rational towards each other. There will be no ill will caused by misunderstanding, as each citizen can appreciate the rational basis for the actions of others, and in turn act themselves in a way fully based upon reason. The shared activity of contemplating the divine, however conceived, is the foundation upon which

[7] Seneca does not address the question of who precisely qualifies for citizenship of this city. Possessing reason certainly makes one a candidate for membership, and, as such, it is open to men and women; whether only people who exercise reason perfectly as *sages* can truly be counted as citizens is not specified. Schofield summarises the Stoic position as "those who have reason, right reason, law and justice in common thereby belong to a single community", but comments that "the moral demands this definition requires a group of human beings to meet if they are to constitute a city are high" (1991: 73). However, Seneca's personal opinion of who belonged to the *cosmopolis* in practice should not affect his use of the image as a consolatory strategy in this text.

relationships are based. The cooperative effort, where each sage is equal in reflection, leads to a city that has no need of hierarchical structures such as law courts (Diogenes Laertius 7.33). The relationship between the members of this balanced society provides the model upon which Seneca will base his discussion of brothers in the *Ad Polybium*.

Brothers at Rome

Brothers held an important place in Roman culture. As Bannon has explored, the relationship between brothers, initially conceived in legal terms concerning matters of inheritance and family property, developed into a wider cultural concept of natural intimacy between biological kin (1997: 4-5). The virtue of *pietas* is especially important in this context. Although, as Saller 1998 has shown, *pietas* was a reciprocal virtue that all members of the family were expected to demonstrate to each other, fraternal *pietas* was a special subset of that virtue. Seneca himself uses the word extensively to describe the sort of relationship Polybius had with his brother (3.2, 5.3-4, 10.1). Intimacy expressed itself not only through *pietas* in family matters, but also through cooperation in the political arena (Bannon 1997: 91-2). The obvious examples of this kind of fraternal *pietas* are the Scipiones and the Gracchi. The emotional connection between brothers was also strong. Catullus' poem to his dead brother expresses feelings as powerful as those he communicates when writing to his mistress (68). The type of relationship that was idealised between brothers also became the model for other relationships, such as those between friends, soldiers and lovers, because "brothers were a model of natural identity among [male] kin" (Bannon 1997: 5).[8]

[8] For instance, Ovid describes his relationship with his friends as brotherly (*ego dilexi fraterno more sodales*, *Tristia* 1.3.65). In Petronius' *Satyricon*, the love triangle of Encolpius, Ascyltos and Giton describe

The ideology of brotherhood expressed in these texts, at least in the stories of biological brothers, is that brothers should behave towards each other in ways that are consistent with *pietas*. One excellent example is found in the myth of Castor and Pollux, who were supposed to live one life shared between the two of them, an ideal brotherly relationship that inspired Tiberius to dedicate a temple to them in memory of his own brother Drusus in A.D. 6.[9] The parity of the Dioscuri's arrangement embodies the idealised equality and balance of the brotherly relationship. A similar image of fraternal devotion appears in Livy's story of the Horatii and Curiatii, the two sets of triplets who fought to decide the outcome of the long-running war between Rome and Alba (1.24-25). Two of the Horatii are killed early in the combat, but the final brother kills all three Curiatii, dedicating the first two to his dead brothers, and the last to the end of the war (1.25.12). The kinship between the brothers, who are willing to fight together for their respective cities, puts their unity and shared courage at the centre of Livy's foundation story. In more recent history, Valerius Maximus used Tiberius himself as an example of fraternal *pietas*, and made much of his trip to Drusus' deathbed (5.5.3). In the mytho-historical context of early Rome and early imperial history, brothers are expected to function together in a way that is based on shared values and that regards each brother as an equal partner.

The importance of brothers extended into religious structures. One of the oldest priesthoods attested in Roman religion is the *Fratres Arvales*, which specifically created a fraternal relationship among their members as a fundamental part of the priesthood's

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themselves as brothers (e.g. *Satyricon* 9.2, 24.6). On the battlefield, Pandarus and Bitias, defending the gate of the Trojan camp against the Latin attack led by Turnus, are described as "proud brothers" (*superbos fratres*, *Aeneid* 9.695).

[9] For more on the use of Castor and Pollux by the imperial family, see Bannon 1997: 178-9 and Wardle 2000: 489-90.

character. The *fratres* were men of senatorial rank, bound by a shared social identity; by Seneca's time, their duties mainly involved sacrificing and performing prayers on behalf of the imperial house. The most important ritual of this kind took place in January, when they would sacrifice for the safety of the reigning emperor and members of his family.[10] Membership of the *Fratres* was for life, and the bond of brotherhood could not be broken. Evidence of a similar priesthood called the *Fratres Atiedii*, responsible for undertaking religious rites on behalf of the community, has been found in Iguvium in Umbria.[11] Elective religious brotherhoods appear to be a uniquely Roman institution, reflecting the importance of the relationship to successfully maintaining the *pax deorum*.

Brothers at Rome were not wholly unproblematic. The obvious exceptions are the first brothers in Roman history, Romulus and Remus, whose relationship left much to be desired. Fighting between brothers was an image of such horror that the Romans frequently used it to symbolise civil discord.[12] Worries about the order of succession and competition between brothers heightened anxiety about fraternal relations under the imperial period; there was always the risk that the infant empire might fall back into the instability of the late Republic. Normally there were several competing potential heirs to a reigning emperor, and it was often unclear who would win.[13] Ginsburg highlights two strategies used by the imperial family to suggest that the age of discord within the dynasty was over (2006: 65-8). The first is Tiberius' reconstruction of the Temple of Concord in 7 B.C., and its rededication in both his name and that of his dead brother

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[10] For more on the *Fratres Arvales* and their relationship to the imperial house, see Beard 1985.
[11] For more on the *Fratres Atiedii*, see Momigliano 1963:115-7.
[12] This imagery springs from the Greek mythological example of the battle between Eteocles and Polynices for Thebes, although Lucan makes the image his own in the *Bellum Civile*. Other poems which use this sort of imagery include the *Thebaid* of Statius and the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus.
[13] As Severy notes of the first imperial succession, "Augustus liked to keep the situation complicated" (2003: 72). For an account of the politics surrounding who was identified as the heir to Augustus, see Severy 2003: 68-77.

Drusus; the second is the so-called "three-sisters" sestertius issued in A.D. 37/38 that featured a laureate Gaius on the obverse and Drusilla, Agrippina and Julia Livilla on the reverse. Each sister represented a specific attribute. Agrippina was visually associated with Securitas, Livilla with Fortunata and Drusilla with Concordia. The promise of both these actions was that reconciliation between the Julian and Claudian lines of the family had come, and the fight for the succession had been amicably settled. The emphasis on the very real presence of *Concordia* in the sibling relationship, in the person of Drusilla, is a vital part of that rhetoric.

The emphasis on the importance of the fraternal bond, then, and its ideological force always exist in tension with cultural fears about what happens if the relationship breaks down. Brothers in the world of Seneca's contemporaries are always at risk of conflict; brothers under the *cosmopolis* need fear no such reversal of fortune.

The *Cosmopolis* in the *ad Polybium*

Now that we have established the philosophical and cultural context in which Seneca wrote, it is time to return to the *ad Polybium*, and the connections drawn between fraternal relationships and the community of the wise. The most explicit parallel between brothers and wise men is drawn at the end of the consolation (18.6):

> Fluant lacrimae, sed eaedem et desinant, trahantur ex imo gemitus pectore, sed idem et finiantur; sic rege animum tuum **ut et sapientibus te adprobare et fratribus**.
>
> Let the tears flow, but let them come to an end as well; let groans be dragged from your deepest soul, but let them be finished too. Rule your mind in such a way **that you can be praised by both wise men and brothers**.

Seneca makes striking but fitting use of the similarities between brothers and sages. The *ad Polybium* is marked out as taking place in a universe that operates under explicitly

Stoic rules by Seneca's invocation of the conflagration, the periodic consummation of the universe by fire, at the beginning of our text (1.2).[14] As in the *ad Helviam* and *ad Marciam*, Seneca never provides any explicit theoretical analysis in the *ad Polybium*, but the text is full of allusions to Stoic philosophy.[15] Seneca's use of the *cosmopolis* to describe fraternal relationships as a consolatory strategy mirrors the role *oikeiōsis* theory played in the consolations to Helvia and Marcia. Bannon's consideration of Polybius' relationship with his brothers concludes that "the emotional bond between brothers reconfigures their kinship, translating biological identity into empathy, which guides their behaviour and decisions" (1997: 75), but misses that what she calls the "radical notion of identity shared by brothers" is informed by not one but two Stoic doctrines. The first, *oikeiōsis*, places siblings among the group of people whose interests are the first to be assimilated to one's own.[16] The second, cosmopolitanism, builds upon that notion, implying that the bond between brothers exists not only in the immediate family but also among the wider community of sages.

As always with consolatory literature, this text primarily aims, at least ostensibly, to console Polybius for his brother's loss. His situation is different from that of Marcia, in

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[14] "Indeed, destruction threatens the world and this universe, which embraces all things human and divine, if you think it is lawful to believe so, some day will disperse, and sink into the old confusion and shadows. Let anyone now lament single souls, let him lament for the ash of Carthage and Numatia and Corinth and if any city higher should fall, when even that which does not have somewhere in which to fall will perish; let anyone now complain that the fates, who will dare such a great evil, have not held back from him" (*mundo quidam minantur interitum et huc universum quod omnia divina humanaque complectitur, si fas putas credere, dies aliquis dissipabit et in confusionem veterem tenebrasque demerget: eat nunc aliquis et singulas comploret animas, Carthaginis ac Numantiae Corinthique cinerem et si quid aliud altius cecidit lamentetur, cum etiam hoc quod non habet quo cadat sit interiturum; eat aliquis et fata tantum aliquando nefas ausura sibi non pepercisse conqueratur*).

[15] Atkinson 1985: 870-2 sums up the *communis opinio* that the *ad Polybium* is written from a Stoic standpoint. Reydams-Schils 2005:59 sees Seneca's reminder that Polybius' brother was a loan from nature, not a permanent possession, as a reminder the family members are indifferents like health and wealth. Inwood 2005: 237-8 explores the inevitability of natural law, as conceived by Stoicism, as an aspect of all Seneca's consolations, including the *ad Polybium*.

[16] For a more detailed discussion of *oikeiōsis*, see chapter one, pages 31-4.

that Seneca is not trying to extirpate deeply rooted grief which has become engrained into Polybius' character. The death of his brother seems to be a recent event, and Seneca's attempts at consolation aim to suggest strategies for managing the immediate impact of that grief in a virtuous fashion. Seneca uses the fraternal relationship between the dead man and his bereaved brother to create a connection between the theoretical *cosmopolis* and every-day life, in much the same way he deployed *oikeiōsis* theory to console Marcia and Helvia. First and foremost the *cosmopolis* serves as a consolatory strategy appropriate to Polybius' relationship with the dead man.

The roles of brother and wise man are actually roughly equivalent. In the community of the wise, each citizen considers the interests of each other citizen to be his own, due to the perfect completion of *oikeiōsis*. This means that their actions would resemble those of brothers as envisaged in traditional Roman ideology, as well as in Stoic theory. Epictetus expresses a similar idea when he outlines the various roles that a human has and the duties that are incumbent upon him as a result (2.10). He asks his listener to consider who he is, and expands on what each of these roles means. The first answer is a man (ἄνθρωπος, 2.10.1) followed by a citizen of the cosmos (πολίτης εἶ τοῦ κόσμου, 2.10.3), then a son (υἱὸς, 2.10.7) and finally a brother (2.10.8-9):

> μετὰ τοῦτο ἴσθι ὅτι καὶ ἀδελφὸς εἶ. καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο δὲ τὸ πρόσωπον ὀφείλεται παραχώρησις, εὐπείθεια, εὐφημία, μηδέποτ' ἀντιποιήσασθαί τινος πρὸς αὐτὸν τῶν ἀπροαιρέτων, ἀλλ' ἡδέως ἐκεῖνα προίεσθαι, ἵν' ἐν τοῖς προαιρετικοῖς πλέον ἐχῃς. ὅρα γὰρ οἷόν ἐστιν ἀντὶ θιδρακος, ἂν οὕτως τύχῃ, καὶ καθέδρας αὐτὸν εὐγνωμοσύνην κτήσασθαι, ὅση ἡ πλεονεχία.
>
> After this, know that you are a brother. Upon this persona is incumbent deference, obedience, good speech, never to contend with someone for any of the things not under the control of one's will, but gladly to give them up, so that you might have more in the things under the control of your will. For see what sort of thing it is,

> in return for lettuce (as it might happen to be) and seats, to obtain his good will – how great the advantage!

It is especially important to notice the force of the imperative in the first line. After discussing this final role, Epictetus looks at other roles a man may have, beginning with a town councillor – but he begins his discussion with the word 'if' ("if you are on some town council", εἰ βουλευτὴς πόλεώς τινος, 2.10.10). Not everyone will be involved in local government, but everyone will be a brother (or sister, as the case may be).[17] The roles of man, citizen of the cosmos, son and brother are all fundamentally part of a person's character, and are different ways of expressing the same truth – that each person is part of the cosmic city, a son of nature, and brother to all others around him who share in reason. The Stoic should take the ethics of behaviour that the Romans traditionally applied to brothers and apply them to his relationship with all rational humans – for these four roles are shared by everyone.

By using Polybius' brothers as a template for the *cosmopolis* and the community of sages, Seneca builds on the Roman motif of modelling various relationships on highly prized fraternal *pietas*. This is a natural progression of the Roman tradition and, indeed, is a clear development in the language of cosmopolitanism.[18] The equality of members of the *cosmopolis* mirrors that between brothers, as does the cooperative rather than hierarchical nature of the relationship. It is also an important indication of the importance that the brotherly bond has for the pursuit of virtue. Polybius' brothers already function as a *cosmopolis*, according to Seneca's description of them as a most harmonious or like-minded crowd (*concordissimam turbam*, 3.4); Seneca also evokes his own fraternal

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[17] Although Epictetus' language is androcentric, the Stoic theory that women have the same capacity for virtue as men means that these theories can be applied in a gender-neutral way.

[18] I am not aware of any earlier discussions that model the *cosmopolis* on the fraternal relationship this explicitly in primary sources, or any discussion of Seneca's use of this template in the secondary literature.

relationship with Polybius by joining with him in his grief at the beginning of the text (2.1-2).[19] The idea of concord, also used by the imperial family to emphasis dynastic harmony, was central to the Stoic doctrine of the *cosmopolis*. The fragments of Zeno's *Republic* that survive suggest that ὁμόνοια was central to his idea of a harmonious and functioning city.[20] Cicero refers to *concordia* as one of the foundations of the state, already giving this image a civic feel (*De Officiis* 2.78).[21] The brothers are also referred to as "a house stuffed full of excellent young men" (*stipatam optimorum adulescentium domum*, 3.4). Again, the portrait emphasises the sense of community and shared virtue.

Seneca emphasises that Polybius and his dead brother were equals in his praise of the brother's character. Unusually, instead of the brother's character, Seneca focuses his praise on Polybius' virtue – he is "most worthy" of not suffering an unworthy brother (*dignissimus*, 3.1), but this brother was worthy of him (3.2):

> Nihil in illo fuit quod non libenter agnosceres; tu quidem etiam minus bono fratri fuisses bonus, sed in illo pietas tua idoneam nacta materiam multo se liberius exercuit.
>
> There was nothing in him that you did not gladly recognise. Indeed, you would have been good to a less good brother, but your *pietas*, having gained a suitable object, occupied itself with him more freely.

It comes as no surprise that the brother took pains to mould himself according to Polybius' own model (3.2):

> Ad exemplum se modestiae tuae formaverat cogitabatque quantum tu et ornamentum tuorum esses et onus: suffecit ille huic sarcinae. O dura fata et nullis aequa virtutibus!

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[19] For further discussion of this passage, see page 105-6.

[20] See, for instance, Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 8 561c, which speaks of Eros as the god that prepares the way for ὁμόνοια and thus furthers the safety of the state. See also Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 31, where Lycurgus' desire for ensuring the prevalence of ὁμόνοια within Sparta is said to have been adopted by Zeno, Plato, Diogenes and all other respected writers on political theory. For *concordia* as a translation of ὁμόνοια, see Skard 1932: 67-73.

[21] Cicero also attempted to create a *concordia ordinum* in order to protect Rome against political threat; see *In Catilinam* 4.14-16, 19; *Epistulae ad Atticum* 1.16.6, 1.17.9-10; *Epistulae ad Familiares* 1.9.12.

> He had shaped himself according to the example of your modesty, and was reflecting on how much you were both an ornament and a burden to your family; he was strong enough for that load. Oh hard fate, fair to no virtues!

This passage follows a long list of the things that fate could have done to Polybius to harm him but would have had no effect (2.3-6). Fortune could have taken things such as his good reputation, his money, his friends, his health, even his life – but none of this would have shaken Polybius. Seneca attributes this to Polybius' grounding in liberal studies (*liberalibus disciplinis*, 2.5). Presumably he has absorbed the Stoic doctrine of indifferents – things that do not affect our possession of virtue and so should not cause us upset when we lose them or pleasure when we gain them – to such an extent that he is able to see that poverty, illness and evil death are not truly evils.[22] His attitude is sage-like, with one exception – the loss of a brother is still able to hurt him (*nocere*, 2.7). This vulnerability aside, Polybius' ability to rise above the physical puts him among the wise since he correctly values external goods such as wealth or health as meaningless. The praise given to Polybius for his equanimity is therefore implicitly applied to his brother. If Polybius behaved in this way, then his brother will have imitated his laudable conduct. Again the family becomes a place where humans can learn how to pursue virtue correctly.

In the consolation Polybius appears as the possessor of wisdom, a sage-like figure that his brothers may learn from. This is not a perfect analogy; for instance, Seneca tells him that he must feign comforting behaviour for his brothers, even if this means hiding his own sorrow (5.4-5). There are two potential objections that arise from this interpretation. First, the Stoic doctrine of *apatheia* is often taken to mean that the Stoic sage would not feel any kind of emotion, and certainly not the upset and imbalance of

[22] See, for instance, Diogenes Laertius 7.101-3 = L&S 58A, and indeed the entirety of L&S 58.

grief.[23] According to this explanation, Polybius should not need a consolation in the first place. Second, the language Seneca uses implies that Polybius should do his best to appear without sorrow even if he can not entirely extirpate it (5.5):

> indue dissimilem animo tuo vultum et, si potes, proice omnem ex toto dolorem, si minus, introrsus abde et contine, ne appareat, et da operam ut fratres tui te imitentur, qui honestum putabunt quodcumque te facientem viderint, animumque ex vultu tuo sument.
>
> Put on an expression different to your thoughts and, if you can, throw out all grief from your whole being; if not, set it aside and contain it so it shall not appear, and take care that your brothers, who will think that whatever they see you do is *honestus*, copy you, and take their courage from your face.

An objector might point out that Polybius must counterfeit the behaviour of the wise man if he cannot truly achieve it; if he must counterfeit, he is not a true sage, and as such, cannot be an example of proper ethical behaviour to his brothers.

There are two possible responses to these objections. The first is that Polybius is not represented as an *actual* sage. However, Seneca gives him enough sage-like characteristics throughout the consolation to make him a credible ethical authority. He is also surrounded by a support structure that sustains him through situations in which his virtue is tested. Seneca makes much of Polybius' public role, saying that there are certain behaviours that would be possible for others which he cannot do because of his position. He is forbidden from doing particular things because of the impression others have of his learning and his character (*opinio de studiis ac moribus tuis*, 6.3). In fact, other people's awareness of Polybius' virtues prevents him from lowering his standards, and they become the guardians of his mind (*custodes animi tui*, 6.3). We have moved from the

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[23] An example of this is found at Epictetus 3.24.84-7; the reader is advised to never grow attached to anything without remembering that, like a jar or crystal glass, it could break at any moment, and to remember that humans are like figs or grapes, with fixed seasons in the year. When someone close dies, then the reader will not desire them like figs in the wintertime. See Nussbaum 1994: 363-4 and 398-400 for a development of the problems this interpretation of detachment causes for living a 'normal' life.

community of brothers to a wider social community which holds Polybius to account – he is supported in his ethical education of his biological brothers by his rational peers. Seneca drives this point home by reiterating that Polybius cannot do anything that is unworthy of his "profession as a perfect and educated man" (*perfecti et eruditi viri professione*, 6.3); the use of *perfectus*, while not quite equal to calling Polybius a *sapiens*, certainly points in that direction.[24] Naturally, to a reader not alert to the Stoic underpinnings of the consolation, this can be read as a reference to Polybius' general education and professional ability; Seneca is, after all, not writing to a purely Stoic audience. Yet Polybius' ability to provide his brothers with a virtuous *exemplum* stems from his involvement with the wider community, and the safeguard he receives in that community against unsagelike behaviour.[25]

The second possible response is that the objector bases his protest on a misunderstanding of how the wise man behaves in the face of grief. The objection assumes that the theory of *apatheia*, the extirpation of the emotions, means that the sage cannot show sadness (as we understand it) when he suffers bereavement. This interpretation of *apatheia* means that Polybius should not grieve for his brother in the first place. It also raises troubling questions about how, if Polybius is meant to be read as a wise man, he is able to have familial relationships with his surviving brothers that actually have any emotional depth. One might compare such concerns to the interpretations of Epictetus 3.24.84-5 that say the comparison of a child's death and the

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[24] Seneca himself describes wisdom as being the making perfect of the human mind (*sapientia perfectum bonum est mentis humanae*, Letter 89.4), so a Latin connection between *sapientia* and *perfectum* clearly exists.

[25] Again, it is important to stress that although Seneca consistently speaks of Polybius as having sage-like qualities, it is not necessary for him to *be* a sage, given the comparative rarity of sages in existence.

breaking of a jug reflects an inhuman distance from one's relations. However, Seneca himself explicitly rejects such interpretations at the close of the consolation (18.5):

> Numquam autem ego a te ne ex toto maereas exigam. Et scio inveniri quosdam durae magis quam fortis prudentiae viros qui negent doliturum esse sapientem: hi non videntur mihi umquam in eiusmodi casum incidisse, alioqui excussisset illis fortuna superbam sapientiam et ad confessionem eos veri etiam invitos compulisset.
>
> However, I will never demand that you do not grieve at all. I know that certain men of harsh rather than courageous wisdom can be found, who deny that the wise man will grieve. These men do not seem to me ever to have met with this kind of misfortune; otherwise Fortune would have beaten this arrogant wisdom out of them and driven them to admitting the truth, even unwillingly.

Seneca's point is not that the wise man will *never* mourn, or that the doctrine of *apatheia* means that every emotional response will be totally eradicated.[26] To expect a man to show absolutely no reaction to the loss of a loved one is to expect inhumanity; the family is a vital part of our engagement with the world.[27] Seneca does not expect Polybius to disavow his family or separate himself from them entirely. Instead, he expects his sage to be able to master the first impact of grief, to not give in to its destabilising force, and to move beyond it.[28] Thus the earlier exhortation that Polybius counterfeit an external appearance of calm if he cannot yet truly achieve calm does not show that Polybius is not a sage, but that he is still undergoing the process of internalising his brother's death. With time, once the immediate shock of bereavement has passed, he will truly be calm once

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[26] Reydams-Schils 2005: 140 notes that in Seneca's treatment of grief, he "is walking a fine line between using the well-established categories of his Stoic predecessors and breaking new ground"; it is hard to know from our fragmentary sources how Seneca's views compared to the work of Posidonius, Panaetius or any of his contemporaries. For a more detailed examination of Seneca's approach to mourning in general, particularly as a reaction against Cicero's depiction of Stoicism, see Reydams-Schils 2005: 134-41.

[27] This is similar to the passage in the *ad Marciam* where Seneca emphasises he is not asking a mother to dry her eyes on the day of her son's funeral (4.1).

[28] This refers to the effect of the so-called 'preliminary passions'. At *De Ira* 1.4.1-2, Seneca describes a preparation for the movement of a *pathos*, and says it is impossible to avoid this very first shock by using reason; therefore even the sage will feel these preliminary movements. Precisely what Seneca meant by this has been the subject of long dispute; for an outline of issues involved, see Inwood 1985: 175-81. For a discussion of the preliminary passions, see Graver 2007: 85-108.

more. With support from the communities of which he is part, both that formed by his brothers and the implicit wider collective of sages, he will regain his equanimity.

It is worth clarifying the nature of my claim that Polybius and his brothers form a community of sages, given the problematic nature of the sage in Stoic theory. Indeed, the true sage is as rare as the phoenix (Alexander, *De Fato* 196.24-197.3, L&S 61N). Seneca always makes a clear distinction between the *sapiens* and the *proficiens*, that is, between the wise man and the man aspiring to be wise – in fact, he explicitly points out that he is *not* a wise man to a critical interlocutor in the *De Beata Vita* (*non sum sapiens*, 17.3).[29] However, that does not mean that he should not aspire to be sage-like and behave in the best possible way, even if he doesn't always succeed (*De Beata Vita* 18.1).[30] The potential for sage-like behaviour is enough to motivate the *proficiens* to attempt to behave virtuously; as Inwood puts it, "the function of the 'pure' ethics, the ethics of the sage, is to provide a context and motivation for specific aspects of practical advice to the normal moral agent" (1995: 254).[31] It is also important that the *cosmopolis* and the community of sages provides an underlying framework for the ethical discussion in the *ad Polybium*. Seneca never overtly labels Polybius a sage, and indeed would have never considered doing so. However, the capacity for imperfection is not sufficient reason to abandon the pursuit of virtue completely. The sage's presence gives guidance to the lives of ordinary people; Seneca uses the ideal community of sages to model the advice he

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[29] For more on Seneca's approach to the *proficiens* concerning the emotions within the framework of the consolatory tradition, see Manning 1974.

[30] See Cooper 2006 for a rather different interpretation. He argues that "however much Seneca himself does show a detailed and excellent knowledge of Stoic philosophical doctrine and the philosophical grounds that Stoic philosophers put forward in order to establish it, he often evinces a harmfully dismissive attitude to the value, for the good life itself, of knowledge of these matters", and so does not in fact provide his reader with a sound basis upon which to proceed in their intellectual journey (2006: 48).

[31] Inwood expands this discussion elsewhere; see Inwood 2005: 293-6. As Torre says, the *sapiens* is both mythical and real, invisible from our sight but present in the world (1995a: 369). For more on the image of the phoenix, and indeed on animal imagery concerning the sage in general, see Torre 1995a and 1995b.

gives to Polybius, even if in the world outside the text his ethical failings would prevent him from perfect wisdom.

There is also no reason that Polybius should not aspire to be a pattern good behaviour to others. That Polybius' brothers think of his actions as *honestum* (5.5) adds an extra dimension to his position as their moral *exemplum*. Seneca explores this word in Letter 120. Laying out the cases that other schools give for gaining knowledge of what is honourable and what is good, he concludes that the Stoics make no distinction between the two qualities (120.3):

> Nos ista duo quidem facimus, sed ex uno. Nihil est bonum nisi quod honestum est. Quod honestum, est utique bonum.
>
> Indeed we make these things two, but out of one [thing]. Nothing is good except what is *honestum*. What is *honestum* is certainly good.

Seneca eradicates the division between what is *honestum* and what is *bonum*. Cicero had anticipated this in his discussion of the *telos* in *De Finibus* 3.22.[32] as Engberg-Pedersen notes, *honestum* is used as the parallel to the Greek *kalon*, while *bonum* is used to translate *telos* (1990: 116). The Latin word not only covers a commonplace range of meanings accessible to a lay reader, but also has a specific application in Stoic theory. This makes the praise of actions described as *honestus* in the consolation take on a different meaning, as the only truly good actions are those performed by a sage – that is, the correct actions performed with the correct intention.[33] When Seneca says that Polybius' brothers will view any action he performs as *honestum* in 5.5, he is not just saying that they will view his behaviour as socially fitting, but as morally correct as well.

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[32] *Qui, cum ratio docuerit quod honestum esset id esse solum bonum, semper sit necesse est beatus vereque omnia ista numina possideat quae irrideri ab imperitis solent* ("since reason has taught that what is *honestum* is the only *bonum*, it is necessary for that man to always be happy, and indeed to truly possess all those names which are in the habit of being mocked by the inexperienced").

[33] For a wider Stoic perspective, see, for instance, Plutarch, *De Stoicorum repugnantiis*1046E-F (L&S 61F) or Stobaeus 2.66.14-67.4 (L&S 61G).

The comfort that Polybius should take from his ability to be his brothers' guide during this period is both social and ethical; the extra dimension to his acts deepens his importance to his brothers. This double meaning of *honestus* appears on one other occasion in the consolation (9.1):

> Si meo [nomine], perit indulgentiae iactatio et incipit dolor, hoc uno excusatus quod honestus est, cum ad utilitatem respicit, a pietate desciscere; nihil autem minus bono viro convenit quam in fratris luctu calculos ponere.
>
> If [I grieve for my brother] on my own [account], the display of indulgence dies, and grief, excused by this one thing, that it is *honestus*, begins to depart from piety, when it turns its attention to usefulness; moreover, nothing is less fitting for a good man than to calculate in his sorrow for a brother.

The *bonus vir*, who is a stand-in for the sage as nobody can be good without also being virtuous, does not take advantage of his grief; the grief itself is *honestum* and therefore also *bonum*. Polybius is not prevented from being wise by feeling sorrow for his brother's death, and indeed to think otherwise would be brutal. His standing is threatened if he gives into lamentation and does not manage his grief appropriately. Thankfully, he is supported by both his brothers and the wider community of rational humans in continuing to behave correctly.

Brothers under Caesar

Within the *cosmopolis*, the relationships that spiritual brothers have with each other are directly facilitated by reason. Reason gives each human the ability to participate in the fellowship of the wise; without its support, any kind of relationship would be impossible. The Stoics talked of reason as analogous to nature and god, and as we saw in the discussion of the *ad Marciam*, nature was considered the divine parent of all creation. Reason is the creator of humanity because nature is perfect reason, and nature brings

forth the world having perfectly planned its purpose and function. The importance of reason, as both the creator and facilitator of the *cosmopolis*, helps us to understand the fulsome praise given to the emperor within the *Ad Polybium*, as it makes sense of Claudius' position within a Stoic universe. This is not an attempt to excuse the flattery, or to pretend that Seneca's obsequious tributes are not motivated by a desire to achieve his recall from exile. However, appreciation of Seneca's deployment of the *cosmopolis* trope as a consolatory strategy enriches our understanding of how he approaches the emperor from many different angles.

Understanding the framework of the *cosmopolis* helps us see beyond the flattery of Claudius as a divine being. The allusive language used to describe Claudius prepares the reader for the Stoic aspect of this portrait, and the movement of Seneca's treatment of Claudius throughout the consolation signals Seneca is discussing a grander Stoic picture as well as a particularised individual. Seneca's choice to refer to Claudius as "Caesar" throughout the text rather than by personal name already gives the emperor a certain timeless quality, identifying him with his predecessors.[34] However, the two major 'purple passages' in praise of Claudius both contain signals of a Stoic underlay. In the first, Claudius is praised for his guardianship of the world and his unceasing devotion to caring for it (7.2). This echoes the sorts of discussion found in *De Providentia* 1.1, which observes that the world needs someone to act as its guardian. The ideas of *De Providentia* also appear later in the *ad Polybium*, in the second 'purple passage', where Seneca says that Claudius knows the best time at which he should come to each man's rescue (13.3).

[34] Seneca's approach to the principate as a system of government drew mainly upon works of Hellenistic philosophy on kingship; in such texts, the praiseworthy βασιλεύς was contrasted with the wicked τύραννος. The advice given in *De Clementia* particularly foregrounds the parallel Seneca draws between the good *princeps* and evil *rex*; however, elsewhere in his writings he does not discuss systems of government in detail. For more on this subject, see Griffin 1992: 202-21.

This evokes the Stoic idea that the world is providentially managed so that things occur at the best times for them to occur. The way that Seneca portrays Claudius' character throughout the consolation also shifts through different perspectives. First, 7.1-4 begins with grand descriptions on a cosmic scale, followed at 8.2 with the suggestion that Polybius become a high priest and worshipper of literature (*antistitem et cultorem*) by writing his biography of Claudius. By the time we reach 12.3-13.4, Claudius' actions are continually placed in opposition to those of Fortuna, just as reason should be used against the vagaries of Fate. Finally, Claudius behaves like the embodiment of reason at 14.1-16.3. Before he unrolls the scroll of history to uncover *exempla* of men who have lost brothers and endured, which takes up most of this section, Seneca specifically outlines Claudius' intellectual and rational contributions to comforting Polybius. These cues are not stressed in the text, and would be unremarkable to a non-Stoic, but their presence signals Claudius' role in at least symbolically creating the *cosmopolis*.

The condition for membership in the *cosmopolis*, according to Cicero in *De Natura Deorum*, is the use of reason (2.154).[35] It is through possession of reason, and acting in accordance with it, that sages and gods make up the divine city, and the kind of community Seneca evokes in the consolation.[36] The Stoics could say that reason, which infuses everything, is identical with Zeus, lord and ruler of all (Diogenes Laertius 7.88). This makes Seneca's choice to paint Claudius as a Zeus figure more than a deployment of imagery commonly found in panegyric literature. Seneca portrays Claudius' rule of the world as so magnanimous that even those struck by his thunderbolts worship them (13.4):

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[35] For a further discussion of this passage and the role of reason in the *cosmopolis*, see Schofield 1991: 65-74. For the *Nachleben* and influence of Cicero's discussion of the *cosmopolis*, see Nussbaum 2000.

[36] This idea held particular significance in Stoic thought; see, for instance, Epictetus 2.8.11 – σὺ δὲ προηγούμενον εἶ, σὺ ἀπόσπασμα εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ (you are a thing that comes first, you are a fragment of god).

> Scias licet ea demum fulmina esse iustissima quae etiam percussi colunt.
>
> One may know, finally, that those thunderbolts which even the stricken worship are most just.

There are echoes in this portrait of Cleanthes' well-known *Hymn to Zeus*, which explicitly lays out the qualities of the god (*SVF* 1.537, L&S 54I). [37] Zeus uses the thunderbolt to direct universal reason; all humans are his offspring; he steers the world with justice; humans are protected from their own failings by trusting in his works. He is responsible for providing the reason which makes the sage wise. Claudius, too, holds the key to this knowledge for Polybius (14.1):

> Iam te omni confirmavit modo, iam omnia exempla quibus ad animi aequitatem compellereris tenacissima memoria rettulit, **iam omnium praecepta sapientium adsueta sibi facundia explicuit**.
>
> Already he has reassured you in every way; he has recalled every example, by which you may be drawn to an evenness of spirit, with a most retentive memory; **already he has explained the precepts of all the sages with his customary eloquence**.

Claudius is the repository for the knowledge of the sages, and is the one who provides it to Polybius. In this way, he mirrors reason in dispensing that which makes a sage sage-like and that enables brothers in reason to interact with each other. He is above the community of sages, its creator and sustainer rather than a participant in the collective.

In this way, Claudius serves as a parallel for the invocation of nature in the *Ad Marciam*. As I discussed in the previous chapter, for Marcia, nature functioned as an extra consolatory element.[38] She was able to take solace from the fact that her experience of giving birth to and losing her son mirrored that of nature, which gives birth to all things and has planned their death as part of a wider providential pattern. In the *Ad Polybium*, Seneca transforms his use of this motif. If Polybius is likened to a sage, then

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[37] I refer the reader to Asmis 1982 for a further exploration of the use of Zeus by the Stoics.
[38] See the discussion in chapter one, pages 40-3.

contemplation of nature, which is perfectly rational, should bring solace to him. It then makes sense that Seneca should foreground the importance of Claudius as a source of comfort. If he is taking on nature's role, he deserves appropriate prominence within the cosmic structure of the consolation. He is also the thing that makes Polybius' engagement with his brothers, both biological and spiritual, possible.

Claudius is also able to act as a consolatory voice because of his own experience of bereavement (16.3). He can comfort Polybius by mirroring both his personal mortal experience and that of nature. Polybius and Claudius have a shared basis of experience because they have a common role as brothers. Both have lost brothers; Claudius recalls his reaction to his brother Germanicus' death (16.3). That Claudius was capable of enduring his brother's demise should be a source of consolation for Polybius for several reasons. First, he may derive comfort from the knowledge that he shares his experience with the ordering principle of the universe as symbolised by the emperor. Second, Polybius' sage-like qualities again come into play. The wise man should attempt to become as in tune with perfect reason as he possibly can. Polybius should therefore need no encouragement to emulate the emperor, as in imitating him he replicates the action of the wise man. Claudius acts both as an incitement to rational behaviour in general and as a particular instance of virtue in these circumstances. Seneca holds the *exemplum* of the imperial family before his addressee both as a traditional model for emulation and as the very source of the moral framework that governs the Stoic universe.[39]

This framework can illuminate some of Seneca's more controversial claims in the consolation. Two controversial passages suggest that Caesar is dearer to Polybius than his own life, so that while he lives, Polybius' family lives, and he has no reason to complain

[39] For more on the imperial family as *exemplum* in Seneca's philosophical work, see chapter four.

(7.4), and that Polybius' obligations to Caesar should be the strongest remedy against his grief, as the most important thing in his life (7.1). Duff noted that it was "rather surprising" that Polybius' wife and son are only mentioned once in the consolation, especially given the comparison offered by the *ad Helviam* (1915: 202). Seneca's own discourse on the subject seems cynically opportunistic (7.3-4):

> Caesare orbem terrarum possidente impertire te nec voluptati nec dolori nec ulli alii rei potes: totum te Caesari debes. Adice nunc quod, cum semper praedices cariorem tibi spiritu tuo Caesarem esse, fas tibi non est salvo Caesare de fortuna queri: hoc incolumi salvi tibi sunt tui, nihil perdidisti, non tantum siccos oculos tuos esse sed etiam laetos oportet; in hoc tibi omnia sunt, hic pro omnibus est.
>
> While Caesar is master of the world, you can give yourself neither to pleasure nor to grief nor any other thing; you owe the whole of yourself to Caesar. Now, add also that, since you always declare that Caesar is dearer to you than your own spirit, it is not lawful for you to complain about Fortune while Caesar is unharmed. With him safe, all your own are safe for you, you have lost nothing; not only are dry eyes proper for you, but even happy ones; in this man you have everything, he is before everyone.

This passage has traditionally been interpreted as yet more praise for Caesar at the expense of Polybius' grief and dismissed as a sycophantic exaggeration. It is certainly true that Polybius' wife and son are elided from this consolation, and that there is clearly an obsequious motive behind this emphasis on Claudius. However, the parallels drawn between Claudius and reason make this kind of passage less jarring and inappropriate to the consolatory theme. Such readings also ignore the prominence of brothers in the consolation as a whole. While Polybius' family are meant to provide consolation to him, they cannot compete with the consolation found in reason; so long as the wise man's virtue is intact, he is happy. If Claudius represents pure reason here, then it is natural that Polybius should take pleasure in him that is not affected by incidents of fortune like his brother's death.

Reading Claudius as emblematic of reason also solves the puzzle of Seneca's advice to Polybius concerning his literary pursuits. One of his suggestions for helping Polybius overcome his grief is to write a biography of Claudius (8.2):

> Tunc Caesaris tui opera, ut per omnia saecula domestico narrentur praeconio, quantum potes compone; nam ipse tibi optime formandi condendique res gestas et materiam dabit et exemplum.
>
> Then compose, so much as you can, the deeds of your Caesar, so that they might be told through all the ages by a reporter from his household; for he himself will give you both the material and the model for shaping and writing history excellently.

This suggestion feels relatively natural at this point in the consolation, but the memory of it jars with Seneca's later exhortation that Polybius should also devote himself to recording his brother's life (18.2):

> Fratris quoque tui produc memoriam aliquo scriptorum monimento tuorum; hoc enim unum est <in> rebus humanis opus, cui nulla tempestas noceat, quod nulla consumat vetustas.
>
> Also bring out the memory of your brother by some monument of your writings; this is the only work in human affairs which no storm harms, which no old age consumes.

The first-time reader feels somewhat perplexed. Surely Polybius would find more comfort in writing about his brother in the first place rather than turning to the grandiose task of Caesar's biography? Without acknowledging the overall Stoic architectonic, the only possible interpretation is that this is yet another strategy employed to ensure Seneca's recall, another distasteful subjugation of Polybius' well-being to Seneca's not-so-ulterior motive. But when the Stoic structure is factored in, the order makes more sense. Claudius' function as reason naturally takes precedence over the brother's function as a wise man. It is obvious that reason will provide any writer with both a way to write and a subject to write about (*materia et exemplum*, 8.2). Indeed, it is impossible for Polybius to write about his brother successfully *without* having written about Caesar first.

Both compositions would have consolatory force because they would necessarily involve the contemplation of reason and virtue. Polybius would be consoled by his connections with his own brother, and would find his fraternal experience comfortingly mirrored in the life of Caesar.

The Metaphorical Family

Seneca pushes the boundaries of *exempla* in the *ad Polybium*, just as he did in the *ad Helviam*, and deploys them in the context of specifically Stoic moral instruction rather than as tropes of consolatory literature. He also continues to go beyond the superficial *domesticum exemplum*, and develops his examples thoroughly. In this case, both Polybius and his brother are set up as examples. Polybius' brother was both exemplary and followed Polybius' own example (3.1-3); Polybius must master his grief in order to provide his surviving brothers with a model to imitate (5.4). Other examples do appear in the consolation, and Mayer suggests that they may have been chosen in order to appeal to Claudius' sense of obscure learning (2008: 309). However, the emphasis that Seneca places on brotherly example has a special importance and moves us further towards the integrated community of the *cosmopolis*. The fraternal motif brings us back to the locus of the family as an ethical hub that featured in the *ad Helviam*, but the constitution of this family is different from Helvia's. Duff's surprise at the relative absence of wife and son must be balanced by the many mentions made of Polybius' brothers, both as a source of consolation and as an obligation. Polybius, as a figurative sage, has moved beyond the immediate web of familial relations in which Helvia found her support. He has

progressed further along the path of *oikeiōsis*, beyond the closest family members that Seneca encouraged Helvia to draw closer to herself.

The objection may be made here that Polybius is still interacting with his biological brothers. Siblings are contained in the second circle of the diagram Hierocles used to illustrate the steps of assimilation in *oikeiōsis*, the one nearest the innermost circle containing the self (Stobaeus 4.671.7-673.11, L&S 57G; figure 1, page 48).[40] Surely Polybius has not moved out beyond that first circle if we are still discussing his relationship to his brothers? Yet Hierocles specifically states that we should do more than just assimilate the interests of those in the wider circles to our own. We should even change the way that we address people, "calling cousins brothers, and uncles and aunts, fathers and mothers", and presumably extending those referential terms as we expand our innermost circle, until everyone is known as brother (L&S 57G.7).[41] In discussing Polybius' brothers, then, we must be aware of the two layers of meaning that Seneca evokes. On the literal level, Polybius functions as a source of motivation and moral excellence for the brothers who are related to him by blood. This mirrors the familial group in the *Ad Helviam* that provided the initial impetus for the sage to learn how to be sage-like. On the metaphorical level, however, Seneca has moved beyond the boundary of the biological or adopted family, and into the universal community of the sages.

It is key that the language of brotherhood has been extended to the *cosmopolis*. Seneca clearly feels the model of family relations deserves to be preserved rather than replaced with a citizenship model, as one might expect given the discussion of states (*res publicas*) found in *De Otio* 4.1. Just as the would-be sage develops his sage-like qualities

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[40] For further discussion of Hierocles' diagram, see chapter one, pages 31-4.

[41] χρὴ δ' ἐπιμετρεῖν καὶ κατὰ τὴν τῶν προσηγοριῶν χρῆσιν, τοὺς μὲν ἀνεψιοὺς καὶ θείους καὶ τηθίδας ἀδελφοὺς ἀποκαλοῦντας πατέρας τε καὶ μητέρας.

by imitation of his family members, so sages reinforce their virtues by engaging with the living *exempla* provided by other sages, including family members. Polybius is a model not only for his physical brothers, but also his spiritual brothers. This interpretation changes the nuance of passages where Polybius is encouraged to remember that he himself is an *exemplum* (5.4):

> Pietatem tamen tuam nihil aeque <a> lacrimis tam inutilibus abducet, quam si cogitaveris fratribus te tuis exemplo esse debere fortiter hanc fortunae iniuriam sustinendi.
>
> However, nothing will lead your piety away from such useless tears so well as the thought that you ought to be an example to your brothers of bravely surviving this injury of fortune.

Polybius' example is not just for the biological brothers who have an intimate relationship with him, but for every member of the community with whom he comes into contact. In turn, this view changes the way we read Seneca's declaration that Polybius' *public* role prevents him from giving in to his grief. It is not simply a matter of political decorum. Rather, Polybius has an active obligation to model sage-like behaviour for all of his fellow human beings, his brothers by virtue of their shared reason, by providing an *exemplum* to those who come seeking his assistance. This applies even if they have not advanced as far towards perfection as Polybius has (12.2):

> Omnis istos una tecum perculsos vides nec posse tibi subvenire, immo etiam ultro expectare ut a te subleventur intellegis; et ideo quanto minus in illis doctrinae minusque ingenii est, tanto magis obsistere te necesse est communi malo.
>
> You see all those people stricken along with you, and unable to rescue you – indeed, you know that they are even expecting to be raised up by you. Therefore, however little doctrine and natural disposition is in those people, by that much more you must make a stand against the common evil.

On the literal level, Seneca describes Polybius' obligations to his biological family, to whom he is superior by virtue of his learning. On the metaphorical level, however, this is a call for the sage to model ideal behaviour for everyone, regardless of their ethical

development. The sage must be an example to *all* his brothers, even those not yet fully in possession of their reason. If that pattern of exemplary behaviour is not exhibited by the people with whom we live, we have no evidence from which to study what is virtuous and what is vicious. These models must come from both the immediate biological family, and the human community at large. Without this familial responsibility to one another, full attainment of reason is impossible. It may be said that the sage will be happy even in isolation, as Musonius Rufus does in ΟΤΙ ΟΥ ΚΑΚΟΝ Η ΦΥΓΗ (9); however, the sage has already learnt how to be a sage. The rest of us need a supportive fraternal community, including the sages and aspiring sages of our acquaintance, to lead us in the correct direction.

We might here expect to see a father portrayed as the authority in ethical education rather than a brother. In contemporary Roman literature, the *paterfamilias* frequently appears as an authority when moral learning is located inside the family, literal or metaphorical. Lemoine has explored how didactic literature is frequently framed as a father's contribution to his son's moral development (1991), and Seneca the Elder wrote his *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae* for precisely this purpose. Other ancient examples of fathers writing specifically for their sons include Cato's *Ad Marcum Filium*, Cicero's *Partitiones* and *De Officiis*, Quintilian's *Institutiones Oratoriae* and Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae*.[42] That Seneca gives the educational role to brothers is therefore worth comment. While Claudius stands in for reason, and thus the creative parent and originator of rational thought, his role is to be passively contemplated rather than to actively teach. It is Polybius, as a brother, who must engage in educational activity.

[42] For a fuller table of works written by fathers for their sons in Latin, see Lemoine 1991: 343.

Seneca's choice to focus on brothers may have been motivated by the cooperative and peaceful nature of that relationship (*pace*, of course, Romulus and Remus). Interaction between the *paterfamilias* and the *filiifamilias* frequently creates manifestations of familial tension; Vesley has studied the way in which conflict between fathers and sons is articulated and explored in the declamatory literature aimed at young men who would have been wrestling with precisely these concerns (2003). Although by the beginning of the empire, actual practice among fathers had moved away from the strict *paterfamilias* ruthlessly wielding the *ius vitae necisque*, the figure of the severe father continued to exert a powerful force on the popular imagination.[43]

There is, in fact, only one father whose paternal role is stressed in the *ad Polybium*, and he only appears because of the death of his son (11.2):

> Quanto ille iustior qui nuntiata filii morte dignam magno viro vocem emisit: 'ego cum genui, tum moriturum scivi.'
>
> How much more just was he who, when the death of his son had been announced, uttered a cry worthy of a great man – "I knew he would die when I begat him".

This is a fairly familiar anecdote, attributed variously to Anaxagoras and Xenophon, and possibly inspired by a quotation from Ennius (Duff 1915: 199). Critics of Stoicism normally comment on this tale, or any of its variants, with censure of the man's callousness and lack of emotion; Seneca uses it as an instructive case of how to

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[43] Eyben argues that the image no longer lived up to the practice (1996: 115-123). Cantarella, on the other hand, makes the case that while attitudes may have shifted, the legal constrictions around the relationship created considerable tensions between the generations (2002-3). While I agree with her that it is inaccurate to impose a model of relationships driven by our modern conception of affection, I nevertheless feel that the social attitude concerning acceptable exercise of *patria potestas* had significantly altered between the early Republic and the early Empire. For instance, Claassen has documented the progress of arranging Tullia's marriage in Cicero's letters, where Cicero's own negotiation with a likely candidate is negated by the decisions of Tullia and her mother Terentia (1996: 217); for whatever reason, Cicero does not use the full power of *patria potestas* at his disposal. Similarly, Seneca records that within his memory (*memoria nostra*), the knight Tricho was attacked in the forum for exercising his rights under *patria potestas* and flogging his son to death (*De Clementia* 1.15.1), suggesting his actions did not meet with universal social approval.

acknowledge the essential mortality of every human being. The fact remains that regardless of how it is construed, this is the only episode in the *ad Polybium* which is focused around the father-son relationship, and it is not a happy one.

The father-son relationship, then, is much more problematic than the fraternal one, and as such is not consistent with the consolation's overall aim. Equally, the father-son relationship, or any kind of parent-child relationship, is bound up in an implicit hierarchy that does not reflect the kind of parity that Seneca attempts to emphasise through his deployment of the *cosmopolis*.[44] The Stoic model of the relationship between teacher and pupil was far more egalitarian. Nussbaum has pointed out that "Stoicism constructs a model of the teacher-pupil relationship that is strongly *symmetrical and anti-authoritarian*" (1994: 344). That is, the onus is on the pupil to develop their own skills rather than to blindly follow precepts handed down by an authoritative figure. Seneca's own approach to moral education in the *Epistulae Morales* is an excellent example of this method. He consistently highlights his own failings at the same time as laying out the doctrines which he wishes Lucilius to absorb. Although he may have more experience handling Stoicism, he does not claim superiority in his application of it.

The use of brotherly compassion in moral education, then, is a far more useful image for Seneca's purposes, as it evokes a gentler and more cooperative ethos than the evocation of the *paterfamilias* might. Indeed, Seneca deliberately downplays Claudius' paternal role by calling him a *parens patriae* rather than using the formula *pater patriae*

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[44] The nature of the parent-child relationship can change when the child becomes an adult and attains reason, but while children are prerational, their parents must take on the role of providing them with rational guidance. Equally, the kind of social tension that Senecaappears to wish to avoid here only manifests in relationships between fathers and sons, and does not appear to be mirrored in relationships with fathers and daughters, or mothers and any children. Mothers, wives and daughters could not have expected to attain the same position of independence as a *paterfamilias*, while an adult son still under his father's control could understandably have resented the restrictions placed upon him.

elsewhere in the consolation (16.4).[45] The bond between brothers provides a more supportive environment in which the aspiring sage may learn, where the hierarchies of power valued by Seneca's contemporaries did not apply. To view one's relationship with mankind as fraternal rather than parental or child-like allows a collaborative approach to virtue that other models prohibit.

The Consequences of Being a Brother

Seneca's use of the *cosmopolis* and the ideals of brotherhood in the *ad Polybium* is not separate from Seneca's desire to return to Rome. In fact, it actually reinforces his case. By making the idea of the *cosmopolis* and the importance of brothers such central features of the consolation's structure, Seneca can make a Stoic case for his recall as well as a worldly one.

The first strategy Seneca uses to reinforce his connection to Polybius is clear at the opening of the extant consolation. He places himself alongside Polybius as an equal sufferer of his pain, and as someone entitled to lament with him (2.1-2):

> Nam si quicquam tristitia profecturi sumus, non recuso quicquid lacrimarum fortunae meae superfuit tuae fundere; inveniam etiamnunc per hos exhaustos iam fletibus domesticis oculos quod effluat, si modo id tibi futurum bono est. Quid cessas? conqueramur, atque adeo ipse hanc litem meam faciam…
>
> For if we will achieve anything by sadness, I do not refuse to pour out whatever tears have survived my misfortune for yours: I will still find some which may flow through these eyes already exhausted by private tears, if only they will be of some good to you. Why do you hold back? Let us lament, and let me myself make this complaint my own…

[45] Claudius was given the title *pater patriae* in A.D. 42 ; while the consolation was probably composed around the time of Claudius' British triumph in A.D. 44, there is no reason it must also have been composed before this title was awarded. For more on the difference of tone between *pater patriae* and *parens patriae*, see Stevenson 2000.

Seneca depicts himself as affected by Polybius' brother's death as Polybius himself. On the literal level, this seems rather presumptuous; on the level of the *cosmopolis*, however, Seneca is entitled to grieve for the loss of a man who was his brother through their shared reason. He and Polybius do indeed suffer the same grief, because their loss is the same within fraternal structure of the *cosmopolis*.

This connection means that Seneca is *also* a brother to Polybius among the community of the wise – and one who is lost to him through exile no less than his biological brother is lost to him through death. The language that Seneca uses to describe the brother's state following death is decidedly geographical. If the dead have no senses, then the brother has returned to that place (*in eum locum*, 9.2) from which he came. If the dead do retain their senses, then he looks down at the world from a higher place (*ex loco superiore*, 9.3). Seneca goes on to describe the location in which the brother now spends his time (9.8):

> Fruitur nunc aperto et libero caelo; ex humili atque depresso in eum emicuit locum, quisquis ille est qui solutas vinculis animas beato recipit sinu, et nunc libere illic vagatur omniaque rerum naturae bona cum summa voluptate perspicit.
>
> Now he enjoys the free and open sky, he has burst forth from a humble and low-lying place to that region, whatever it may be, which receives souls freed from their chains in its blessed lap, and now he wanders freely there, and observes all the good things of nature with the greatest pleasure.

This is a portrait of utopia. Souls are freed from their burdens and can contemplate what is good without obstruction, presumably in the company of other souls. The location is blessed (*beato*) in comparison to the humble and lowly place which the soul has come from (*humili atque depresso*). This is obviously meant to provide comfort by picturing a blessed dwelling of the dead as opposed to some Stygian underworld. However, it also

provides a comparison to Seneca's place of exile, of which he paints a dire picture at the conclusion of the consolation (18.9):

> Haec, utcumque potui, longo iam situ obsoleto et hebetato animo composui. Quae si aut parum respondere ingenio tuo aut parum mederi dolori videbuntur, cogita quam non possit is alienae vacare consolationi quem sua mala occupatum tenent, et quam non facile latina ei homini verba succurrant quem barbarorum inconditus et barbaris quoque humanioribus gravis fremitus circumsonat.
>
> To what extent I could, I wrote these things in an already far off place with a disused and dull mind. If they seem to speak too little to your character or to comfort your grief too little, consider how he whom his own evils hold occupied is not able to be idle for someone else's consolation, and how it is not easy for Latin words to come to the aid of that man whom the uncivilised growl of barbarians, oppressive even to the more civilised barbarians, echoes around.

This place is the Tartarus from which Polybius' brother is spared. The force of *longo iam situ* is clear. There is somewhere on the earth that is far away from Polybius and civilisation, yet it is not the underworld – it is where Seneca finds himself. What is more, his presence there is directly connected to the decline of his intellectual qualities – specifically, his mind (*animo*) is deteriorating. Without the company of his brothers in reason, Seneca cannot maintain the ethical standard that they set.

On the one hand, this is a fairly bald-faced plea for recall on grounds of intellectual and cultural superiority – clearly Seneca's genius is going to waste out in the barbarian wilds. However, within the Stoic context, the complaint is more logical. If Seneca's *animus* decays, then his ability to engage with reason fails with it. He needs to be with his spiritual brothers in order to maintain his hold on virtue and his understanding of reason; it is an active process that is hindered by his isolation. Reason is the key quality that makes Seneca able to participate in the community of the wise. While a layperson may need to develop their capacity for reason, this ability should certainly

never regress. The location of Seneca's exile is the anti-*cosmopolis*, where his ability to interact with other humans is actively stunted rather than encouraged.

Indeed, one might argue that he does not actually have any humans to engage with – the only individuals he has contact with are barbarians. Even though some of them might be "more human" than others (*humaniores*), they do not have the capacity to function as his brothers in virtue. None of them are capable of participating in reason like a civilised human. Even their communication is described in subhuman terms. The words *fremitus* and *circumsonat* are not usually associated with human speech. *Fremitus* tends to be made by nature, like rivers and horses, while *circumsonat* is normally translated as 'resound' or 'echo', implying that what is produced is mere noise rather than meaningful contact.[46] One might object by raising the aforementioned Stoic belief that the sage will be happy wherever he is, even in exile.[47] However, Seneca makes it clear that his situation is not that simple. He is *not* on his own – he is in the company of people who are causing his rational capacities harm. The only thing that causes harm to the sage is anything that affects his virtue; his virtue is achieved by his participation in reason; and if exile is affecting Seneca's reason, then he is entitled to be discomforted by his circumstances.

Seneca sets up a parallel between Polybius' loss of his brother to death and Polybius' loss of Seneca to exile. Both men have been removed from the earthly *cosmopolis* of brothers that supports Polybius in his grief – but while Polybius' brother

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[46] For uses of *fremitus* see, for instance, Cicero *De Finibus* 5.2.5 and *Tusculanae disputationes* 5.40.116, Lucretius *De Rerum Natura* 1.276 and Caesar *Bellum Civile* 3.38.3; for uses of *circumsonat* see, for instance, Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 3.28.3 and 39.10.7, Virgil *Aeneid* 8.474 and Seneca *De Tranquillitate Animi* 1.9. Fantham 2007: 191 notes the language used here, but sees it as an exilic echo of Ovid *Tristia* 3.14.33-6.

[47] As Reydams-Schils puts it, "even when we appear the most withdrawn, whether in ourselves or on the remotest of islands, we are actually still involved in community and cannot be otherwise" (2005: 74).

has moved on to a place far superior to earth, where he can engage with the workings of the universe on a profound level, Seneca has been dislodged from his intellectual moorings and prevented from participating in wisdom.[48] Polybius may be unable to change his brother's fate – but he can change Seneca's. Here, then, is a truly Stoic case for recall from exile – it will bring Seneca back into the community of the wise of which Polybius enjoys membership, and Seneca's participation in the fraternity of reason will be restored. When Seneca has spent so much of the consolation emphasising the importance of this brotherly environment for relieving Polybius' sorrows, his suffering at being deprived such comfort is even more poignant.

The importance of being part of a family, and of having the access it provides to the wider community of the wise, has been a fundamental theme of the *ad Polybium*. However, this raises a question about whether the evidence from the consolations threatens the view that the Stoic sage can achieve virtue without a family, given that the family is meant to be an indifferent. That is, the texts raise the possibility that the family is not just instrumental to virtue, but actually constitutive to it – that a Stoic sage could not develop in any other way. I do not propose to resolve that question here, but only to note the role that these idealised familial relationships play in contributing to moral development; I will return to this issue in my conclusion, once we have seen a wider range of how Seneca approaches the family. It is now time to examine the relationship that provides the foundation of the family, and to enquire what Seneca believes about the function and purpose of marriage.

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[48] Seneca also puts forward the possibility that Polybius's brother is, in fact, no longer able to sense anything in death (*si nihil sensit*, 5.1; see also 9.2), although this would be following an Epicurean rather than a Stoic view of death; the later portrayal of the heavens at 9.8 is in keeping with the latter.

Chapter Three: The Mystery of Marriage

The study of Seneca's views on marriage and its role within human life is fraught with complications. The relevant texts are fragmentary and quite possibly corrupt, evidence taken from other works has to be applied with appropriate caution, and Seneca's occasional reliance on misogynistic language raises the question of what purpose women could serve in an ideal universe. However, through careful examination of the evidence and comparisons with the work of earlier and later Stoics, it becomes clear that marriage plays a central role in the ethics of the family as Seneca conceives it. Without marriage, a family cannot be formed, and thus the sage cannot enter the moral environment it provides that helps form virtuous behaviour; with it, the sage may deepen her own virtue and that of her partner as they pursue perfection together.

Discussions of Stoic views on marriage inevitably mention Seneca's *De Matrimonio* but rarely refer to its context. The sole evidence we have from antiquity that Seneca wrote a text entitled *De Matrimonio* comes from Saint Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*, a polemical text that attacks the doctrines of Jovinian concerning the relative merits of virginity and marriage.[1] Jerome strongly favours virginity, and cites a formidable range of sacred and pagan worthies to support his argument.[2] Unfortunately, Jerome is somewhat less than faithful to the original context of his sources. For instance,

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[1] Jerome's attack was considered excessive because of the strongly negative approach he took towards marriage. Apparently this was unexpected by his married friends and was thus not well received. His *Letter* 49 is a lengthy apology for the treatise written to the Roman senator Pammachius and suggests that he was accused of heretical Manichaeism. Hunter 2007 gives a rich overview of Jovinian's ideas, the theological context in which he wrote, and the motivations of his opponents. For a reading of the *Adversus Jovinianum,* that looks beyond the attack on marriage and towards a more positive reading of his attitude to sex, see Oppel 1993.

[2] The choice to refer to both sacred and profane authors seems to have been a response to a similar tactic on Jovinian's part; see Hunter 2007:27-8.

Bickel noted his manipulation of excerpts from Plutarch's *Coniugalia praecepta* to suit his own ends (1915: 74). Since we are sometimes able to compare Jerome's citations to an original ancient source and see that there are significant discrepancies between the original intention of a work and Jerome's use of it, we should approach quotations from works that do not survive in the original with considerable caution.[3]

The first problem to address is precisely which fragments can be taken as pure Seneca, which passages are paraphrases of Seneca, and which parts Jerome wrote himself or took from another source.[4] The establishment of the text took place mainly in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Haase first attempted to catalogue the fragments in 1852; he was followed by Bickel, who wrote a magisterially thick treatise upon the lost work in 1915, in which he addressed various topics of interest in the *Quellenforschung* as well as making some changes to Haase's fragments. Some of the resulting fragments are extremely small. Bickel's fragment 6 isolates just two words from a much longer passage, *amor formae*, as genuinely Senecan. Bickel chose not to separate out his fragments, but rather reproduced the relevant section from the *Adversus Jovinanum* in its entirety, with the fragments printed so that the letters were widely spaced and thus stood out from the remaining text. Bickel also created a hypothesis about the order in which the fragments should be read. He suggested that Jerome unrolled the scroll of the *De Matrimonio*, marked the places he thought would be useful in the margins, and then

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[3] Such caution has not always been observed. Of the scholars who use this work problematically I shall only mention Engel 2003, who quotes a section of the *Adversus Jovinianum* to support his view that Seneca is explicitly hostile to women (285-6). However, he does not discuss the problems involved with assuming that this text is unmediated Seneca, nor does he explain that the quotation is found in Jerome's work. He notes that this is "a rarely quoted passage" (286); there are good reasons for this. Wilcox 2006: 78 quotes Engel's citation without going back to the original source, which only highlights the need for the comprehensive account that I attempt to present in this chapter.

[4] See Trillitzsch 1965 for a consideration of Seneca's influence on Jerome's work in general, although the work of Delarue 2001 is more critical in considering how much of the *Adversus Jovinianum* can be taken as Senecan itself.

incorporated them into his own work in reverse order. However, the three sections that Bickel identifies as Senecan retain the original order of Seneca's own work, so although the order of the three segments needs to be reversed, the content of each segment remains intact (1915: 368). Bickel therefore concludes that the original *De Matrimonio* began with a refutation of Epicurus' and Chrysippus' positions on marriage, followed by reasons for marrying. Next there followed a discussion of courtship and the correct way for a man to love his wife, and then a group of various bad things associated with marriage. The dialogue closed with a catalogue of good wives and bad wives. Vottero produced the latest edition of the fragments of Seneca as a whole in 1998. He follows Bickel's proposed ordering system and in the main accepts his identification of what to attribute to Seneca and what to attribute to Jerome, essentially providing a more user-friendly version of Bickel's edition.

Following Vottero's new edition, Torre undertook a thematic rather than philological analysis of the fragments. She notes that Bickel exerted a heavy conditioning ("un pesante condizionamento," 2000: 14) on any scholar attempting to work with the fragments, but ultimately does not break away from his approach. While she begins her analysis by examining the prose works for central themes before turning to the fragments, ultimately her response to them remains one of attempting to identify the *echt* Seneca, only on thematic rather than philological grounds.

However, Delarue 2001 questions the underlying assumptions behind this approach to the corpus. He attacks the belief that we can tell anything about the order of Seneca's original text from the order in which extracts appear in Jerome's manuscript. He also queries the number of fragments that Bickel attributes to Seneca through linguistic

methods which do not convince him. Vottero identifies 32 fragments belonging to Seneca from the *Adversus Jovinianum*; from this, Delarue whittles down the number to only twelve, two of which are very small excerpts of V 54, a long passage which discusses Theophrastus' "golden book of marriage" (*aureolus Theophrasti liber de nuptiis*);[5] it is generally agreed that Jerome came across Theophrastus through the intermediary of Seneca, and thus that this passage has some Senecan content. Delarue mostly discards *exempla* of good and bad wives. He argues that Jerome would have had access to these stories from many sources besides Seneca. He also discards passages such as the *amor formae* passage, where a fragment's identification rests on Bickel's assumption that other securely attributed works use similar vocabulary.

Delarue has done invaluable work in reassessing the state of the text and I defer to his conclusions about which fragments we can accept as Senecan. However, I do not follow his view that it is misleading to use the fragments in constructing a systematic approach to the ideas about marriage that Seneca expresses in this and other works (2001: 187). He is right to point out that we cannot assume that our fragments are direct quotations, unfiltered by Jerome's voice (2001: 187), but none of his arguments preclude the enterprise of trying to provide a constructive account of a systematic view of marriage from a Stoic perspective. Work on fragments has to begin by asking whether any positive account can be constructed from them. Proscribing the possibility of investigation raises

[5] For the sake of clarity, I shall refer to fragments of the *De Matrimonio* according to the numbering system used by Vottero throughout. Should the editions of Haase and Bickel need to be consulted, the appropriate references are provided in Vottero's edition. Delarue rather harshly criticizes Vottero for practically reproducing Bickel's judgements (2001: 165). It is worth noting that Vottero's project extended more widely than the *De Matrimonio* to a comprehensive collection of Senecan fragments from many different lost works, and so erring on the side of inclusiveness may be excused. For another discussion of Jerome's use of Seneca and Theophrastus, in this case on friendship, see Neuhausen 1984.

serious methodological difficulties; the only way to judge whether such an approach is misleading is for somebody to try it, as I intend to, and examine the results.[6]

Hopefully this survey of scholarship on the *De Matrimonio* has shown that work done on it has been preoccupied with establishing a text rather than analysing the fragments from a Stoic perspective, as I propose to do. Wider discussions of Stoic marriage have for this reason mainly ignored Seneca, choosing to focus on other Stoic contributions to the debate. [7] Treggiari comments that Seneca "gave little attention" to the topic of children and marriage in his work outside the *De Matrimonio* (1991: 215), and Deming speaks of the "negative attitude to marriage" found in his writing (1995: 76). Lentano, in the preface to his edition of the fragments, assumes that the main thrust of the text was to condemn behaviours within marriage which were contrary to nature, in keeping with Stoic doctrine as a whole, but does not provide further analysis (1997: 13). Effectively, Seneca's own opinions on this subject have received very little study because of the fragmentary nature of the material and the more alluring evidence of later Stoics.

A separate problem for those discussing Seneca's views on marriage is the rather vexed question of the philosopher's own marriage or marriages. Although Seneca's private life can only provide limited evidence for his theoretical stance, the fragmentary nature of the *De Matrimonio* means that any historical details can provide valuable supplementary evidence. We know that Seneca was married to Pompeia Paulina when he wrote the *Epistulae Morales*, as he begins one letter with an account of her attempts to

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[6] I should note here that I am not immune to the "powerful subliminal fascination" that fragments exercise upon scholars, as so eloquently described by Most (1998: 13-14).

[7] I approach the *De Matrimonio* deliberately apart from Foucault's belief that the Stoic writers of the first and second century A.D. somehow represented a shift in thinking about matrimony, which he defines as "*dual* in its form, *universal* in its value and *specific* in its intensity and strength" (1986: 150). Most of the evidence which Foucault uses comes from later Stoics, and he does not discuss Seneca's approach to marriage at any point. Given the fragmentary nature of the source, I do not feel that examining it in terms of Foucault's approach is likely to produce helpful insights.

prevent him leaving her for a trip to Nomentum, and her pleas that he look after his health while away from her (Letter 104.1-3). Paulina was probably the daughter of the *praefectus annonae*, and came from a family with its origins in Arelate in Narbonensis.[8] However, Seneca wrote the *Epistulae Morales* late in life, well after his return from exile on Corsica. We know that Seneca must have been married before then, as he mentions his wife's understanding of his night-time ritual contemplation of the past day in a work probably written before his exile (*De Ira* 3.36.3-4). In addition, one of Helvia's sufferings is the death of her young grandson, Seneca's son (*Ad Helviam* 2.5). Yet this passage raises a puzzle, as the *Ad Helviam* never mentions Seneca's wife. Various solutions have been suggested – that Seneca's marriage to Paulina is his second, and his first wife died either in childbirth or before his exile; that Paulina was the mother of the dead child mentioned in the *Ad Helviam*; that the wife is not mentioned in the consolation because she is on Corsica with her husband; that the wife is not mentioned because Helvia didn't like her. The evidence is too thin for us to draw any definite conclusions on the subject. If the hypothesis that Paulina is Seneca's second wife is correct, Griffin suggests that he married her after his return from exile in A.D. 49 (1992: 59).

The question of how many wives Seneca had often distracts attention from his thoughts on the subject of marriage.[9] However, Seneca's approach to the practice of marriage, insofar as our limited evidence records it, may be valuable for understanding his views on the subject. Although there are always problems with extrapolating theory from practice and *vice versa*, the historical evidence provides some interesting additional

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[8] Pliny notes that the Pompeii Paulini originated in Arelate at *Naturalis Historia* 33.143. For the case of Pompeius Paulinus, the *praefectus annonae*, addressee of *De Brevitate Vitae* and most likely candidate for Seneca's father-in-law, see Griffin 1962: 105 and 108.

[9] The question was first raised by Kamp 1937, and has been with us ever since.

information. The suicide of Seneca, in which Paulina attempted to share, provides the key for such an approach. Although our main sources for this event, Tacitus and Cassius Dio, give differing interpretations of Paulina's motivation, it still appears to be a moment of ethics in practice. That said, in some ways Seneca's personal life can be more of a distraction than a resource; while the urge to take evidence from every possible place is strong, Seneca's own words should be privileged above those of others about him.

It is also important to put Seneca's thought in the wider Stoic context that surrounds him. Seneca, who comes after the old Stoa but before the work of writers like Musonius and Hierocles who provide a much more focused approach to the family, appears to be at a cultural tipping point. The original Stoics held views on marriage which proved frankly embarrassing for their successors. Most infamous of these was the assertion of Zeno in his *Republic* that women should be held in common (κοινάς, Diogenes Laertius 7.33). While this view may be taken as a response to Plato's *Republic* and the community of women described there, there is also conflicting evidence about Zeno's views. Diogenes Laertius earlier reports that in the same *Republic* Zeno says that the wise man will marry and have children (7.121).[10] The Stoics continued to discuss the question of marriage and love in some detail. Indeed, Diogenes Laertius lists a περὶ γάμου and περὶ ερώτων in the works of Persaeus (7.36); ἐρωτικαὶ διατριβαί in the works of Ariston (7.163); a περὶ ὑμεναίου, περὶ ἔρωτος, and ἐρωτικὴ τέχνη in the works of Cleanthes (7.175); and a διαλόγους ἐρωτικούς in the works of Sphaerus (7.178). None of these texts survive, but the frequency of works pertaining to *erōs* and

[10] For a discussion of the doctrinal background to these two passages, see Schofield 1991: 119-127.

marriage shows that it was considered a sufficiently important topic to merit discussion in its own right.[11]

The idea that the wise man should marry and have children appears to have triumphed in this debate by the time of Cicero.[12] In *De Finibus*, the Stoic speaker Cato argues that it follows from man's nature that the wise man should not only engage in politics, but also marry and have children (*uxorem adiungere et velle ex ea liberos*, 3.68). Moreover, he adds that love is not inappropriate for the sage, so long as it is pure.[13] While discussions of *erōs* among the older Stoics appear to have been comfortable about relationships between men, by the time we reach the Stoics of the late Republic and early Empire, such discussions have by and large been transformed into a discourse about marriage and marital relationships.[14] Seneca himself, in his extant discussions on marriage, mentions neither the concept of having women in common nor the possibility of the wise man engaging in an *erōs*-based relationship with another wise man. This is not to say that there is no discussion of same-sex relationships in Seneca; however, where this discussion occurs, it is normally described as against nature because of other habits adopted by those men behaving in such a way.[15] By Seneca's time, the ideas of the original Stoics about *erōs* and marriage have undergone a considerable shift. The two subjects have become combined rather than separate, and marriage has become a natural

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[11] See Natali 1995 for a discussion of why marriage often appears within the context of discussions of *oikonomia*.

[12] For one solution for the difficulty of combining the two ideas of holding women in common and the wise man's duty to marry and procreate, see Asmis 1996: 91-2.

[13] "Nor indeed do they imagine that pure loves are alien from the wise man" (*ne amores quidem sanctos a sapiente alienos esse arbitrantur*), *De Finibus* 3.68.

[14] For a more detailed summary of this issue, see Houser 1997: 153-4. For a discussion of the Stoic approach to relationships between men, see Babut 1963.

[15] Two excellent examples of this are Letter 122.7-8, where men who exchange their clothing with women and submit to other men are described as being against nature, along with men who build their warm baths (*thermae*) in the sea; and *Naturales Quaestiones* 1.16, which tells the story of Hostius Quadra, who was voracious for both men and women, and compounded his wickedness by surrounding his debauched acts with mirrors.

duty. *De Beneficiis* 5.8.1 demonstrates that Seneca views marriage as a natural duty, where the relationship between husband and wife is described as Nature's way (*natura est*), in parallel with the relationships between father and son and creditor and debtor. However, as I will show, Seneca himself creates yet another shift by positioning the marriage relationship not only, as Cicero does, as one of the natural duties a Stoic sage will perform, but as a relationship that can contribute to an individual's moral development.

The social background to Seneca's *De Matrimonio* helps us to understand his work and its radical departure from the normal procedure of his contemporaries. As has been well documented, under the late Republic, marriage was used very much as a political tool for cementing alliances and obtaining political power.[16] Fulvia is a prime example of a woman who carried political power with her, as her three husbands, Publius Clodius, Curio and Mark Antony, each grew in wealth and influence after marrying her.[17] Livia's marriage to Octavian had a similarly powerful effect, associating him with the Claudian *gens*, one of the oldest patrician families in Rome. The use of marriage as political strategy remained an important tactic in social advancement under the Principate, even if the stakes had become smaller. Seneca also lived in a world governed by the Augustan marriage laws. The *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, passed around 19 B.C., imposed penalties on unmarried men between 25 and 60 and unmarried women between 20 and 50 on receiving legacies and inheritances from people outside their families; penalties were also imposed on the childless.[18] Widows and divorcees were similarly penalised if they did not remarry within a set time period, while people who had

[16] For more on marriage in the Republican period, see Cantarella 2002.
[17] Welch 1995 gives further discussion of Fulvia's marital career.
[18] Lelis, Percy and Verstraete 2003 provide an extensive analysis of the age of marriage in ancient Rome.

three or more children obtained certain privileges. The *Lex Papia Poppaea*, passed in A.D. 9, made some amendments to the *Lex Iulia*, mainly by creating a distinction between the unmarried (*caelibes*) and the childless (*orbi*), and increasing the period that widows and divorcees might remain unmarried. Similarly, the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis*, passed the year before the *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, made adultery a crime in public rather than private law, and penalised a husband who did not prosecute his wife if he knew she had committed adultery.[19] These laws were reinforced by Domitian (Suetonius, *Vita Domitiani* 8), and remained in force until Constantine. There is no evidence that certain elements of them, especially the prohibition against unmarried people attending the games, survived Augustus.

Marriage in Roman society served primarily as a means of procreation, consolidation of power and property transfer.[20] Marriages could be dissolved for contingent political factors, and the underlying facts of life in the ancient world meant that marriage could be ended by death equally easily – in war for men, in childbirth for women, through disease for both. For legal and social reasons, remarriage was encouraged wherever possible. This meant, as Bradley has described, that most upper-class Romans could expect at least two, if not more, marriages in their lifetimes, and families would include children from various marriages at various life-stages (1991b: 85). The age difference between spouses was often considerable, with a much older man marrying a young woman still capable of bearing children. Seneca himself was older than Paulina, and it was perfectly possible for step-children to be the same age or older than

[19] Further discussion of these laws can be found in chapter four, pages 164-6. For further analysis of the Augustan marriage laws and their effects, see Treggiari 1991: 60-80.
[20] For a further discussion of the development of marriage as an institution up to the end of the Republic, see Cantarella 2002: 269-274.

their step-mother.[21] Bradley therefore describes the elite Roman family not as a static entity, but as "an extremely fluid organism, subject to constant interruption, disruption and reconstitution" (1991b: 97). Marriage was the main means through which families would be modified, homes changed and children moved about. This persistent instability in the fundamental relations of a Roman's life, with family trees always in flux through the death, divorce or remarriage of oneself or one's relations, forms the backdrop to Seneca's own thoughts on marriage. For most of Seneca's peers, marriage serves a functional purpose. It is not contracted because of a pre-existing relationship between the two people joined in marriage, but simply because of the benefit that connection provides to the larger family groups.

Seneca, by contrast, concentrates not on the utilitarian value of a marital alliance, but turns to the actual people within that marriage. He appears to be the first Stoic to discuss the nature of a relationship between spouses, or rather, to transfer the language of the *erōs*-driven relationship discussed by the earlier Stoics into that context.[22] Seneca has no objections to disagreeing with his predecessors on their conception of marriage and its purpose; he scathingly reduces Chrysippus' assertion that the wise man should marry in order not to offend Jupiter Gamelius and Genethlius to absurdity (V 24). Most of our knowledge of the Stoic view on marriage and its role comes from Hierocles and

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[21] This equivalence in age between children and stepparents could, of course, be an impediment to a marriage. One is reminded of the notorious story that Catiline murdered his son because Aurelia Orestilla would not agree to marry him if that meant having an adult step-son (Sallust, *De Catilinae coniuratione* 15). A less salacious example would be Cicero's remarriage to Publilia in 46 B.C. His daughter Tullia was born in either 79 B.C. or 78 B.C., and so would have been about twenty years older than Publilia, described as a maiden in Plutarch (*Cicero* 41) and previously Cicero's ward. Valerius Maximus gives the story of Lucius Gellus who found his son in bed with his stepmother, suggesting another possible problem these marriages could cause (5.9.1). For a further discussion of this topic and others relating to real-life stepmothers in Rome, see Watson 1995: 135-175. For more on Cicero's marriages, see Claassen 1996.

[22] While the remains of earlier Stoics are very fragmentary, the titles of the works preserved by Diogenes Laertius suggest more of an interest in *erōs* than the workings of marriage.

Musonius Rufus, who both wrote later than Seneca. Earlier Stoics talk about marriage as a duty that fits within a range of correct actions that the wise man should perform, and Cicero shows this was still a common approach under the late Republic; however, they do not seem to discuss the *internal* workings of marriage.[23]

The one figure who could be presented as discussing the ethics of marriage before Seneca is Antipater of Tarsus, head of the Stoa at Athens in the second century B.C. A considerable fragment of his work on marriage was preserved by Stobaeus, and includes the memorable image of a husband and wife intermingling together like water and wine (*SVF* 3.63). However, the same fragment is more concerned with the political purpose of marriage than with any role it might serve in promoting the virtue of both partners. Indeed, the extant discussion closes by saying that a wife is indispensable for a philosopher because he can turn away from the bother of household management and concentrate on the *really* important things without further distraction. A wife in this scheme serves only to further her husband's virtue, and the house revolves around the philosopher; she is subsumed into his character rather than respected as an individual in her own right.[24] In Seneca's discussion of marriage, we begin to see a new focus on the relationship between husband and wife that foreshadows the more detailed discussions found in the later Stoics. Just as we saw the family used as a moral model in the consolations, as a template that mirrors the perfect equanimity of the sage on the personal level, once more Seneca locates a state of stability that reciprocally leads to virtue within the ideal marriage.

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[23] While the evidence may be fragmentary, it is not unreasonable to think that had anything been said about the correct relationship between a husband and wife, some implication of this would have survived.
[24] A similar idea is found in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*; for a discussion of how Isomachus' wife is assimilated to her husband, see Murnaghan 1988.

As I mentioned earlier, I base my approach to Seneca's views on the ethical function of marriage on the fragments of the *De Matrimonio* securely identified by Delarue. Each of these fragments identifies a topic of interest to Seneca and can be taken as a fairly secure indication of his views on the subject. Naturally, we must remain cautious. As Delarue notes, the tone of some of the fragments is satirical, but that tone does not prove that the entire work took this approach (2001: 187). Even though we can identify satire, we cannot be certain that we always know what is being satirised, given how much context is missing. Equally, we cannot be certain that we have Seneca's own words rather than Jerome's paraphrases. But with all these caveats in mind, the concerns and priorities expressed in the fragments give us an indication of how to tentatively reconstruct an ethics of marriage.

The Right and Wrong Reasons to Marry

The first question that the fragments seem to address concerns the right and wrong reasons to marry. We have already seen that earlier Stoics considered it the wise man's duty as a member of a *polis* to marry. However, Seneca is quite clear that, like everything that is not virtue, marriage is an indifferent, neither good nor bad in and of itself (V 23):

> et quomodo divitiae et honores et corporum sanitates et cetera quae indifferentia nominamus, nec bona nec mala sunt, sed velut in meditullio posita usu et eventu vel bona vel mala fiunt, ita et uxores sitas in bonorum malorumque confinio; grave autem esse viro sapienti venire in dubium, utrum malam an bonam ducturus sit.[25]

[25] Although I follow Vottero's selection here, I use Delarue's punctuation, which separates this sentence from the previous section of the fragment. There, Seneca gives Epicurus' view on whether the wise man should marry or not; this section clearly moves into Stoic doctrine rather than providing a continued exposition of the Epicurean position. For further discussion of the textual difficulties involved in this fragment and V 24, see Bellandi 2004.

> And just as riches and honours and the health of our bodies and other things which we call indifferents are neither good nor bad, but become either good or bad by use and by chance, as if placed in the middle, so also wives are placed on the boundary of good things and bad things; however, it is a serious matter for a wise man to come into doubt about whether he is about to marry a good or a bad woman.

For the Stoics, nothing is an absolute necessity except behaving virtuously. Anything else is an indifferent, made good or bad (or, rather, virtuous and vicious) by its circumstances rather than its inherent nature. In this context the decision to marry should not be driven by a sense of duty or natural appropriateness, because wives in and of themselves are neither good nor bad things to have. However, at the end of the fragment Seneca distinguishes between marrying a good or a bad woman (*malam an bonam*).

Seneca appears to recognise that a woman entering marriage has as much of an individual ethical character as the wise man. As such, the wise man cannot just consider whether or not he wishes to marry; marriage is indifferent, and so has no value outside of its context. However, there is no such thing as a morally neutral 'wife' for the sage to marry, but a whole range of women with their own strengths and weaknesses. Within that framework, the moral character of one's intended naturally requires careful scrutiny, as it will be the determining factor in whether marriage becomes an aid to virtue or an aid to vice. Clearly the wise man should aim for virtue, and as such, should marry a good woman; indeed, as women have the same potential for virtue as men, two sages should ideally marry each other.[26] Presumably, given the rarity of the sage, if a sage cannot find another sage to marry, a partner who is pursuing sagehood is an acceptable alternative. A good spouse makes marriage a good rather than an evil; as such, he or she will help

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[26] Evidence that Seneca believed women and men had the same capacity at virtue is found at *ad Marciam* 16.1. Further evidence is found, for instance, in Musonius Rufus 3, ΟΤΙ ΚΑΙ ΓΥΝΑΙΧΙ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΗΤΕΟΝ (That women too should do philosophy). See also the discussion in chapter one, page 33.

support the sage's wisdom rather than detract from it as a bad spouse would. As Seneca says, for a wise man to engage in marriage without full knowledge of the other party's moral character would be a very serious matter. It would impact the entire character of the marriage and its function in the sage's life.

It is important to note what does *not* feature in the discussion of what affects the nature of marriage, namely the things that Seneca also lists as indifferents – riches, honours and healthy bodies (*divitiae et honores et corporum sanitates*). The importance of these qualities to (non-philosophical) marriages contracted in Rome cannot be underestimated.[27] Financial wealth was naturally a key consideration when selecting a spouse for one's child, and connections with a family containing illustrious ancestors would bring extra social prestige. Equally, healthy bodies might not feature so overtly in marriage negotiations, but the question of whether each partner would be sufficiently fit to reproduce would play a role in the final decision. All these conventional qualities are discarded as merely indifferent to the pursuit of virtue – they are not matters to become too concerned about. Elsewhere Seneca describes men as responsible for their own misery if they are tormented by an ambitious wife or bothered by their riches (Letter 95.3), and says how enjoyable it is to watch others get involved in politics and its attendant concerns without having to be involved oneself (Letter 118.4). What provides the force of *grave*, a serious concern, is uncertainty about whether one's prospective spouse is morally turpitudinous.

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[27] In his letter to Junius Mauricus, recommending Minicius Acilianus as a husband for his daughter, Pliny highlights his noble heritage, the good character of his grandmother and uncle, the young man's own industry and truthfulness, and also his father's wealth (1.14). Pliny emphasises the worthiness of the family as a whole as well as the proposed husband. For more on the criteria looked for in a spouse, see Treggiari 1991: 83-124.

The other fragments that address possible reasons for marrying approach it from the opposite direction – that is, as examples of reasons why one *should not* marry. The first of these is formed as an attack upon the thought of Chrysippus (V 24):

> Ridicule Chrysippus ducendam uxorem sapienti praecipit, ne Iovem Gamelium et Genethlium violet. Isto enim modo aput Latinos ducenda uxor non erit, quia Iovem non habent Nuptialem. Quod si deorum, ut putat, nomina vitae hominum praeiudicant, offendet ergo statorem Iovem, qui libenter sederit.
>
> Chrysippus absurdly instructs the wise man to marry so that he might not outrage Jove Gamelius and Genethlius.[28] For, according to this logic, among the Latins a wife must not be married, because they do not have a Nuptial Jove. But if the names of the gods, as he thinks, decide the lives of men beforehand, the man who willingly sits therefore offends Jove Stator.

Here we have a very simple reason for marrying – fear of displeasing the gods. Yet Seneca shows that this is ridiculous on two grounds. Firstly, if you are obliged to get married to not offend Jove Gamelius and Genethlius, if you happen to live in a culture (like the Latins) who do *not* have a god of marriage, then it is impossible to get married in the first place. The duty of marriage, he suggests, cannot be driven by whatever gods a local population happens to have. Secondly, the suggestion that Jove's title here indicates what will offend him leads Seneca to construct a *reductio ad absurdum* – if that is indeed the case, then it follows that sitting down will offend Jupiter Stator, or Jupiter Who Stands. Indeed, the very idea that the gods can be offended by human action is misguided; Seneca elsewhere states the gods are neither able to hurt humans nor would wish to do so, making fear of punishment doubly pointless (*De Ira* 2.27.1). While previous Stoics may have discussed the act of marriage within the context of living in accordance with nature (*kata phusin*), Seneca does not believe that fear of divine retribution provides sufficient motivation for such appeals.

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[28] For more on Jove Gamelius and Genethlius, see Vottero 1998: 242.

Seneca also speaks harshly against those who marry for worldly convenience, specifically in order to contravene legal restrictions (V 29):

> Nam quid – ait Seneca – de viris pauperibus dicam, quorum in nomen mariti et ad eludendas leges, quae contra caelibes datae sunt, pars magna conducitur? Quomodo potest regere mores et praecipere [castitatem] et mariti auctoritatem tenere qui nupsit?[29]
>
> Seneca says: for what may I say about poor men, a large number of whom are employed in the name of husband in order to escape the laws which are given against the unmarried? How is a man who has been taken in marriage able to guide morals, instruct [chastity] and hold the authority of a husband?

Nubo is most commonly used of a bride; this deliberately gendered language is difficult to translate, but implies that the man takes the woman's role in the bridal ceremony rather than his own.[30] I do not mean that he puts on the flame coloured veil, in a gender-bending version of the usual procedure; rather, in modern parlance, he hands over the trousers to his new wife. By not performing his correct function and inverting the normal structure of power relations, he is unable to perform the duties that fall to him within marriage. Seneca, then, understandably frowns upon a decision to marry purely in order to avoid the Augustan marriage laws, what Torre labels making marriage subservient to purely utilitarian impulses (2000: 160). The motivations for this kind of marriage would have arisen from a desire to escape the restrictions placed upon those who fell into the class of *caelibes*, mainly the inability to receive legacies unless they came from relatives within the sixth degree.[31] Given the spread of family that this would have covered, and from whom a *caelebs* would have been able to inherit, the penalty does not seem so severe. The sixth degree extends as far as second cousins, meaning that inheritances from

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[29] *Castitatem* in this passage is judged by Vottero to be an alteration to the original quotation made by Jerome. As I have not adopted his practice of differentiating between 'authentic' Seneca and 'authentic' Jerome through the use of wide and narrow spacing of words, here I use square brackets to indicate a probable amendment.

[30] While Vottero 1998: 249 comments on the deliberate gender-inversion of language at work here, he does not explore its ethical consequences.

[31] For more on this point, see Gardner 1986: 77-8.

comparatively close relatives such as grandfathers and great-uncles posed no difficulties. However, given the mutability of the Roman upper-class family and the frequency with which divorce, adoption and other dynastic strategies might alter these relationships, it is not difficult to construct a situation where a woman might decide upon a strategic marriage to ensure she received at least part of her designated inheritance.[32]

We can hardly take this acerbic fragment as irrefutable evidence that upper-class women frequently chose to marry poorer men in order to evade legal restrictions placed upon them.[33] However, Seneca's choice to criticize a hypothetical case of such behaviour reveals his underlying priorities and concerns about marriage. Marriages should not be formed in order to gain social privilege or as ways around unfortunate obstacles – that is, they are not instruments of convenience. To view them as such ignores the fact that they are supposed to be spaces of ethical significance, where principles are controlled rather than finances. It is hardly surprising that Seneca implies the kept husband will not be able to fulfil his obligations, as he will always be aware of his status as a purchased commodity – but note what those obligations actually *are*. A husband should be able to guide morals, teach what Jerome records as chastity, and be viewed as a figure of authority. It is a fair assumption that *castitatem* is an alteration by Jerome, given the weight of the word in a Christian ethical system, but we cannot hypothesize what it replaced.[34] What is clear is that it was some kind of central ethical tenet that a husband

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[32] Legal conditions were attached to obtaining full rather than partial inheritances; under the *Lex Papia Poppaea,* one was not entitled to a full inheritance until a child had been born and survived for a set period.
[33] A bride still under *patria potestas* required the consent of her *paterfamilias* to marry; if she was *sui iuris*, then the consent of her tutor was required only if she were entering a *manus* marriage (Borkowski and du Plessis 2005: 123, 147). Clearly if a woman is considering avoiding the law in this manner, the question of her guardian's consent is not an issue. For other ways women may have used to evade the restrictions of Augustus' moral legislation, see McGinn 1992: 280-91.
[34] One might fairly safely speculate that it is *not* replacing *pudicitia*, a word found elsewhere in the *Adversus Jovinianum* with great frequency.

should be able to demonstrate. The role of a spouse here is that of an educator – someone who lives in a morally upright manner and can encourage their partner to do so as well. The phrase *regere mores* is particularly multivalent, as it might refer to the husband's control of himself, of his wife, or of his entire household. However, when the power relationship between a couple is so obviously in the wife's favour, there is no hope that a husband would have the authority to carry out such education. Indeed, the very character of a man who would be happy to marry under these circumstances would probably be insufficiently robust to carry out such duties in the first place.

While this fragment explicitly addresses the question of a husband's relationship to his wife, this does not automatically exclude a wife having the same kind of developmental influence over her husband. The situation Seneca has set up, that of a wife essentially hiring a husband in order to avoid tiresome legal restrictions, relies upon the wife having a sufficiently poor character that she would decide to marry for such an inadequate reason, based on wealth, which is irrelevant to the pursuit of virtue. A poor but virtuous man, seeing an opportunity for reforming her character, might marry her with the intention of correcting her thinking and bringing her to the path of virtue. However, he would find himself thwarted by the circumstances of his marriage, unable to carry out his noble plans. That does not mean that wives in all situations would possess this hypothetical wife's proven bad character. This fragment, rather, depicts a situation in which marriage fails in its purpose as a location for the moral education and maturation of at least one of the spouses, because it has been contracted for the wrong reasons. One should therefore scrutinize one's motivations for marrying, lest the marriage should result in unhappy consequences.

A similar distaste for convenience appears in a fragment that complains about the speed with which remarriage occurs (V 36):

> Quasdam repudiatas altero nuptiarum die, statim nupsisse legimus: uterque reprehendendus maritus, et cui tam cito displicuit et cui tam cito placuit.
>
> We read of certain women who, divorced on the day after the ceremony, married again at once; both husbands are to be censured, both he who was displeased so quickly and he who so quickly was pleased.

Again, Seneca takes a swipe at marriages contracted for advantageous reasons, suggesting snidely that there must be something behind that "so quickly" (*tam cito*) to motivate such sudden changes of preference. Here, the subject of the jibe must be the kind of political considerations that motivated speedy divorces and remarriages in order to consolidate or secure power. By articulating his criticism through the use of *placere* and *displicere*, Seneca also makes a subtle point about the nature of the human character. Putting aside the implicit alternative motives for divorce and remarriage, the husband who divorces almost immediately after the wedding and the husband who marries as soon as his bride-to-be is available both undergo amazingly swift emotional transitions, from desiring to marry to not desiring to marry, or *vice versa*. The decision to marry, based upon a spouse's character, should not be that hasty. For those changes to be made so quickly implies that they are being made under the influence of the passions (although the object of those passions might be sexual, financial or political).[35] Seneca's demand that these husbands be rebuked comes from their instability, their susceptibility to desires for something other than virtue.

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[35] Seneca elsewhere expresses distaste that women no longer feel *pudor* at divorce, and that some women in fact measure their lives by number of husbands rather than number of years (*De Beneficiis* 3.16.2-4). He also implies that the divorce rate keeps on climbing precisely because the number of divorces has been so widely publicised.

This is not to say that Seneca suggests marriages based upon virtuous grounds could never have problems; even if we cannot guarantee perfect outcomes, we still need to enter marriage as if we believe they are possible.[36] But a virtuous marriage, entered into with proper forethought, would not be abandoned by the wise man on the next day. Equally, the wise man would not suddenly decide that marriage was in his interest without devoting considerable time to reflect on the matter. We see that marriage, as a commitment, must be entered into thoughtfully and with a view to virtuous action. No other reason is good enough.

Stability

Seneca obviously values stability as a characteristic of marriage. We have already seen this in V 36, where husbands are criticised for changing their minds and their situations "so quickly" (*tam cito*). In the *ad Helviam*, we saw how the stability of Helvia's virtue and the family as a whole could give Helvia consolation for her son's absence, and that this stability came through a practical application of Stoic ethics. Logically, it follows that the same is true of marriage; for it to nurture virtue, it must mirror the equilibrium of the Stoic sage, untroubled by any external blows of fate or vacillations of irrational behaviour. In this context the criticism of behaviour undertaken at speed takes on another nuance. Seneca not only criticises people who make the decision to marry or divorce without sufficient introspection, but hints at a wider problem

[36] See *De Beneficiis* 1.1.10 and 4.33.2. While Reydams-Schils foregrounds Seneca's realism about the possible suffering that married life can bring (2005: 167), I do not believe she gives sufficient weight to either the context in which the fragments of *De Matrimonio* appears, or the conclusions about how married life *should* operate that can be extrapolated from them. There is more to his conception of marriage than his 'realpolitik' perspective, and acknowledging the contextual evidence provides us with a greater understanding of his theoretical stance as a whole.

with the marital habits of the Roman elite. Because they make and break alliances facilitated through marriage so quickly, the family unit is fractured and reconfigured so frequently that it has no chance to create stability.

A fragment dealing with the wider question of *amor* within marriage shows that behaviour within marriage should be controlled rather than impetuous (V 27):

> In aliena quippe uxore omnis amor turpis est, in sua nimius. **Sapiens vir iudicio debet amare coniugem, non affectu; regit impetus voluptatis nec praeceps fertur in coitum.** Nihil est foedius quam uxorem amare quasi adulteram.
>
> Indeed, all love for another person's wife is shameful, as is too much for one's own. The wise man should love his wife with discernment, not with emotion; he rules the force of pleasure and is not carried headlong into sexual intercourse. Nothing is more disgusting than to love a wife as if she were an adulteress.[37]

I will return to the question of the role of *amor* between spouses later. For now I wish to draw attention to the distinction drawn here between *iudicium* and *affectus* as modes of loving one's spouse. *Iudicium* implies a rational decision, and is more commonly found in legal contexts to describe trials and even judicial sentences.[38] Naturally, it can also mean the power of judgement or discernment, as it does here; it is a supremely rational mode of engagement. It is juxtaposed with *affectus*, meaning a mood, often translated as fondness or desire.[39] Seneca seems to recommend that the wise man view his wife with legal iciness rather than with warmth. Yet the word *affectus* functions as a term of art within Latin discussions of Stoicism, and reading it as such in this context significantly changes our interpretation of the fragment.

The Stoic doctrine of the passions held that a passion (or *pathos*) was an irrational movement of the soul, which was based on mistaken impressions rather than reason.

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[37] A similar sentiment is found at *De Constantia* 7.4: "if anyone should lie with his own wife as if she was someone else's, he will be an adulterer, although she will not be an adulteress" (*si quis cum uxore sua tamquam cum aliena concumbat, adulter erit, quamvis illa adultera non sit*).
[38] For the use of the word to refer to a legal judgement, see Cicero *Pro Caecina* 2 and *Brutus* 1.1.
[39] For examples of this type of usage, see Tacitus *Agricola* 30 and Juvenal 12.10.

Pathē should therefore be eliminated from the soul, because they lead to behaviour based on irrational grounds rather than reason; since reason is equivalent to virtue in the Stoic system, irrational actions can only lead to vice.[40] This is not the same thing as saying that a Stoic should not, for instance, feel sad about the death of a close friend or family member. For instance, in the *ad Marciam*, Seneca does not encourage Marcia to cultivate the sort of behaviour that would lead a mother to watch her son's funeral with dry eyes (4.1).[41] *Pathos* refers to a particular sort of movement in the soul, of which there are four – grief (*lupē*), fear (*phobos*), appetite (*epithumia*) and pleasure (*hēdonē*).[42] These are paralleled by three *eupatheiai*, or 'good' emotions - caution (*eulabeia*), volition (*boulēsis*) and joy (*chara*).[43] It is perfectly acceptable for a sage to feel the *eupatheiai* – they are rational responses to a situation that properly value the force of a given chance act upon one's reason and therefore one's happiness. The *pathē* do not do this. They arise from misunderstanding the value of indifferents, and the assumption that things which have no effect upon our virtue can affect our happiness. It is through such misunderstandings that Marcia's grief was able to take such a hold upon her.

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[40] For Seneca's view of this approach in contrast to the Peripatetic approach, which tried to moderate the passions rather than extirpate them, see Letter 116. For more general primary sources, see L&S 65 in its entirety. For a discussion of how to interpret Stoic claims about the passions, see Irwin 1998.

[41] "Nor will I lead you to more firm precepts, so that I should order you to bear human things in an inhuman way, so that I should dry a mother's eyes on the very funeral day itself" (*nec te ad fortiora ducam praecepta, ut inhumano ferre humana iubeam modo, ut ipso funebri die oculos matris exsiccem*). For discussion of a similar passage in Epictetus, see Long 2002: 232.

[42] These are the passions listed and defined by Andronicus, *De Passionibus* 1 (*SVF* 3.391, part = L&S 65B). It is important not to confuse grief (*lupē*), here used as a technical term, with what we might consider expressions of grief like crying at a funeral, which Seneca says he views as acceptable (*ad Marciam* 4.1). Andronicus defines grief as "an irrational contraction, or a fresh opinion that something bad is present, at which people think it is right to be contracted [i.e. depressed]" (translation Long and Sedley). This refers specifically to a movement within the soul, not the outward actions that might express loss, and which are acceptable provided they are kept under control.

[43] These are defined at Diogenes Laertius 7.116. As Brennan has explained, the reason we have no fourth *eupatheia* is because there is no need to have an emotion for the sage to feel that parallels pain (1998: 35). Pain relies upon an admission that something that happens to you is evil. However, the only thing that is evil is vice, the opposite of virtue; everything else is indifferent. The sage will not feel that anything that happens to him is an evil, as he is the embodiment of perfect reason; hence he has no need for a 'good' equivalent of pain.

It is worth mentioning here the poison pen portrait of Maecenas that appears in the *Epistulae Morales* (114.4).[44] His overall character is criticised – his effeminacy, his willingness for his vices to be visible, and indeed his relationship with his wife, which comes in for heavy attack later in the same letter (114.6). However, the key behaviour that is taken as an indication of his viciousness, publically displayed, is his eloquence, which is described as being like that "of a drunk man, twisted and wandering and full of disorderliness" (*eloquentiam ebrii hominis involutam et errantem et licentiate plenam*, 114.4). A man's ability to speak effectively should be the key demonstration of his control over his reason. If Maecenas is so irrational that it is even affecting his speech, the great marker of Roman masculinity, then it is hardly any surprise that his relationship with his wife is equally dissolute.[45]

In the context of V 27, to act towards one's spouse with *affectus* does not describe an affectionate bearing and loving manner. Instead, it refers to letting one's actions be driven by the *pathē* – by grief, fear, appetite and pleasure. It seems most likely that Seneca had the *pathos* of pleasure in mind here, given that the rest of the fragment explicitly discusses the place of *amor* in a marital relationship. We can then make more sense of the declaration that the wise man will control the surges of desire and will not be carried away with lust; it is a lack of control of these impulses that is criticised, not the wish to engage in coitus itself. A relationship governed by the irrational can never, by the Stoic definition, be a place in which virtue is nurtured, as virtue is the embodiment of the rational. This is not to say that all kinds of emotion will be absent from the ideal Stoic

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[44] For an analysis of Seneca's treatment of Maecenas in terms of *virtus* and the demonstration of one's character through one's writing style, see Graver 1998. For a discussion of the role that Maecenas' Etruscan origins may have played in hostility towards him, see Farney 2007: 166-71.

[45] Seneca further outlines Maecenas' marital problems in *De Providentia* 3.10, which I will return to in the section that discusses what the marital relationship should look like.

marriage, but the rational *eupatheiai* will be present rather than the irrational *pathē*. Basing a relationship upon the *pathē* by definition will lead to instability, as only reason can provide constancy.

Marriage, then, should create a space of tranquillity between spouses, untroubled by irrational impulses (sexual or otherwise), and unconcerned about indifferent things like political power or wealth. Only in that kind of environment can the wise person cultivate virtue.

Pudicitia

Senecan scholarship struggles with the question of *pudicitia* and its relationship to both women and marriage. As far back as Bickel, Seneca's designation of *pudicitia* as the prime female virtue has caused comment (1915: 364-6); Bickel believed it had been taken from a Greek source as the parallel to *sōphrosunē*. Indeed, Bickel often decided to identify fragments of the *De Matrimonio* in the *Adversus Jovinianum* as Senecan or non-Senecan based upon whether or not the word *pudicitia* appeared in the passage, an approach that Delarue has proved in at least one case leads to circular reasoning (2001: 174). It is true that in the fragments identified by Delarue *pudicitia* does appear as a virtue possessed by women, and that it seems to be given special emphasis in comparison to other virtues held by men. However, the nature of the term has not been given special consideration. *Pudicitia* is not only portrayed as a key element of a woman's virtue, but as the key to the success of a marriage.

The term *pudicitia* itself has usually caused considerable problems, in both Latin literature as a whole, as well as in Seneca in particular. There is no adequate English

word to encompass the concept that the Latin expresses. Lewis and Short give shamefacedness, modesty, chastity and virtue as possible translations. However, all of these are loaded with our own ideological burdens, especially 'chastity', which implies a mainly sexual virtue. As Langlands' recent work shows, the virtue *pudicitia* could be used in a wide range of circumstances not limited to women: "it could be a badge of honour for married women or male politicians, a corporeal or notional purity under siege from bullying *libido*, a guardian of Roman freedom or an avenging brutality" (2006: 364). Langlands' work encompasses a wide range of sources which state and renegotiate the idea of *pudicitia*; supposedly, we should be in an easier position when examining the work of Seneca alone. Yet we find that Seneca is happy to work with alternative definitions of *pudicitia* himself – in one of the *Epistulae Morales*, he lists two types of *pudicitia* as virtues he should be taught in order to perfect the teachable character given to him by nature.[46] The argument could be made here that the *Epistulae Morales* is a different sort of work from the *De Matrimonio* and appeals to a different audience, but this difference does not remove the fact that the virtue of *pudicitia*, even within the Senecan corpus, is presented as multifaceted. This is also a good moment to remember Delarue's advice to remain cautious of our evidence, and the possibility that we are reading text liberally rewritten by Jerome. By the Christian period, the meaning of *pudicitia* had shifted considerably. Tertullian, writing two centuries before Jerome, composed a volume entitled *De pudicitia* that reframed the virtue in specifically Christian

[46] "Nature gave birth to us able to be taught, and gave us reason – imperfect, but which can be perfected. Discuss justice with me, piety, economy, and both types of *pudicitia*, both that which is abstinence from another's body and that which is the care of oneself" (*dociles natura nos edidit, et rationem dedit imperfectam, sed quae perfici posset. De iustitia mihi, de pietate disputa, de frugalitate, de pudicitia utraque, et illa cui alieni corporis abstinentia est, et hac cui sui cura*, Letter 49.11-12).

terms. Jerome's approval of Seneca's position was based on Jerome's understanding of the term, not Seneca's.

With those caveats issued, let us turn to the fragment which gives the protracted approval of *pudicitia*, and which is the lengthiest fragment approved by Delarue (V 50):

> Doctissimi viri vox est pudicitiam inprimis esse retinendam, qua amissa omnis virtus ruit. In hac muliebrium virtutum principatus est. Haec pauperem commendat, divitem extollit, deformem redimit, exornat pulchram; bene meretur de maioribus, quorum sanguine furtiva subole non vitiat; bene de liberis, quibus nec de matre erubescendum nec de patre dubitandum est; bene imprimis de se, quam a contumelia externi corporis vindicat. Captivitatis nulla maior calamitas est quam aliena libidine trahi. Viros consulatus inlustrat, eloquentia in nomen aeternum effert, militaris gloria triumphusque novae gentis consecrat; multa sunt quae per se clara ingenia nobilitent: mulieris proprie virtus pudicitia est. Haec Lucretiam Bruto aequavit, nescias an et praetulerit, quoniam Brutus non posse servire a femina didicit. Haec aequavit Corneliam Graccho, haec Porciam alteri Bruto. Notior est marito suo Tanaquil: illum inter multa regum nomina iam abscondit antiquitas, hanc rara inter feminas virtus altius saeculorum omnium memoriae, quam ut excidere posit, infixit.
>
> The opinion of that most wise man is that *pudicitia* above all must be preserved, by whose loss all virtue falls. In this is the ruler of womanly virtues. This commends the poor woman and lifts up the rich one, it saves the ugly woman and adorns the beautiful; the ancestors well deserve it, whose bloodline is undamaged by secret offspring; it is well deserved by children, who must neither be blushed at by their mother nor doubted by their father; above all, it is well deserved by the woman herself, whom it vindicates for an affront of the external body. There is no greater calamity of captivity than to be dragged by an alien desire. The consulship gives glory to men, eloquence bears them into an eternal name, martial glory and triumph of a new race sets them apart; there are many things which through themselves make bright characters known: *pudicitia* is the virtue especially for a woman. This equalled Lucretia to Brutus, it may even give her preference, since Brutus learnt not to be able to be a slave from a woman. This equalled Cornelia with Gracchus, this Porcia to another Brutus. Tanaquil is more known than her husband: antiquity has already squirreled him away among the many names of kings, but that rare virtue among women has fixed her in the memory of all ages, more deeply rooted than can be destroyed.

The surface point made here appears very clear – while men can express their *virtus* through all manner of venues, women express theirs primarily through *pudicitia*. In some ways, this seems to foreshadow the discussion of a woman's virtues found in Musonius

Rufus (3), which explains the ways in which a woman can demonstrate traditional male virtues within the sphere of her household. Men have places within the public world where they can perform deeds to bring them glory; a woman is restricted to her home life. It is therefore no surprise that *pudicitia* should be this most vital virtue of all "womanly virtues" (*muliebrium virtutum*). If a woman can only demonstrate her virtue practically in the home, and the traditional outlet for that demonstration is through *pudicitia*, then all other virtues must be built upon its manifestation.

In some ways, this passage appears to undercut the previous implications about marriage and how it should not be guided by indifferents. For instance, traditional Roman concern about ensuring clear lines of inheritance seems to frame the ideas that a family's bloodline should not be impaired and that parentage of children should not be doubted. Yet the assertion that *pudicitia* makes any woman desirable, whether she is poor, rich, ugly or beautiful, returns to the claim that only a partner's virtue matters, not her physical or financial attractiveness. Her *pudicitia* will give her the resources to be a good wife, and from there to become the sound foundation of a family, as Helvia is to Seneca's family. Seneca immediately demonstrates this by showing how *pudicitia* leads to the integrity of a family by keeping the paternity of children from suspicion. This is a comment on sexual behaviour, but at the same time reiterates the theme of stability. Without confidence in the wife's *pudicitia*, the husband must also be in doubt (*dubitandum*).

However, fear of being caught out cannot be all that motivates good sexual behaviour; elsewhere, Seneca says that he would not call a woman *pudica* who repulses a

lover because she fears the law or her husband (*De Beneficiis* 4.14.1).[47] A woman who behaves appropriately simply from fear displays no *pudicitia* at all. Fear is, of course, not a rational response, being one of the four classes of *pathē* outlined above, so it is not surprising that a virtue, the embodiment of rationality, cannot be built on an irrational impulse. Fear is not the only thing that inhibits true *pudicitia*. Seneca says that *pudicitia* saves a wife from the affront of the external body (*contumelia externi corporis*), adding that the greatest calamity of captivity (*captivitatis nulla maior calamitas*) is to be dragged along by an alien desire. This sentence presents a puzzle; what kind of captivity does Seneca mean? On the surface, this could easily be read as an allusion to the practice of mass rape after the sack of an enemy city, especially given the reference in the previous sentence to the *contumelia* of the external body and the later allusion to the story of Lucretia.[48]

However, in order to answer the question, we must remember that the Stoics had very specific ideas about freedom and slavery which this image evokes.[49] Stoicism defined freedom as the power of autonomous action. Only the wise man is truly in control of his actions, because only he has the capacity for perfect reason; therefore only the wise man is truly free (Diogenes Laertius 7.121-2).[50] The rest of us, then, labour under our enslavement to irrational passions, which is the alien desire (*aliena libidine*) Seneca

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[47] "I will not call *pudica* what spurns the lover to inflame him, or what fears either the law or a husband" (*non dicam pudicam, quae amatorem ut incenderet reppulit, quae aut legem aut virum timuit*).

[48] I should of course note that as we do not know what context surrounded this passage in *De Matrimonio*, there may have been textual cues to support this reading which we are now missing.

[49] The concept of freedom is often mistakenly considered together with the question of whether the Stoics were determinists or not. Bobzien 1998: 330-57 examines the reasons for this confusion and proves that there is no connection between the Stoic notion of freedom (*eleutheria*), an ethical concept, and "that which depends on us" (*eph' hēmin*), an idea the early Stoics used in physics, until Epictetus creates the link; even then, he does not predicate moral responsibility on being free in the sense of being a wise man. The classic discussion of freedom and determinism is Long 1971.

[50] For a more lengthy exposition of this idea, see Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 5.

refers to. This is the very worst type of slavery, because not only are you powerless over your own actions, but you are compelled by an irrational force like lust. We are forced to follow the urgings of any irrational impulse so long as we are not sages, and Seneca contends that this is our greatest tragedy. We can now see why this state of affairs harms *pudicitia*: if *pudicitia* is a manifestation of reason and rationality, then the dominance of irrational impulses inexorably leads to behaviour that is not virtuous and undermines *pudicitia*.

The idea that one's external image does not reflect internal virtue appears in an anecdote about Claudia, the matron whose *pudicitia* was under suspicion and who proved her innocence by dragging the boat carrying the image of the Great Mother to shore after it had got stuck on the bank of the Tiber, using only her girdle (V 43). I should note that I call Claudia a matron here, whereas Jerome's text labels her a Vestal Virgin. However, writers before and contemporary to Seneca frequently told the story of Claudia, and in those retellings she was a *matrona*.[51] It seems fair to assume that Jerome changed Claudia's status to support his praise of virginity, but left the details of the story reasonably intact. That said, it is clear that while Claudia may not have appeared outwardly *pudica*, her actions proved that she was. Practical demonstration once more is the key to Seneca's ethics, although this is rather an extreme example. Seneca comments that it would have been better for this miraculous deed to occur as an ornament of tested *pudicitia* rather than as a defence of doubted virtue.[52] He does not answer the question of

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[51] See, for example, Livy 29.14.5-14, Cicero *De haruspicum responso* 27 and Ovid *Fasti* 4.247-348. Torre 2000:98-105 discusses the history and transmission of this *exemplum*.

[52] "Better, however – says the uncle of the poet Lucan – when this had happened, if this is what happened, that it had been an ornament of tested *pudicitia* rather than the defense of doubted *pudicitia*" (*melius tamen – inquit Lucani poetae patruus – cum illa esset actum, si hoc quod evenit, ornamentum potius exploratae fuisset pudicitiae quam dubiae patrocinium*, V 43).

how precisely one might test (*explorata*) *pudicitia* rather than doubt it. Perhaps Seneca has in mind a more visible performance of *pudicitia* that defends itself without needing such extravagant deeds – but, as Langlands has noted, it is very difficult for us to tell precisely what *pudicitia* should look like from the surviving ancient sources (2006: 69). The fragments of the *De Matrimonio* do not supply details of what Seneca thinks it should look like either, save that it can be publically tested before things come to a crisis point requiring divine intervention.

Pudicitia, then, serves an important role within marriage, not simply as a woman's virtue, but as that belonging to a married woman; it also provides an external outlet for her to display her inner virtue. Seneca's strong delineation of *pudicitia* as a specifically female characteristic has led to the suggestion that while men and women are both capable of virtue, they do not have the same nature and thus do not express that virtue in the same way (Reydams-Schils 2005: 167-9). This point leads to discussions of whether spouses can in fact be equal in marriage, or whether the difference in their natures means that the woman will always be inferior.[53] It also creates problems for the Stoics' claim that women have the same ability to achieve virtue as men; if there is a specific virtue that only women can attain, then clearly men and women are *not* equally able to achieve virtue.

However, a distinction between names of virtuous behaviour and the underlying cause of such behaviour helps combat this problem. The same issue arises with the four cardinal virtues – if there are four virtues, then clearly there is not just *one* virtue that is

[53] For a discussion of the approach of the early Stoics to the equality of women, see Asmis 1996. She highlights, very importantly, that Seneca gives us the first explicit statement from a Stoic that women have an equal capacity for virtue (1996: 80). Although it occurs at *ad Marciam* 16.1 and not within a doctrinally strict context, it is still a revealing insight into Seneca's thinking.

the good. However, the performance of the four cardinal virtues all arises from the same underlying motivation – that is, the sage's knowledge of what is good and what is evil. The underlying psychological state creates virtue, and the four cardinal virtues describe ways in which virtue manifests itself.[54] I would argue that Seneca uses *pudicitia* in a similar way. He takes the conventional meaning of a virtue which is applied to married women, and uses that label to discuss the kinds of behaviour through which married women might manifest true virtue, that is, the knowledge of good and evil. The underlying mental state that enables a woman to display *pudicitia* remains the same; Seneca merely uses the word as it appears in ordinary language to describe the outward manifestations of that virtue.

Seneca's praise of *pudicitia* does not downgrade women; he chooses to use a conventional term to describe feminine outcomes of virtue because of his desire to give intensely pragmatic advice that can be put into practice. Ignoring the realities of the Roman political situation and suggesting that a woman demonstrate her virtue through similar instruments as her husband, like the triumph or prowess in battle, would have appeared absurd to Seneca's readers. However, Seneca accepts that the same mental state which leads to virtuous acts can be achieved by both men and women, and prudently judges that conventional terminology will serve him best in making his point that women can perform virtuous acts. By praising the importance of *pudicitia* for women, Seneca provides clear guidance to his female readers about how to target their energies if they are to ground their marriages and future lives upon their virtue.[55]

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[54] This argument is heavily influenced by Penner 1973 and his approach to the same problem in Plato's Socratic dialogues. My thanks to Alan Code for directing me to this article.

[55] I do not wish to go as far as Torre 2000: 75, who believes that by examining the places where Seneca discusses faithful *uxores*, it is possible to see the faint outlines of a female *sapiens*, and sees *pudicitia* as a

What Does the Marital Relationship Look Like?

I have so far discussed the reasons for marriage, the characteristics that a marriage should have, and the necessity of *pudicitia* as a personal quality within marriage. None of these areas address what might be considered the most important question about Seneca's marital ethics – namely, what the relationship between spouses should look like, and how they should treat each other. Again, because of the nature of the surviving fragments and Jerome's literary purpose in employing them, we are forced to look for negative definitions and for what such behaviour should *not* look like. That said, there is still plenty we can extrapolate from both the fragments of the *De Matrimonio* and other passages in Seneca's extant work.

We have already discussed one fragment that gives a model for interaction between husband and wife; V 27 spoke of the need to love one's spouse with discernment, not with emotion (*sapiens vir iudicio debet amare coniugem, non affectu*). It should not come as a surprise at this stage to see Seneca recommending that the relationship between husband and wife should be governed by reason rather than by passion, and thus should qualify as virtuous behaviour befitting the sage (*sapiens vir*). However, precisely what that behaviour looks like is not clear.

One striking anecdote gives an excellent example of how *not* to do applied ethics (V 26):

> Refert praeterea Seneca cognovisse se quondam ornatum hominem, qui exiturus in publicum fascea uxoris pectus alligabat et ne puncto quidem horae praesentia eius carere poterat; potionemque nullam nisi alternis tactam labris vir et uxor hauriebant, alia deinceps non minus inepta facientes, in quae inprovida vis ardentis affectus erumpebat: origo quidem amoris honesta erat, sed magnitudo deformis. Nihil autem interest, quam ex honesta causa quis insaniat.

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privileged way of discovering interiority. While *pudicitia* is certainly a specifically feminine virtue for Seneca, I do not think the evidence justifies making quite as much of it as Torre does.

> In addition, Seneca reports that he once knew a distinguished gentleman who, when he was about to go out into public, used to bind up his chest with his wife's *fascea*, and was not able to lack her presence for even a moment of an hour; husband and wife used to drink nothing unless it had been touched by the lips of the other, doing no less ridiculous things one after another, in which the thoughtless force of burning *affectus* used to burst out: the source of this love was indeed honourable, but its intensity was shameful. Moreover, nothing is of benefit which someone is mad over for an honourable reason.

I leave *fascea* untranslated as it seems to have a somewhat indeterminate use; while it is used to describe a band tied around a woman's breasts, like an ancient equivalent of a bra, it can also refer to any bandage or piece of fabric tied around some other body part, and so may have referred to another item of female clothing.[56] That said, it is clearly an intimate item of apparel, and the distinguished man's choice to wear his wife's *fascea* is given as an example of *amor* taken too far, along with an inability to be away from her, and the husband and wife's need to always drink from the same cup.[57]

Amor itself is not condemned. Indeed, Seneca says that it comes from an honourable source, implying that it is appropriate to show *amor* towards one's spouse under certain conditions. However, the couple depicted here have taken things too far – they are gripped by *affectus*, and their demonstrations of *amor* are no longer rational. A similar obsession seems to be at play in the case of the man who rationally knows that keeping a concubine is an insult to his wife, but is driven by his lust in the opposite direction (Letter 95.37). This raises the question of how *amor* fits into the system of

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[56] Lewis and Short give, as a list of possible purposes, "to bind up diseased parts of the body; to wrap round the feet to prevent the boots from rubbing them; to bind under the breasts of women; a headband set with pearls, etc". The distinguished gentleman will not have been alone; Pliny the Elder records that he finds tying a woman's *fascia* upon his head lessens the pain of a headache (*Naturalis historia* 28.76, *sic* – the spellings *fascia* and *fascea* are interchangeable, according to Lewis and Short). For more on what we know of the ancient bra, see Stafford 2005.

[57] Torre 2000: 155-6 interprets this as a reversal of roles between husband and wife, and sees the wearing of the wife's *fascea* as a sign of the husband's subordination to her. However, given that it appears *both* husband and wife demonstrate foolish behaviour through uncontrolled *affectus*, I do not find this interpretation convincing.

pathē and *eupatheiai* that I outlined above. It does not seem to fit into either category, for if it were a *pathos* it could never be appropriate, and it if were a *eupatheia*, it could not be carried to excess. The problem arises from viewing *amor* as an emotion in the modern sense of the word rather than the Stoic technical definition used in setting out such systems, that is, as a contraction or expansion of the soul. What *amor* parallels in this discussion is not a passion, but *erōs*, which served an important role in the Stoic conception of relationships and political theory. Indeed, Zeno is said to have considered Eros a god who helped protect the safety of the state by preparing the way for friendship, freedom and concord (*philias*, *eleutherias* and *homonoias*; Athenaeus 561c).

When we see the Stoics discussing *amor*, we cannot think of it as the same kind of *amor* expressed by elegiac poets towards their *doctae puellae*, although that seems to be the kind of passionate devotion that Seneca deplores here. Since *amor* appears in a passage that obviously draws on Stoic doctrine, as shown by the use of *affectus*, it is worth considering what Seneca's Stoic predecessors said excited *erōs* in the first place. Thankfully, a definition from Zeno survives through Diogenes Laertius (7.129):

> καὶ ἐρασθήσεσθαι δὲ τὸν σοφὸν τῶν νέων ἐμφαινόντων διὰ τοῦ εἴδους τὴν πρὸς ἀρετὴν εὐφυΐαν, ὥς φησι Ζήνων ἐν τῇ Πολιτεία καὶ Χρύσιππος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ βίων καὶ Ἀπολλόδωρος ἐν τῇ Ἠθικῇ.
>
> And the wise man will love those young people who, through their appearance, make appear a well disposed nature in regard to virtue, as say Zeno in the *Republic* and Chrysippus in the first book of *On Lives*, and Apollodoros in the *Ethics*.

Erōs, then, is aroused by the visible promise of virtue in the beloved – not necessarily fully-fledged virtue, for that would assume that sagehood is easily attainable, and as we well know, the sage is as rare as a phoenix (Alexander *De Fato* 196.24-197.3 = L&S 61M). An external physical mark of virtue goes hand and hand with beauty here. For the

Athenians, to be beautiful was also to be virtuous, and vice versa, as represented in the well-known notion of the *kaloi k'agathoi*. This external promise of virtue is sufficient to arouse amorous feelings towards a beloved one. The gender of "young people" (νέων) in this passage is ambiguous; it could refer to either male or female objects of desire. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the early Stoics had no issues with same-sex relationships, providing they were built on properly conceived *erōs*.[58] What we see in the Senecan fragment is that a husband and wife could feel that kind of intense attraction to each other, even if on this occasion the parties involved have gone beyond the limits of reason. It is important to note that this does not mean that *erōs* is impossible without some form of irrational passion. Plutarch specifically notes that the Stoics believe it is possible to desire the young without a *pathōs* being involved (*De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos* 1073C). However, like every indifferent, if it is not approached with reason, it can be overtaken by vice.[59]

It is possible for love to exist between spouses, but it must be governed by reason lest it lead to irrational, and thus vicious, behaviour. Similarly, such love will arise out of an appreciation for the other's virtue. Asmis has argued that the purpose of such *erōs* is to "reproduce not just humans, but human rationality" (1996: 92). A wise person will not just love a young person because of their potential for virtue, but will actively seek to nurture their beloved until they achieve that potential. Her comments relate specifically to the community of the wise – that is, a wise person will ensure the continuity of the community of the wise by making sure that non-wise people become wise themselves.

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[58] For a further discussion of the sage's love, and the general Athenian social context that surrounded the idea's development, see Nussbaum 1995.

[59] See, for instance, gives Stobaeus 2 66.11-13 where love is described as an indifferent, and Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 9.5.5, where Zeno is reported to categorise *voluptas* as *indifferens*.

However, it seems reasonable to posit that even among the non-wise, or those attempting to become wise, the same potential for virtue should spark desire. After all, it is the only thing that is not an indifferent, unlike beauty or wealth, and so should be considered the only worthy criterion by which to choose a mate. Of course, none of this is made explicit in V 26 – all we can take from that is that *amor* between spouses is possible. Yet this assumption leads to considerable implications for the correct behaviour between spouses if Seneca is imposing his predecessors' conception of *erōs* onto the marital relationship.

A further element of the marital relationship is that there is to be no double-standard of behaviour, one for the man and one for the woman. This can be teased out of V 28:

> Quorundam matrimonia adulteriis cohaeserunt et – o rem improbam! – idem illis pudicitiam praeceperunt qui abstulerant. Itaque cito eiusmodi nuptias satietas solvit. Cum primum lenocinium libidinis abscessit timor, quod licebat eviluit.
>
> The marriages of certain people were united by adulteries and – o wicked thing! – the same men who had taken *pudicitia* away instructed those women in it. And so quickly satiety dissolves marriage of this sort. As soon as fear has departed from the enticement of lust, what was permitted becomes cheapened.

Seneca here criticises men who marry their partners in adultery and then expect those women to behave like perfect wives, despite being responsible for their corruption. These men do not respect the *pudicitia* of other men's wives, but expect their own wives to demonstrate it, and even behave as if they have an ethical right to educate them in it. As we saw from V 29, the ideal husband has a role in educating his wife, yet a man who has seduced another's wife and then married her abdicates that right. He has no moral authority over her, because he has shown he operates according to a double standard; there is one set of behaviour that is appropriate for the wives of others, and a different set

that applies to *his* wife.[60] Similarly, he believes there is another double standard between what he is allowed to do – that is, remove *pudicitia* – and what his wife is allowed to do – that is, protect it. Seneca's scorn at this approach suggests that he believes such contradictions are simply unacceptable in a marriage. He also suggests that such contradictions come from lust (*libidinis*). Lust causes a man to first approach another man's wife and take away her *pudicitia*. Once he has married the woman, the lure of illicit pleasure fades, and the marriage will turn out to have been built on nothing of substance. Such disjunctions in what is and is not considered acceptable can only come from irrational impulses, such as lust. Once more, the corollary of Seneca's criticism must be that only values arising from reason can provide a stable foundation for marriage. Whatever that relationship looks like, it does not involve conflicting standards of behaviour for men and women in this kind of situation.

A description of what the marital relationship should not look like comes from two sections of V 54 identified by Delarue as most likely originating from Seneca (V 54.6-7):

> Si totam ei domum regendam commiseris, serviendum est; si aliquid tuo arbitrio reservaris, fidem sibi haberi non putavit et in odium vertitur ac iurgia et, nisi cito consulueris, parat venena. Anus et aurifices et hariolos et institores gemmarium sericarumque vestium si intromiseris, periculum pudicitiae est, si prohibueris, suspicionis iniuria. Verum quid prodest etiam diligens custodia, cum uxor servari inpudica non possit, pudica non debeat? Infida enim custos est castitatis necessitas, et illa vere pudica dicenda est, cui licuit peccare si voluit.
>
> If you entrust the whole house to her to govern, she must be obeyed; if you hold on to something for your judgement, she does not think she has your trust, and is turned to hatred and abuse and, unless you quickly consult her, she prepares poisons. If you admit old women and goldsmiths and soothsayers and sellers of

[60] We see the same idea articulated in *De Ira* 2.28.7 – "the man who covets the wife of everyone else and thinks that is sufficient reason for loving that which is not his own nevertheless does not want his own wife to be seen"(*is qui nullius non uxorem concupiscit et satis iustas causas putat amandi quod aliena est, idem uxorem suam aspici non vult*).

> gems and silken clothes, it is a danger to *pudicitia* – if you forbid them, you inflict the injury of suspicion. Indeed, what benefit is even assiduous protection, when the wife who is not *pudica* is not able to be protected, and the wife who is *pudica* ought not to be? The necessity of chastity is a faithless guard, and truly that woman must be said to be *pudica* who has the chance to sin if she wished to.

Seneca describes the difficult predicament a husband finds himself trapped in. Either he must implicitly trust his wife to remain *pudica*, and so give her plenty of opportunities to become *impudica*; or he must, so to speak, bar the stable door after the horse has bolted, as there is no point in protecting a wife who has already lost her *pudicitia*. There is something satirically overdramatic about this passage, particularly the reference to preparing poison; that said, this was a common theme in declamation topics, and so is a concern we might expect to see articulated.[61] Despite the sardonic tone, Seneca appears to address a genuine question – what steps might a husband take to ensure his wife's *pudicitia* remains intact? The prospect looks bleak for those who hope that any of the traditional methods might work, as Seneca points out the flaws in each option. It comes down to the simple fact that nothing a husband might do will protect *pudicitia*. The woman who has it does not need to be guarded, and there is no point in guarding a woman who does not.

Unless a man changes his own attitude to *pudicitia* and realises that it is entirely within the woman's power, and her power alone, he will find himself frustrated again and again. A husband can impose no effectual external restrictions, but must rely on his wife to police herself. This is, in and of itself, a significant statement about women's capacity as individual moral agents. If we accept that *pudicitia* is a manifestation of virtue and

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[61] Fear of being poisoned by a family member appears in Seneca the Elder 3.7, 7.3, 9.5 and 9.6. *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a rhetorical handbook, provides an explanation of Marcus Cato's claim that an adulteress was by necessity also a poisoner (4.16.23). For more on women condemned for poisoning their husbands, see Fantham 1991: 282-3. For more on why women especially were associated with poisoning, see Currie 1998.

cannot exist without it, then we accept that women are capable of virtue. If it is impossible for husbands to perform behaviours to protect *pudicitia*, it follows that women are capable of controlling their own *pudicitia* – and, consequently, their own virtue. They do not need a man's protection to safeguard it. Seneca seems to take a profoundly anti-paternalist approach here, based firmly on the assumption that women are equally as capable of attaining virtue as men, and on the same terms.

This idea resonates with the discussion of freedom and slavery that V 50 stimulated. To recap, freedom is autonomous power over one's own actions and, as such, is only available to the wise man. However, the power to act includes the power to choose wrong things. The wise man has the *power* to choose to perform irrational acts – but he chooses to perform rational acts instead. The last line of the fragment takes on a different significance in this light, for it says that the only truly *pudica* wife is the one who may sin when she wishes (*cui licuit peccare si voluit*). Without the possibility of transgression, true *pudicitia* and virtue are impossible. Like the wise man, the *pudica* wife has the opportunity to err, but rationally decides not to – if she is infallibly capable of not erring, then she must by definition also be wise. By arguing against traditional methods of ensuring *pudicitia*, and instead advocating reliance on a woman's character alone, Seneca makes a strong implicit case for the equality of women in Stoicism. A husband may provide moral and ethical support to his wife, but the relationship must be conducted as between equals. The paternalistic strategies that V 54 demolishes provide no help for either partner.

A final negative example of the marital relationship is found once again in a brief portrait of Maecenas in *De Providentia*, where he is compared to Regulus, who was tortured and killed during the first Punic War (3.10):

> Feliciorem ergo tu Maecenatem putas, cui amoribus anxio et morosae uxoris cotidiana repudia deflenti somnus per symphoniarum cantum ex longinquo lene resonantium quaeritur? Mero se licet sopiat et aquarum fragoribus avocet et mille voluptatibus mentem anxiam fallat, tam vigilabit in pluma quam ille in cruce.
>
> Do you therefore think that Maecenas is luckier, for whom, anxious with loves and weeping over the daily rejections of his hard to please wife, sleep is obtained through the singing of musicians echoing gently from a distance? He can soak himself in wine and distract his anxious mind with the noises of waters and deceive it with a thousand pleasures, but he will be as awake on his feathers as the other [Regulus] on his cross.

The separation from the partner, the rejection, the immersion in the delights of the body (and only of the body) in an attempt to dull mental anxiety... Maecenas approaches things from entirely the wrong angle. His *amores* cause him distress; his wife treats him like a lover rather than a partner. His only comforts are wine, music and the rippling of water. Once more, *amor* has got the upper hand, and Maecenas cannot even turn to the consolation of philosophy. We know from the *Epistulae Morales* that his eloquence, the mark of his reason, was deficient; now we see the consequences of that lack. Without reason, a husband in a difficult situation suffers like a man crucified. The only way to survive is through conquering these passions and engaging with one's reason.

If we want an *exemplum* of what Seneca thinks the marital relationship *should* look like, we arguably have no better source than to examine his own marriage or marriages. We should not expect to find a detailed handbook laying out the precise guidelines for every situation – that would not be in keeping with the Stoic approach to ethical matters. Once a man has realised that he should be guided by his reason to achieve virtue, he will not need to be told what to do in every possible circumstance – his reason

will tell him what the correct course of action is. In outlining this point to Lucilius, Seneca specifically mentions that reason, rather than a set canon of regulations, will judge the different demands made upon a married man and a bachelor (Letter 94.8).[62] That said, it is clear that there must be some good examples of what a marriage looks like, and for that, we can turn to Seneca's own experience.

Surprisingly little has survived about the circumstances of his own marriage(s), although what evidence there is suggests a good deal of tenderness and intimacy. The famous passage from *De Ira* paints the couple's bedtime routine. Seneca's wife, here unnamed, remains quiet when they get into bed, so that Seneca may scrutinize his conscience in peace (3.36.3). She does not do this because he instructs her, or has trained her – she does it because she is his confidante, privy to this nightly ritual (*moris iam mei conscia*). She is intellectually aware of the process he puts his mind through, believes it is important and can respect what others might consider at best an eccentric affectation. Whether or not she is capable of undertaking the same intellectual exercise, Seneca does not say, but her willingness to support him in his pursuit of virtue is the kind of collaboration that one partner can give to another, regardless of their relative progress on the path to moral perfection.

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[62] "With these things set out, when you have led a man into the sight of his own situation, and he knows that the life that is blessed is not that which follows pleasure, but that which follows nature; when he has fallen in love with virtue, the unique good of man; fled disgrace, the only evil; knows that everything else, riches, honours, good health, strength, power, are of the middle part and must not be counted as good nor evils – then he will not desire a prompter to details, who says, 'go in thus, dine thus. This is appropriate for a man, this for a woman; this for a married man, and this for a bachelor' "(*his decretis cum illum in conspectum suae condicionis adduxeris et cognoverit beatam esse vitam non quae secundum voluptatem est sed secundum naturam, cum virtutem unicum bonum hominis adamaverit, turpitudinem solum malum fugerit, reliqua omnia — divitias, honores, bonam valetudinem, vires, imperia — scierit esse mediam partem nec bonis adnumerandam nec malis, monitorem non desiderabit ad singula qui dicat 'sic incede, sic cena; hoc viro, hoc feminae, hoc marito, hoc caelibi convenit'*). For more discussion of this letter, see chapter five, pages 258-61.

Another famous passage comes from the *Epistulae Morales*, where Seneca writes to Lucilius after leaving Paulina in Rome. He has travelled to his villa at Nomentum, despite her concerns for his health (Letter 104.1-5). The relationship between them is depicted as caring and intimate.[63] On this occasion, Seneca's rational decision that it is best for him to depart trumps both the judgement of Paulina and his doctor, but one gets the impression that Paulina's concern for him is almost as restorative as the trip itself. He says that he feels that her life is bound up in his (*spiritum illius in meo verti*, 104.2). On the other side of the scale, he feels that he must look after himself for her sake (*incipio, ut illi consulam, mihi consulere*, 104.2). The relationship between them is not one-sided; Seneca does not take the hero worship without reciprocation. There is a balance of care between the couple despite the difference in their ages, which frequent references to old age and youth highlight. Through her love, Paulina makes Seneca responsible for her fears – but she also makes him more aware of his *own* fears (104.5). A spouse's love can make one more fully aware of one's own mental state. In this case, it makes Seneca think about his concerns for his own welfare, and subsequently his conduct, when he had been tempted to give up bothering because of his advancing years.

Against this background of evidence from Seneca's own corpus, I wish to turn briefly to a source outside Seneca to examine the circumstances surrounding his death. The emperor Nero commanded Seneca to commit suicide following his implication in an assassination plot; Seneca decided to cut his veins, a common choice during the Neronian period.[64] When he attempted to send away his friends after a farewell dinner, Paulina

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[63] *Pace*, of course, Henderson 2004: 40, which reads this trip as the ultimate in escaping from it all – including Paulina. For further discussion of this letter, see chapter five, pages 271-4.

[64] The other famous contemporary who immediately comes to mind is Petronius, whose death scene is deliberately set up by Tacitus to form a diptych with Seneca's suicide (16.18-20). Tacitus also records that

refused to leave and begged that she should be allowed to die with him. Although he tried to persuade her otherwise, she insisted, and eventually convinced him to allow her to join him in death. In the event, Nero's soldiers saved her, to make sure that Nero did not come out of the incident looking any more of a villain than he already did. This is the version related by Tacitus (15.63-64). The story that appears in Cassius Dio is somewhat less generous (62.25). It suggests, in briefer and more vitriolic fashion, that it was Seneca's desire that Paulina should die along with him, and she only survived because he predeceased her.

Reydams-Schils, in her analysis of these two passages, points out that Tacitus' heroic tale was obviously expected to sound credible, regardless of the historical accuracy of the accounts (2005: 171-175). Griffin argues that Tacitus' version should be accepted, because of evidence independent of Seneca's own writing – for instance, the use of Seneca's last words and the evidence of Fabius Rusticus, an old friend who may have been in attendance at the final dinner (1992: 370-2). The ethics of marriage demonstrated by Tacitus' account certainly appear to be more in keeping with the principles of reason. For instance, before Paulina announces her desire to share his death, Seneca tells her to moderate her grief and to take comfort in contemplating his virtuous life.[65] This echoes his attempts in the consolatory works to limit the grief of Helvia and

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the following died from opening their veins under Nero: Octavia (14.64); Torquatus Silanus (15.35); Piso (15.59); Vestinus (15.69); Vetus, his mother-in-law and his daughter (16.11); Anteius (16.14); Mela, Seneca's brother (16.17); and Thrasea Paetus (16.35). It is implied by the description of his sensations at death that Seneca's nephew Lucan perished the same way (15.70). Ostorius cut his veins, but found the process too slow, and thus cut his throat with the help of a slave (16.15).

[65] "As soon as he discussed these things and things of this sort as if in public, he embraced his wife, and softened a little in the face of her exhibited bravery, asked and begged that she would control her grief and not take it up forever, but that in contemplation of life conducted through the virtue she should bear the loss of her husband with honest consolations" (*ubi haec atque talia velut in commune disseruit, complectitur uxorem, et paululum adversus praesentem fortitudinem mollitus rogat oratque temperaret dolori aeternum*

Marcia, but also sets a premium upon a virtuously lived life, suggesting it should be sufficient to console Paulina in her loss. When Paulina states her intention to die with him, Seneca tries to persuade her otherwise by showing her the charms of life (*vitae delenimenta*, 15.63) – he reasons with her (*monstraveram*, 15.63), but respects her choice as rational when he knows that both sides of the case have been discussed. He takes upon himself the spouse's responsibility to educate and to clarify, by making sure that the issue has been fully articulated and all the options are on the table, but he respects Paulina's reasoned decision once it has been made. Her decision is based upon her evaluation of life as an indifferent, and of her preference for a death that has glory (*decus*, 15.63) rather than an ignoble life; life is not a benefit if it cannot be lived virtuously.

The final act of Seneca's life, the *exemplum* that he wishes to create from his own death, is fundamentally bound up with his relationship with his wife. The couple's decision to die together means that Seneca outdoes the death of Socrates, which is evoked here (Mayer 2008: 300). The final image of Seneca as a wise man is thus inextricably interwoven with his identity as a husband. His last evening, imitating Socrates' consumption of hemlock by his gathering with friends, is changed into a vignette between husband and wife rather than a dialogue between philosophical friends. She becomes his philosophical partner in death.[66] The Socratic element is important here, for Socrates features in another fragment of the *De Matrimonio* (V 31):

> Quodam autem tempore cum infinita convicia ex superiori loco ingerenti Xantippae restitisset, aqua perfusus inmunda nihil respondit amplius quam capite deterso: "sciebam" inquit "futurum ut ista tonitrua imber sequeretur."

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susciperet, sed in contemplatione vitae per virtutem actae desiderium mariti solaciis honestis toleraret; 15.63).

[66] For an extended reading of the parallels between this scene and Plato's *Phaedo*, see Reydams-Schils 2005: 171-2.

> Moreover, on one occasion, when he [Socrates] had resisted boundless reproofs from Xanthippe, who was throwing them in from a place higher up, having been soaked in filthy water he answered nothing more than, after wiping his head, "I knew that rain would follow that thunder."

The relationship between Socrates and Xanthippe, at least by the time of Seneca, was renowned as notoriously turbulent.[67] For Seneca to model himself upon Socrates in his final moments, and yet reincorporate his wife into that narrative, could be read in two ways. First, it could be read as re-writing Xanthippe, with all her temper, into Socrates' story, as an important part of his marriage rather than as part of his life that should be ignored or belittled. Second, it could be seen as a way of incorporating marriage into the philosophical project provided that it *does not* look like Socrates' relationship with Xanthippe. Although Paulina and Seneca clearly disagree on the correct course of action for her, there is no implication that she begins throwing things at her husband in exasperation; her temper remains calm. Their relationship is not moved by irrational *pathē*, as Xanthippe's anger is. In V 31, Socrates appears to embody the calm, rational nature that we should strive for. Despite external actions of fate, even being covered in filthy water, he does not become angry. Such behaviour within a marital relationship is clearly desirable when one partner is more advanced in the pursuit of virtue than the other. When both partners have become sufficiently virtuous, then they will be able to communicate without being controlled by irrational drives or using *convicia* to make their point.

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[67] For more on Xanthippe's negative portrayal in sources after Plato, beginning with Xenophon, see Nails 2002: 299-300. This particular anecdote is repeated at *De Constantia* 18.5; Socrates is discussed as an *exemplum* to be imitated despite his difficult home life, among other things, at Letter 104.27.

The Wise Man and Marriage

A final word needs to be said on the topic of the wise man and marriage. Delarue contends that nothing in the fragments discusses the marriage of the *sapiens* (2001: 187). The famous question of whether the wise man will marry (*an vir sapiens ducat uxorem*) is posed at the beginning of the section attributed to Theophrastus, which Delarue understandably does not consider Senecan as a whole.[68] While I do not intend to give a detailed account of Seneca's approach to this subject, as opposed to how the *proficiens* should approach marriage, I do think it is possible to draw some tentative conclusions.

Delarue is correct insofar as these fragments contribute no answer to the question of whether a wise man is capable of having a married relationship that we would recognise as emotionally intimate. This debate springs from the question of whether the extirpation of the *pathē* leaves anything behind to create an emotional connection with a non-wise human being, or whether there can be an emotional connection between two wise humans. As most of the discussion in this chapter of what is rational and irrational, and what is therefore motivated by a *pathos*, is based on the use of technically specific vocabulary in passages without explicit doctrinal context, it does not seem helpful to extrapolate further about Seneca's views on the extirpation of the emotions, and whether they stand up to scrutiny.[69]

However, it seems fair to say Seneca believes that, in the right circumstances and with the right motivations, the wise man should marry, and thus is capable of marrying. This is in keeping with the Stoics' general doctrinal view that it is a duty of the wise man

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[68] Wiesen 1964: 113-5 outlines the historical debate on the question *an vir sapiens ducat uxorem* that influenced Jerome's own treatment of the subject.

[69] For further information about the debate on *apatheia*, the extirpation of the *pathē* and whether the wise man is capable of feelings, see Stephens 1996, Brennan 1998 and Irwin 1998.

to marry, just as it is for him to participate in politics, as these things are all according to nature (*kata phusin*). I see no reason to suggest that Seneca would have made an about-face in his doctrinal stance here, especially as such an approach is not echoed in the writings of later Stoics such as Musonius Rufus or Hierocles. What those circumstances and motivations are is more open to question. I have argued that they are primarily based on reason, that is, on ways in which marriage will help both partners come nearer to virtue. The phrase *sapiens vir* appears in the fragments approved by Delarue in contexts that support this conclusion. In V 23 it is said to be a serious thing for the *sapiens vir* to marry without knowing whether he is marrying a good or a bad woman. V 27 tells us that the *sapiens vir* will love with *iudicium* rather than with *affectus*. Both of these uses suggest that Seneca believes that the wise man *is* capable of marrying and having a relationship with his spouse, and that such a relationship will be governed by reason and virtuous behaviour.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that Seneca envisages marriage as a place in which one exercises virtue, and an institution through which virtue can be nourished. There are no other good reasons for entering into marriage, and as such, Seneca's stance is profoundly counter-cultural. The suggestion that virtue needs to be cultivated in an atmosphere that is unaffected by external shocks, and as such is unconcerned about considerations of wealth and ancestral prestige, is again strongly counter-cultural, given the priorities demonstrated by the Roman elite in their marital strategies. The idea that marriage should replicate the condition of the wise man in its composure and lack of

concern for indifferents continues the pattern we have seen of relationships within the familial context providing a stable environment for the pursuit of virtue.

The special quality of the relationship between spouses is that each person is able to encourage the other. This is different to the relationship found between mother and child that I discussed in chapter one, as one partner is not superior to the other by virtue both of age and of having given birth to the other. It also differs from the relationship between brothers discussed in chapter two as it exists between only two people rather than an indeterminate number of siblings. Brothers also function as an ethical support network for each other, but one might mistakenly infer from that example that only men were capable of such relationships; the marital bond provides evidence to the contrary. As men and women are both equally capable of virtue, there is no reason that a woman might not be able to instruct a man, just as a man can instruct a woman. Indeed, in *De Beneficiis*, Seneca explicitly says that a wife is able to recall a husband who has erred, just as a father corrects his son or a friend rekindles a friendship.[70] We even have one brief vignette of an interaction between husband and wife that illustrates this point, and an illustrious pair at that. It occurs in *De Clementia* between Augustus and Livia, when Augustus is debating what course of action he should take to punish Cinna, who has plotted against him despite being spared on a previous occasion (1.9.1-12). While Augustus is debating whether or not to have him executed, Livia steps in and advises

[70] "We will suffer men to perish who are actually curable and who could be good, if something bit them, if that rebuke is taken away with which a father sometimes corrects his son, a wife brings back her erring husband to herself, and a friend stimulates the wilting honesty of a friend" (*quosdam vero sanabiles et qui fieri boni possint, si quid illos momorderit, perire patiemur admonitione sublata, qua et pater filium aliquando correxit et uxor maritum abberantem ad se reduxit et amicus languentum amici fidem erexit*, *De Beneficiis* 5.22.4). I am aware that some might chose to interpret this passage as referring simply to a wife luring back a husband who has strayed to an extra-marital alliance. However, given that this example is placed within the context of a father correcting a son and a friend correcting another friend in wider moral terms, placing such stricture upon the reading of this passage seems unwise.

mercy (1.9.6). Augustus takes her advice, spares him, and Cinna is eternally grateful. The problem with this scene is that it appears to be utterly fictional – as far as we are aware, Cinna was never involved in such a conspiracy, and the dating is suspect.[71] Putting that inconsistency aside, Livia's role as counsellor to Augustus in this trying situation drives the interaction between the couple. She gives him good, logical and reasoned advice – and he is more than happy to take it. What is more, it turns out to be just the advice he needed. Within the context of marriage, equal partners can guide each other closer to virtue – even if, from time to time, the pull of irrational *pathē* may intervene.

The focus on the need for stability within marriage, as opposed to the instability caused by divorce and remarriage, reflects the fundamental difference between the things that shake marriage and the previous chances of fate that Seneca has warned against. In the consolations to Marcia and Polybius, Seneca provided a rationale for not being upset by the death of loved ones. Death is an event that is out of our control, that we cannot influence, and indeed should not view as an evil. However, the desire to divorce one's spouse and remarry is driven by irrational desire, whether that desire is for sexual pleasure, financial benefit or political advantage. That irrational impulse *is* under our control in a way that death simply is not – and, as such, we should take all due care to make sure that we view marriage as a practical extension of virtue rather than an instrument of personal gain.

[71] For a discussion of the dating of this incident, see Griffin 1992: 409-11; for the purpose behind creating such a fiction, see Syme 1986: 266-7; for a different explanation of how the error crept into the text in the first place, see Mayer 2008: 303.

Chapter Four: The Imperfect Imperial Family

For Seneca and his original readers, the presence of the imperial family was inescapable. Augustus had established the imperial family as a model of perfect familial respectability, and later emperors maintained the image he created. However, Seneca's use of the imperial family in the *ad Marciam*, *De Clementia, De Brevitate Vitae* and *De Ira* undermines the public impression of their moral superiority, and instead subtly illustrates how their example is *not* to be emulated. We have seen in previous chapters that Seneca envisions the family as an environment in which the aspiring sage may develop virtue, and as an institution which can mimic the equanimity of the Stoic sage. In this chapter, I show that Seneca demonstrates the imperial family performs neither of these functions. Seneca highlights their imperfections in relationships with each other, despite their claim to supreme political power and divinity – thus reminding his readers that only the Stoic wise man can be truly happy.

What difference does Seneca's use of the imperial family make to the way that we interpret his works? I argue that it points once more to Seneca's subversion of cultural norms to indicate a truth based on Stoic doctrine. In their public art and acts, the imperial family from Augustus onwards constructed themselves as the embodiment of the familial ideal, the perfect *exemplum* to be emulated by all other Romans, as befitted the possessors of the symbolic hearth of the Roman state.[1] However, this beatific representation was not truly representative of the realities of Julio-Claudian home life.

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[1] Augustus created a new shrine for Vesta on the Palatine near his own home in 12 B.C., when he was elected Pontifex Maximus. Ovid, *Fasti* 4.949-54 refers explicitly to Vesta being rightly received into the house of her kinsman Augustus. See Beard, North and Price 1998: 189-92 for more on Augustus' assimilation of his own house to that of Vesta; see Severy 2003: 99-100 for the way this move also integrated his family with the state.

The corporate image was also continually under threat from the more extreme behaviour of some individuals in the Augustan family, and the question of succession constantly lurked in the background. Seneca, as a Stoic, believed that happiness could only come from the attainment of perfect reason, not from chasing after political power. Reason had to receive nurture in a family environment supportive of that quest, not one obsessed with worldly ambition. Through his use of imperial *exempla* in a way that subtly undercuts the official line of familial flawlessness, he provides a timely reminder that only the sage can achieve virtue and, consequently, happiness, as well as reminding his reader that a family which functions in the correct way is conducive to such development.[2]

The Construction of the Imperial Family

Augustus positioned the imperial family as a central model for emulation.[3] The household of the *princeps*, by the time of Augustus' death, had become synonymous with the Roman state in religious, political and social terms. He built on historical precedent in creating this emphasis on the family. Ancestry had always been an important feature of

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[2] Some have argued that this is the same sort of thing that Seneca does in his tragedies, that is, use the tragic plots to refer to the problems of the imperial house. For instance, Bishop 1985 argues for a "code" of rhetorical tropes that runs throughout the tragedies, and which allows Seneca to explicitly attack the imperial house and encourage members of the Pisonian conspiracy. However, his approach is rather reminiscent of the *Da Vinci Code* approach to textual analysis and its conclusions are unconvincing. More successful is the work of Henry and Henry 1985, which considers the implications for emperors of Seneca's treatment of kings and royal families on the stage as part of his inheritance from the Greek dramatic tradition, and the impact of Seneca's experience of the imperial family's behaviour (68-74, 162-76). Similarly, Henry and Walker 1983 analyse the plot of the *Oedipus* to show that Seneca's tragedies were "works of contemporary significance for imperial society" (138), even if not directly mirroring the imperial court.

[3] For Augustus' positioning of himself in a paternal role to the city, particularly in an architectural sense, see Favro 1992. Flower 1996: 223-59 explores how Augustus appropriated the *imagines* to establish "his family's leading position within the community". Spaeth 1996: 101-23 demonstrates how the assimilation of imperial women to the goddess Ceres "suggested that these virtues were exemplified in the women of [the *princeps*'] family". Severy 2003 discusses the gradual development of the role of Augustus' family in civic affairs between 17 B.C. and 2 B.C. Milnor 2005 explores the ways in which the imperial family became the centre of the Roman state in numerous areas.

the Republic, initially in terms of eligibility for certain political offices based on one's membership of the patrician *gentes*, and later because of alliances between the major political families.[4] Indeed, as maintaining a family was a fundamental part of one's civic duties, one of the questions that the censors could ask a man as they reviewed the citizen body was whether he had a wife for the purpose of procreation.[5] Cicero gives the example of Quintus Metellus, whose four sons all achieved the rank of consul (*Brutus* 81); he felt so strongly on the importance of raising children for the good of the state that he wrote a speech on the subject, which Augustus later read to the Senate (Suetonius, *Vita Divi Augusti* 89). Family interaction also provided a source of exemplary material. For instance, the story of Lucretia, which in turn became the story of the expulsion of the kings and the foundation of the Republic, was fundamentally a story about marital fidelity. It demonstrated the implications that actions within a family could have for the state as a whole, especially through the constitution-changing actions of Lucretia's husband Collatinus.[6] Marriage and adoption into particularly eminent families were common political tactics, and the families of nubile young people gave considerable deliberation to the implications of such allegiances. Families also provided important

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[4] For a detailed case study of the importance of familial connections in the career of Cn. Domitius Calvinus in the late Republic and early Empire, see Sweeney 1978. For more on the importance of family identity in political activity during the Republic in general, see Farney 2007: 11-26.

[5] Aulus Gellius 4.3 attests to this form of the oath for the third century B.C.; see Fantham 1991: 272.

[6] Valerius Maximus' first chapter on ancient institutions is largely concerned with examples of correct familial behaviour (2.1). For the role and function of Republican *exempla* in Roman culture, see Roller 2004, who includes a useful schematic of the four features which all exemplary stories should contain. He notes, in connection with the *exempla* of Horatia, Lucretia and Verginia, that "threatened or actual sexual violations of these women's bodies echo, or constitute, threatened or actual political violations of the civic body" (2004: 39), and thus again marks the connection between the private and the public. For a comparison of the *exemplum* of Horatia in Livy and Valerius Maximus, see Maslakov 1984: 464-71.

sources of support in difficult circumstances, for instance if one of its members were sent into exile.[7]

In the imperial period, these machinations lost much of their force. While families had previously jostled for the position at the top of the social and political pyramid, the emperor's family was now guaranteed that honour. Augustus first signalled his intention to keep political power within the imperial family as early as 23 B.C., when Claudius Marcellus, Augustus' nephew, was given permission to seek the consulship ten years before the legal minimum age (Cassius Dio 53.28.3). However, Augustus did more than simply consolidate political influence among his relatives; he completely refashioned the role that the family of the leading citizen played in the political sphere. As Milnor puts it, "the state became centered on a single man and a single family" (2005: 3).

Zanker traces Augustus' attempt through public imagery "to maintain his image as *primus inter pares* but at the same time make it clear that the successor could only be a member of the 'chosen people', the Julian family" (1988: 215), through the depictions of Gaius, Lucius Caesar, Tiberius and Drusus (1988: 215-230). The Ara Pacis, the first visual representation of the imperial family, served to intertwine the political and the familial role of Augustus' family by validating the age of the *Pax Augusta* with the promise of continued rule by Augustus' adopted sons Gaius and Lucius (Rose 1990: 467).[8] Similarly, the prevalence of sculpture representing the imperial family reinforced the sense of "the emperor and his family as permanent governing forces, deeply

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[7] Valerius Maximus 6.7.2-3 gives the examples of Turia and Sulpicia, who both aided their husbands when they were proscribed, in Sulpicia's case despite her mother's attempts to keep her from following her husband into exile. Grebe 2003 discusses Terentia's support of Cicero while he was in exile.

[8] Rose also analyses the difficulty of giving secure attribution to any of the figures on the Ara Pacis, and identifies different figures as Gaius and Lucius Caesar to those identified by Zanker. For more on the positioning and identity of the family groups on the Ara Pacis, see Kleiner 1978. Ramsby and Severy 2007: 53-5 argue that the Ara Pacis represents the empire, including its provinces, as a family over which Augustus is the *paterfamilias*.

embedded in the political, religious and social aspects" of Roman society (Bartman 1999: 22). The importance of the family as a political construct under the Republic became the importance of one specific family under the empire.

As part of this cultural shift, Augustus took great pains to establish his own family as a model of perfect behaviour, despite its rather chequered past. Just as the adoption of the name Augustus metaphorically wiped the slate clean of his violent and sometimes vindictive actions as Octavian in the years following Julius Caesar's assassination and the war with Mark Antony, it also drew a line under his family's dubious history – for instance, his divorce of Julia's mother Scribonia, which coincided with his marriage to Livia while she was pregnant with Drusus. The scandal of this affair had provided the target for much of Antony's propaganda, so the image of a traditional home life needed to counteract that invective.[9] It also countered any remaining memories of political abuse from around the time of the Perusine conflict, when Octavian had been accused of adopting effeminate behaviour in pursuit of ambition.[10] Such potentially scandalous or damaging history was neatly overwritten with the convenient myth of perfect familial harmony and excellence in traditional Roman virtues. For instance, Augustus insisted that both Julia and her daughter were trained in spinning and weaving, and strictly controlled what they might say or do in public and private (Suetonius, *Vita Divi Augusti* 64).[11]

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[9] Suetonius, *Vita Divi Augusti* 69 makes specific reference to Mark Antony using not only the marriage to Livia but also Augustus' adultery with wives of senators for his own political purposes. For a discussion of Mark Antony's propaganda around this issue, see Barrett 2002: 20-7.

[10] For a discussion of how Octavian moved towards a more virile image, particularly after the Perusine conflict, see Hallett 1977. For accusations supposedly made about Octavian's sexuality around this time by his enemies, see also Suetonius, *Vita Divi Augusti* 68.

[11] It is, of course, problematic to assume Suetonius provides the unadulterated 'truth' about how specific acts were understood during the reign of Augustus rather than how those acts were perceived in his own time. Nevertheless, the values of feminine virtue that Augustus wished the women of his household to embody appear to have persisted without much alteration after his death. For a discussion of these virtues on epitaphs, see Forbis 1996.

Augustus solidified his position as moral censor through his legislative program. The *Lex Iulia de adulteriis* of 18 B.C. and *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* of 19 B.C. set out his vision for the families of his citizens.[12] Chapter three discussed how these laws affected the social conception of marriage, but they had a wider impact on the concept of family and its relation to the state as well. The *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus* explicitly made procreation of children a defining feature of legitimate marriage, with penalties imposed upon those who either did not marry or whose marriages were without issue, and special benefits given to parents of multiple offspring. It also put pressure upon people who were divorced or widowed to remarry in a tight time-frame or else face financial and legal penalties.[13] Augustus' decision to privilege the fecund and penalise the childless made a strong declaration about the values he wished to foster within the burgeoning empire, and about the state's role in regulating family life. The law also prohibited members of the senatorial order and their relations from marrying freedmen and actors, and all free citizens were forbidden from marrying prostitutes, pimps and condemned adulterers; thus statutes clearly outlined the composition of families that was in the state's best interest. Considerable incentives, such as women's ability to obtain relief from certain legal restrictions by producing sufficient numbers of children, sought to make the imperial vision attractive to those upon whom it was imposed.

Augustus made a similar statement about the state's interest in the family by making adultery a public crime in the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis*. Previously, adultery would

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[12] For more on the *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, see Gardner 1986: 77-8 and McGinn 1998: 70-104. For more on the *Lex Iulia de adulteriis*, see Gardner 1986: 127-132, McGinn 1998: 140-215 and Borkowski and du Plessis 2005: 129-30. For the reception of the legislation, see Milnor 2005: 140-85. See also the discussion in chapter three, pages 118-9.

[13] Under the *Lex Iulia de maritandis ordinibus*, a widow had to remarry within ten months and a divorced woman within six months. After that period they would be subject to the penalties applied to the unmarried. The *Lex Papia Poppaea* amended this in A.D. 9 to give a widow two years and a divorcee eighteen months to remarry.

have been handled privately within the affected family; Augustus' law made it clear that the state had an interest in how this kind of situation was handled, and the sorts of outcomes that might arise. For instance, the husband who did not prosecute his wife and her lover upon discovering adultery was himself open to a charge of pimping or *lenocinium*, which implied that private arrangements were no longer appropriate and such placid cognisance was harmful to the state (Digest 48.5.30pr). While one could argue that the onus remains on the husband to bring a private prosecution, and that the action remains essentially a private one, the state still establishes an unprecedented sanction against a private individual who chose not to undertake such action.

In some ways, Augustus' authority to impose such legislation came from his strategy of slowly positioning himself as a *paterfamilias* to the family of the Roman state, including taking the title of *pater patriae* in 2 B.C. As Severy has shown, this was a gradual development of the role of the *princeps*, but "by intruding upon the Roman father's rights to control sexuality, marriage and procreation within his own family, Augustus was also acting as a father over all families and over the community itself" (2003: 56). By making his family encompass the whole state, Augustus put himself in a position of moral authority over behaviour that previously would have been managed within a familial context. Through creating legislation that set out what was acceptable and what was not, he presented himself as the ultimate moral arbiter, a man who knew what was morally correct and thus was entitled to prescribe the behaviour of others.[14]

Augustus' successors continued to model the attitude of moral familial perfection that he adopted, and evidence of their imitation of his strategy appears in both literature

[14] Of course, the effect of the new legislation is unclear, and it does not seem to have been a practical solution to the social problems that Augustus had identified. Nevertheless, the implications of Augustus' behaviour outlined here remain valid even if the outcomes were not what he would have desired.

and material evidence from the early imperial period. For instance, in his *Facta et dicta memorabilia* Valerius Maximus refers to Tiberius, the reigning emperor at the time of composition, as *princeps parensque noster*, and clearly invokes a paternal relationship between the reader and the *princeps* that is presumed unproblematic.[15] The parental aspect was also emphasised through the Julio-Claudians' appropriation of the goddess Ceres, chosen as a symbol of the traditional virtues of *castitas* and motherhood. By assimilating women from the imperial family to Ceres after their deaths, the *princeps* "suggested that these virtues were exemplified in the women of his family" (Spaeth 1996: 121).[16] The numismatic record shows a wish to reinforce a sense of more general concord and agreement within the imperial family, as demonstrated by Gaius Caligula's issue of the "three-sisters" sestertius in A.D. 37/38. The coin shows his sisters in perfect divine balance in counterpoint to himself.[17]

The importance of the imperial family in iconographic settings is also clear from sculpture. Ginsburg discusses a monument in Rome probably dedicated in memory of Claudius' British victory; although sadly the statues themselves do not survive, the inscriptions indicate that they depicted Claudius' "brother Germanicus, his mother Antonia, his wife Agrippina, his adoptive son Nero, and his children by a previous marriage, Octavia and Britannicus (*ILS* 222)" (Ginsburg 2006: 85). That these figures all appeared together in a familial group implies the continued importance for the emperor of presenting a unified and harmonious familial front to the public gaze. The commemoration of Claudius' victory with this sculptural subject also speaks volumes

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[15] This phrase apparently was acceptable despite Tiberius' decision not to take the formal title of *pater patriae* (Suetonius, *Vita Tiberii* 26.2). For more on Valerius Maximus' use of Augustus and Tiberius, see Wardle 2000, who also discusses the date of the composition of the *Facta et dicta memorabilia*.
[16] For more on the imperial appropriation of Ceres, see Spaeth 1996: 101-23.
[17] See chapter two, pages 81. For a further discussion of the coin, see Ginsburg 2006: 65-7.

about Claudius' own manipulation of the imperial family. By creating such an artefact, he gives the impression that he was always intended to play a part of the imperial succession and that his ascension fitted into the overall stability of the imperial family, whereas the actual circumstances of his obtaining the principate were rather the reverse.

Of course, external unity did not necessarily result from internal harmony. According to the historical facts, the Julio-Claudians were fairly dysfunctional. Tacitus' *Annales* overflow with tales of plotting, betrayal and deceit among the various powerful familial factions.[18] This conflict rose at least in part from competition between the Julian and the Claudian branches of the family tree.[19] The uncertainty over the imperial succession and consequent competition created an atmosphere where the pursuit of power was more important than the performance of *pietas*. In terms of morality, Augustus' attempts to brush his own unorthodox relationship with Livia under the carpet may have succeeded in rehabilitating his political public image, but his indiscretions were not forgotten. For instance, Cassius Dio reports that the senate pointedly mentioned his sexual proclivities in a debate over the reluctance of young men to marry and his relevant legislative program (54.16.3). Tacitus puns on Livia as a *gravis* stepmother to the house of the Caesars (*Annales* 1.10), and implies that her pregnancy when Augustus married her had serious implications for the state. Suetonius also records his marriage to the pregnant Livia as the final marriage after the unsuccessful unions with Claudia and Scribonia (*Vita Divi Augusti* 62). Clearly Augustus' attempts to whitewash his conduct were not effective

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[18] While we may rely on the evidence of later historiographers, the trouble with taking the testimony of Tacitus, Suetonius or Cassius Dio as evidence of opinions about the imperial family is that they are not writing at the same time as the events they chronicle; their accounts of imperial life are shaded by changes of dynasty and accretions of myth.

[19] Rose 1997: 52 provides the excellent case study of Germanicus, who was figured alternatively as a Julian or a Claudian in imperial iconography, depending on which branch was in the ascendant at the time of an image's creation.

over the long term.[20] Equally, the irony that the most famous infraction of Augustus' *Lex Iulia de adulteriis* was perpetrated by his own daughter has not been lost on modern scholars.[21]

Seneca and the Imperial Family

Seneca was in a unique position to accumulate knowledge of the imperial family's imperfect reality. Seneca was exiled from Rome by Claudius on a charge of adultery with Julia Livilla, one of Gaius' sisters, and thus was aware of the unstable background behind the image of sibling harmony suggested by the "three-sisters" sestertius. He would also presumably have had a sufficiently close relationship with Julia Livilla to be aware of the tensions that led up to the plot involving Agrippina and Livilla against Gaius in A.D. 39.[22] For our purposes, it is sufficient that he was a close enough intimate for an

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[20] The evidence from historians writing nearer to Augustus is thin on the ground. Horace's *Carmen Saeculare*, composed a year after the legislation was passed, refers to the legislation in positive terms and asks the goddess Ilithyia to support it (17-20), but one would expect nothing less from a publically commissioned work. Valerius Maximus in particular makes only sparing references to recent history. Bloomer 1992: 204 believes that this is in part due to his reliance upon previous written sources, such as Livy, for his *exempla*. Briscoe 1993: 402 suggests that such reticence is far more likely to be a consequence of the prosecution of the historian Cremutius Cordus, the father of the Marcia addressed in the *Consolatio ad Marciam* discussed in chapter one. While Velleius Paterculus, writing in the time of Tiberius, does mention the affair, and even that Livia's first husband gave her to Augustus in the marriage ceremony (94.1), he is surprisingly gentlemanly in his references to the incident, even when noting that Drusus was born in Augustus' house (95.1). However, his description of Livia fleeing Octavian's army with her first husband, who had opposed Octavian and sided with Mark Antony, makes it quite clear he is pro-Livia as well as pro-Tiberius (75.2-3). It is worth noting that although the sources express disapproval for Augustus' behaviour, Livia's sexual conduct is never criticised; see Barrett 2002: 124-5.

[21] For discussions of Julia's adultery and its effect on Augustus' moral program, see Edwards 1993: 61-2, Severy 2003: 180-2 and Milnor 2005: 88-9. Ancient writers appear not to have made much of a connection between Julia's actions and Augustus' legislative program. The only source that explicitly connects the two is Tacitus *Annales* 3.24, which notes that in calling adultery treason, he went beyond both the clemency of the ancestors and his own legislation (*nam culpam inter viros ac feminas vulgatam gravi nomine laesarum religionum ac violatae maiestatis appellando clementiam maiorum suasque ipse leges egrediebatur*).

[22] He would also have known enough to judge if there was any truth in the allegations of incest between the siblings. Barrett 1989: 85 notes that the accusations of incest do not appear in historians such as Philo, who is happy to accuse Gaius of many other moral failings, and hypothesises that Tacitus' lost books did not mention the incest charge. Wood 1995: 459 suggests that "accusations of incest between Caligula and his sisters were probably fuelled by the fact that they played the sort of public ceremonial role normally reserved for a wife: for example, they took turns sitting at the place of honor at state banquets on the dining

accusation of adultery to be plausible grounds for banishment. When Seneca was recalled from exile to be Nero's tutor, he was once more placed in the heart of the imperial family. Viewed as an ally by Agrippina in her quest to get Nero adopted and named official heir to Claudius, he would have seen the inside of the political battle between her and those who supported Britannicus. Of course, we must take Tacitus' accounts of tooth-and-nail hostility with a pinch of salt. Nevertheless, Seneca would have had personal experience of Nero's complicated relationship with his mother, and Agrippina's anomalous marriage to her uncle Claudius. Seneca lived with the day-to-day realities of life within the imperial family, and was thoroughly aware of the ways in which the external public imagery did not match up to the lived reality.

I am not suggesting that Seneca explicitly underscores the worrisome elements of the relationships within the imperial family; rather, I aim to observe the places in which Seneca is silent about topics he could have discussed, and what that means for our interpretation of the facts he does mention. The *De Clementia* provides a prime example of these awkward silences. Nero is eighteen at the time of the work's dedication, and is encouraged to treat his subjects with all due clemency and reverence. The work as a whole has large concentrations of *exempla* featuring the imperial family, making all references to past emperors in fact serve as specifically targeted *exempla* with a personal ancestral force for Nero rather than as all-purpose models of superior morality for the general reader. However, by this point, Britannicus, Nero's cousin and a potential threat to his rule, had been murdered, allegedly by Nero himself.[23] Yet Seneca never mentions

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couch, and their images were considerably more prominent in coinage and in sculptural groups than those of his wives".

[23] Modern historians now consider Britannicus' death as more likely arising from a seizure rather than poison. This did not stop the ancient world from believing the rumours, which would have informed the

the death, an omission which demands that we ask why and what the significance of that omission is for the text as a whole.

We know from the purple passages of the *Ad Polybium* that Seneca is capable of glossing over awkward cracks in events when he chooses to, with considerable verve – but in this case, he chooses silence instead.[24] The political background of this period, and the tensions within the developing dynasty, would have been reasonably common knowledge even beyond the intimate circles to which Seneca belonged. As Kragelund has noted in his work on the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*, the argument that "historical traditions need time to develop before being codified" by "proper historians" before other people have access to them is not defensible (2005: 71). Seneca and his audience did not need to wait for Tacitus and Suetonius to write accounts of events before they formed judgements on them. It is not unreasonable to suggest that some readers would have noticed the omissions of historical detail, and that the reasons *why* such information had been omitted would have been comparatively clear to them.

Seneca often refers to members of the imperial family in his work as *exempla*, constructing them as examples of virtuous behaviour.[25] When they appear as individuals, rather than in relation to other members of the imperial family, their appearance is often unproblematically positive. For instance, Augustus appears a good deal in *De Ira* as a

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reception of the *De Clementia*. The pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*, a near-contemporary source, refers to the poisoning of Britannicus at 45-6, and Octavia identifies Nero as the perpetrator of the crime that killed her brother at 110-14. In her discussion of the issue, Braund assumes that Nero was responsible for the murder, although, "given that the murder was carried out in secret, it was possible for the official version, that Britannicus died from an epileptic fit, to be credible" (2009: 17).

[24] A good example of such a passage from the *ad Polybium* would be the lengthy encomium at 12.3-14.1, where Seneca brushes past the reasons for his exile and focuses on Claudius' glory.

[25] There has not been a specific study of Seneca's imperial *exempla*, but Castagna 1991 looks more broadly at Seneca's interest in history. Gowing 2005: 67-81 and 96-101 specifically explores Seneca's deployment and interpretation of Republican history, although he notes the importance of individuals rather than events to the Senecan narrative. Roller 2001: 64-126 discusses, *inter alia*, Seneca's deployment of *exempla* as "a venerable mode of moral argumentation that would be familiar, and presumably persuasive, to his audience" (2001: 73), but does not address the imperial *exempla* independently.

helpful example of how to manage one's anger; he repaid the insults of the historian Timagenes about him and his family with nothing worse than a ban on entering the palace (3.23.4-8), and responded to Vedius Pollio's cruel act of feeding to lampreys a slave who broke a glass by smashing all his glasses, filling in his lamprey pit and giving him a good stern lecture (3.40.2-5). However, neither of these examples, nor indeed most of the positive ones that Seneca uses, recount an interaction of Augustus with a single member of his family. I define the imperial family broadly here to include such figures as Julius Caesar, who is praised for being merciful in victory, by burning letters he had intercepted from Pompey rather than using them against those to whom they had been addressed (*De Ira* 2.23.4). *De Ira* is addressed to Seneca's brother Novatus, and so in this case there is also no special connection between the addressee and the *exemplum*. Such brief examples are common throughout Seneca's work, and do not necessarily rely upon the identities of the subjects as members of the imperial family or their relationships with their family members.

The imperial family *as* family have a special prominence in the consolatory texts that provided the focus for chapters one and two.[26] In their role as bereaved parents or siblings, they provide models of endurance for emulation by the consolation's addressee, just as the official public image suggests that they should. However, these *exempla* are not as innocent as they appear. The underlying historical narrative often subverts the use to which the imperial family is put, and extends to moral issues beyond the management of grief. This program of subverting the imperial image is not apparent through overt

[26] I take a conservative approach to identifying what counts as a reference to the imperial family as family, and privilege passages where kinship terms appear. However, in cases where the relationships are fairly obvious (for instance, in *De Clementia* 1.1.6, where Seneca comments that nobody thinks of Augustus or Tiberius, but everyone looks to Nero as a model), I have taken the familial connection as read.

criticism, which would have been politically unwise at any point in Seneca's career. To illustrate the underlying ambiguity of Seneca's approach, I shall provide some close readings of the contexts in which *exempla* appear, and the various strategies through which they destabilize the public image of the imperial family's excellence. Through careful examination of what is said and what is *not* said in passages where Seneca chooses to use these kinds of examples, it becomes clear that the imperial family is actually an anti-*exemplum* – they are an excellent example of how *not* to manage one's familial relationships.[27] For all the shine on their public image, like every other imperfect human, they are unable to achieve happiness without perfect reason. For the Stoic, they cannot perform the social role Augustus created for them. Political ambition overtakes the pursuit of virtue as the imperial family's driving motivation.

I should take a moment here to briefly define what I mean by an anti-*exemplum*. Roller has identified four features of an incident that may be labelled a traditional *exemplum*: an action considered significant for the Roman community as a whole that somehow embodies social values; an audience of witnesses who observe and categorise the action; some form of commemoration of the deed; and encouragement for others to imitate the deed (2004: 4-5). Roller admits that *exempla* may in fact demonstrate characteristics not to be imitated and negative social qualities; he refers to these as negative examples. However, I believe that the term anti-*exemplum* fits these cautionary tales better, given that a central part of a traditional *exemplum* is its positive force and

[27] I disagree that the imperial family is not an example at all as opposed to an anti-*exemplum*. The passages I will shortly discuss all occur in exemplary contexts, where Seneca clearly deploys them to illustrate a moral lesson of some sort. This illustrative role leads me to conclude that the imperial family is meant to communicate a moral message, even if it is an example to be avoided rather than imitated.

worthiness of emulation.[28] The incidents to which I will apply this label seem completely contrary to those key values, and so I prefer the term anti-*exemplum* when discussing a passage whose clear message is that the behaviour recorded therein is to be avoided rather than replicated.

An anti-*exemplum* can gain its negative force from the role of politics within it. Seneca is generally pessimistic about the pursuit of political ambition in place of the pursuit of virtue, as we would expect; devoting one's life to anything other than achieving virtue was, in the Stoic understanding of things, a misguided and harmful choice. This concern did not make political engagement with the state impossible; indeed, Zeno's teaching on the subject, as Seneca outlines, was that a wise man should engage in state affairs unless something prevented him from doing so (*De Otio* 3.2).[29] However, public service had to remain subservient to the pursuit of virtue rather than becoming the primary goal.[30] The examples Seneca uses to explicitly illustrate these points are often based on political or military situations, and he is particularly fond of mentioning kings (rather than emperors) to drive his argument home. *De Beneficiis* 7.2.5-3.3. conjures up Alexander in the company of Cyrus, Cambyses and the other Persian kings, who were all obsessed with extending the bounds of their empires. Seneca contrasts them to the wise

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[28] Davis 1980 uses the term anti-*exemplum* to refer to places in Ovid's *Amores* where he "introduces *exempla* which seem appropriate at the outset but which he develops in such a way that their appropriateness is undercut" (415) or otherwise inverts the point of invoking a mythological *exemplum* to begin with. That term perfectly captures Ovid's mocking approach to the tropes of traditional love elegy. However, in my definition of an anti-*exemplum*, I believe that Seneca is always perfectly serious about the behaviour he warns his reader away from.

[29] Seneca then explains that three situations may prevent a wise man from being involved: the state is too corrupt to benefit from his assistance; the wise man does not have enough influence or power, and the state refuses his services; and the wise man is in too poor a state of health.

[30] Seneca's own reluctance to mention or defend his political career is notorious; as Syme puts it, "without the testimony of Tacitus, Seneca the statesman could hardly exist" (1958: 552). For more on Seneca's attitude to political participation, see Griffin 1995: 315-66.

man, who is untroubled by any turmoil (*sine tumultu*, 7.3.2) and does not feel the need to extend his power in such a way.

One might fairly ask whether an emperor can in fact aspire to follow Stoicism in the first place, or whether the demands of the position inherently rule out living in accordance with Stoic doctrine. It is not just the emperor who is affected by this, but his family as well; given the nature of the family as a tightly-interconnected and cooperative network, the condition of one family member has an impact on all. However, history helps us by providing the example of Marcus Aurelius, whose famous *Meditations* record his own Stoic journey towards virtue. If the wise man can serve the state under the right conditions, there is no reason that he cannot serve the state as emperor as well as anything else. However, one's focus must always remain the pursuit of virtue, not the attainment of power.

Political ambition causes destabilisation, which in turn means that the inner tranquillity necessary for sagehood cannot exist within an ambitious person's soul; ambition only begets more ambition (*De Brevitate Vitae* 17.5). Seneca explicitly addresses the point that political aspirations and activity can impede virtue by using examples from a historically safe distance rather than drawing them from events during the principate. However, understandably given the primarily political context, he does not address the role of the family in this process. Yet the rise of the importance of the imperial family makes this issue unavoidable, since the function of the family and the function of political activity are now intertwined. If political ambition destabilises the individual's quest for virtue, it follows that a family must lose its stability if it, too, becomes more concerned with obtaining power than virtue.

I have selected three case studies which demonstrate Seneca's use of the imperial family in the corpus as a whole to illustrate his main concern – that the imperial family's pursuit of power undermines the ethical education that it gives to its members and does not provide the emperor with a firm moral base. The deployment of the imperial family in the *ad Marciam* illustrates the functional difficulties that the imperial family experienced in day-to-day interaction, brought to light through their experience of death. The representation of Augustus and Julia in the *De Brevitate Vitae* and *De Clementia* reinforces the danger political ambition poses to familial relationships, and implies that Augustus' own identity as parent was less perfect than his public image suggested. Finally, the treatment of Gaius Caligula throughout Seneca's work demonstrates the dreadful consequences of growing up in a family devoted to power rather than virtue.

The Imperial Family in the *ad Marciam*

The imperial family plays a vital role in Seneca's consolatory strategy within the *ad Marciam*. At the beginning of the work, Seneca sets out the figures of two bereaved mothers, Octavia and Livia, as contrasting images of how one should and should not grieve. Seneca suggests he uses these women because of Marcia's personal friendship with Livia, and that her example will therefore be particularly persuasive (4.1). Later in the consolation, Seneca recalls a lengthy catalogue of famous men who have lost their children and grieved (12.6-15.4). Julius Caesar, Augustus and Tiberius all appear in that list. Seneca takes special pains to point out the effrontery of fortune: while the emperors can be born from gods and give birth to gods, they have no more control over their fate than other mortals (15.1).

Manning notes that the inclusion of Tiberius in the catalogue might be considered somewhat suspect. He comments that Seneca's choice "is perhaps not the most fortunate, since Tiberius' minister Sejanus was apparently responsible for the enforced suicide of Marcia's father and the ban on his books. Moreover Suetonius suggests that Tiberius was in any case lacking in paternal affection" (1981: 85). This is certainly true in terms of the political context of the consolation, yet Manning seems to imply that this mention of Tiberius is a careless slip on Seneca's part. I would contend that Seneca is perfectly aware that his inclusion of Tiberius is problematic, but on more than political grounds – he deliberately wishes to make the reader question Tiberius own failings within his family, not just with his sons but with his mother too. Indeed, the very way in which Seneca introduces Livia's bereavement deserves to be examined much more closely, as it is not as straightforward as it first appears.

To begin with, the fact that Seneca's two examples of grieving motherhood come from the imperial family immediately shows that it can contain both *exempla* and anti-*exempla*. He juxtaposes Octavia's immoderate grief over the death of her son Marcellus with Livia's more managed grief over the death of her son Drusus. The behaviour of the two women forms a strong contrast. Octavia spends her whole life as if she were at Marcellus' funeral (*talis per omnem vitam fuit qualis in funere*, 2.4), weeps, refuses to hear her son's name mentioned, see any reminder of him, or listen to anything composed in his honour. Livia also grieves, especially as she was not at Drusus' deathbed, but she continually speaks of him, keeps his picture by her, and cherishes both her own and other people's memories of him. Seneca's obvious point in picturing these two reactions to a son's death is to show Marcia her two possible options, and to encourage her to pick the

path of Livia. Yet the parallel explicitly demonstrates the potential for the imperial family to fail in its exemplary duty, as Octavia in this case serves as an anti-*exemplum*.

However, there is a problem in the juxtaposition of these women. Due to the vagaries of imperial succession, Livia and her son Tiberius directly profited from the death of Marcellus. Seneca explicitly acknowledges the political element in his portraits; he says that both women had lost young men who had a firm hope of becoming the future emperor (*utraque spe futuri principis certa*, 2.3), which obviously is a problem when there can only be one emperor at Rome. Moreover, one of Octavia's irrational responses to her grief especially targets Livia (2.5):

> Oderat omnes matres et in Liviam maxime furebat, quia videbatur ad illius filium transisse sibi promissa felicitas.
> She hated all mothers, and raged greatly against Livia, because the success promised to her seemed to have passed to the other woman's son.

It is impossible for Livia to offer comfort to the grieving Octavia as her sister-in-law. The political implications of Marcellus' death mean Octavia becomes poisoned against Livia, and indeed may make any comfort Livia could offer appear insincere. Ambition destabilises and undermines the effectiveness of the familial support network that should support Octavia in her mourning. Seneca deliberately constructs an awkward juxtaposition of the grieving mother of a dead man and the mother of the man who profited by that death.[31] Suddenly the *exemplum* becomes less compelling. The decision to create a mirrored pair of examples which are interlinked in this way, while a subtle

[31] Things become even more awkward if, as Cassius Dio claims, Livia was accused of causing Marcellus' death (53.33.4), and the anger that Seneca here attributes to Octavia implies her assumption that Livia was somehow involved. Dio's account notes that the accusations were the source of controversy, as Rome was suffering serious epidemics that killed many at the time of Marcellus' death. Velleius Paterculus makes no mention of rumours of poisoning in his account of Marcellus' death, although his is a very pro-Livian narrative (93; c.f. 75.2-3). Barrett 2002: 112 suggests that accusations of poisoning may have arisen from Livia's use of herbal remedies upon her family members. Watson 1995: 177 n.7 analyses how the evidence given by Cassius Dio fits into the trope of the wicked stepmother, and notes that Tacitus does *not* record the rumour, despite his overall inclination to make Livia fit the stereotype whenever possible.

choice, begins to destabilise the image of perfection that Seneca presents as he describes the behaviour of Livia that he would like Marcia to imitate. The fusion of the Julian and Claudian family trees creates a situation where one publically grieves for the loss of a family member, but is privately relieved at the removal of a rival. The assimilation of one's relatives' interests to one's own that should occur during the process of *oikeiōsis* simply cannot happen in such a competitive environment. The behaviour that Seneca would not like Marcia to imitate, the ambitious political manoeuvring that brought Livia's son to prominence, always hovers in the background of the *exemplum*.

The inclusion of Tiberius later in the catalogue of bereaved fathers is difficult, as Manning has noted, because of his troubled relationship with both his biological and adopted son. The passage in the catalogue concerning the Caesars reads as follows (15.1-3):

> Quid aliorum tibi funera Caesarum referam? quos in hoc mihi videtur interim violare fortuna ut sic quoque generi humano prosint, ostendentes ne eos quidem qui dis geniti deosque genituri dicantur sic suam fortunam in potestate habere quemadmodum alienam. Divus Augustus amissis liberis, nepotibus, exhausta Caesarum turba, adoptione desertam domum fulsit: tulit tamen tam fortiter quam cuius iam res agebatur cuiusque maxime intererat de dis neminem queri. Ti. Caesar et quem genuerat et quem adoptaverat amisit; ipse tamen pro rostris laudavit filium stetitque in conspectu posito corpore, interiecto tantummodo velamento quod pontificis oculos a funere arceret, et flente populo Romano non flexit vultum; experiendum se dedit Seiano ad latus stanti quam **patienter** posset suos perdere.
>
> What might I recall to you of the bereavements of other Caesars? Fortune seems to me in this to sometimes dishonour them, so that thus too they might benefit the human race, showing that not even they, who are said to be born of gods and give birth to gods, have their own fortune in their power, in the way that they have another's. The Divine Augustus, when he had lost his children and grandchildren, and the crowd of Caesars was exhausted, propped up the deserted house through adoption; however, he bore this as bravely as one who was already dealing with his own affairs, and to whom it was of great interest that nobody should complain about the gods. Tiberius Caesar lost both the one whom he begat and the one whom he adopted; however, he himself praised his son

> before the Rostra, and stood by the body, placed in full view, with only a veil placed in the way which protected the eyes of the *pontifex* from death, and did not turn his face from the tearful Roman people; he presented himself to Sejanus, standing by his side, as an example of how **patiently** he could lose his own.

Here Tiberius stands by the body of his biological son, Drusus; yet the death of his adopted son Germanicus, who is alluded to but not named, is excluded from this description of parental suffering. In some ways, this foregrounds the problematic presence of Sejanus at Drusus' coffin. Sejanus used Drusus' death to his advantage by pursuing the now widowed Livilla, and it was suggested that the two had been responsible for Drusus' murder by poison.[32] Tiberius' grief for his biological son is presented as sincere and devoted, but this then raises the question of why Seneca omits his reaction to Germanicus' death. Surely Tiberius could have provided two examples of how to endure parental grief bravely? This tension is strengthened by the fact that Tiberius appears at Drusus' state funeral, while Germanicus was not given such an honour. This decision on Tiberius' part caused considerable vexation and consternation among the people, if Tacitus is to be believed (3.3-6).

Suetonius gives us an alternative way to read this passage, and suggests that Tiberius had no paternal feeling for Germanicus *or* for Drusus – in fact, what Seneca reads as the emperor's bravery in difficult circumstances appears as callous disinterest to Suetonius (*Vita Tiberii* 52). The use of Tiberius as a model of grieving is further undermined by the rumoured historical circumstances under which these sons died – Drusus allegedly perished from poison, and Germanicus died in mysterious conditions

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[32] See Tacitus *Annales* 4.10 and Cassius Dio 57.22.1-3. While accusations of poison were prevalent under the empire, Tacitus in his discussion of the episode suggests that in this particular case there was well-founded contemporaneous justification for them. The revelation that Sejanus had been responsible for Drusus' death was apparently conveyed by Sejanus' ex-wife Apicata in a letter shortly after Sejanus' death; see Tacitus *Annales* 4.11 and Cassius Dio 58.11.6-7. Flower 2006: 171-2 argues that Tacitus' account of the premeditated murder involving both Sejanus and Livilla was influenced by Livilla's subsequent disgrace and erasure from the public record. See Pigoń 2001 for a discussion of Tacitus' use of rumour in his account of Drusus' death to denigrate Sejanus.

linked to witchcraft.[33] Moreover, Tiberius' relationship with Germanicus was notoriously difficult. Conflict arose between them when Tiberius succeeded to the principate and Germanicus began to behave in ways that suggested he might challenge his adoptive father's rule.[34] Tacitus even hints at contemporary rumours that Tiberius was in fact complicit in Germanicus' death (*Annales* 3.16). That Seneca chooses to allude to Germanicus' death but ignore Tiberius' reaction to it erases their awkward relationship from the text for the inattentive. For the alert ancient reader, the silence raises questions about whether Tiberius really handled the death of both his sons with quite the excellence that the text attributes to him. The choice of the word *patienter* to describe Tiberius' behaviour at Drusus' death might also be read as suggesting a somewhat less than ideal moral disposition, despite the way it models restrained grief here. *Patiens* can also imply that the person or thing described is firm or unyielding.[35] The modern temptation to translate *patienter* simply as the derivative 'patiently' obscures the alternative meanings of the word that a Roman reader would have accessed automatically – particularly for a father whose relationship with his sons was as difficult as Tiberius'.[36]

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[33] For Germanicus' death, see Tacitus *Annales* 2.69-73, Suetonius *Vita Tiberii* 52 and *Vita Gaii* 1-5.

[34] Particularly inflammatory was Germanicus' unauthorized trip to Egypt, as described by Tacitus at *Annales* 1.52.3-4 and 2.59.3. For a discussion of the ways in which these tensions manifested themselves, see Levick 1975: 31-2. The trial of Piso for poisoning Germanicus and the subsequent *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre*, in tandem with Tacitus' account of this period, provide striking illustrations of the animosity between Piso, acting as Tiberius' factotum, and Germanicus. For a discussion of issues raised by the *Senatus Consultum*, see vol. 120 of *The American Journal of Philology* (1999), edited by Cynthia Damon and Sarolta Takács, which is dedicated to the inscription.

[35] For instance, at Ovid *Amores* 1.14.25, Corinna's locks of hair are described as offering themselves to the curling irons *patienter*, implying not just submissive obedience but also endurance of the scorching heat they suffer. Similarly, at *Amores* 3.11.17, he complains that Corinna cannot tell him when he has not been stationed at her side *patienter*, presumably not just patiently, but also steadfastly and consistently (and indeed stoically). Seneca himself uses *patienter* in this same sense in Letter 67.3, when he reports a questioner asking whether it is good to be tortured bravely and to burn with a great mind and to be ill *patienter* ('*si bonum est' inquis 'fortiter torqueri et magno animo uri et patienter aegrotare'*). The parallel construction of *fortiter*, *magno animo* and *patienter* suggest a level of firmness invoked by *patienter* that the English 'patiently' does not accurately convey.

[36] Tiberius' strength in familial relationships seems to have been in fraternal connections; see chapter two, page 79 for some further discussion. The entry for *patienter* in the TLL appears to be strongly influenced

However, one could argue that there is nothing suspicious in Seneca's decision not to mention Tiberius' loss of Germanicus. Perhaps Drusus' death provided enough dramatic interest for this passage; perhaps the progress of Germanicus' remains through Italy to Rome seemed too far removed from the ordinary circumstances of the death of Marcia's son to be useful; perhaps it is an accidental omission. However, given the care Seneca puts into the structure of his compositions, I am very sceptical of any interpretation that blames omissions on 'accidental' authorial decisions. I am also doubtful that Seneca would choose to pass over another excellent example of fortitude in not one but two losses of the sort that Marcia had suffered, if using Germanicus' death for that purpose had been a credible alternative. The detail in which Seneca otherwise outlines the losses of the imperial family would lead us to expect similar detail here, rather than simply a parenthetical reference to Germanicus as "the one [Tiberius] adopted". That silence means that we must consider the impact of the elision of Germanicus from the text, which serves primarily to highlight the fact that Tiberius' mourning for him may not have been as praiseworthy as it was for Drusus.

Tiberius' appearance at this stage in the consolation, with undertones of skulduggery and troublesome relationships, brings another relationship to mind – that between Livia and Tiberius, a living mother and son. Seneca does not actually describe the relationship between mother and son at any point in the consolation, despite noting that Livia gave up grieving publicly for Drusus out of respect both for Augustus and Tiberius (3.2), and that Tiberius was one of the people who gave Livia solace after Drusus' death, in his case through his *pietas* (4.2). One could argue that Seneca does not

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by English cognate 'patiently', although some of the examples cited do have undertones of firmness and strength; the synonym *fortiter* is the one area of the entry where this strand of meaning does appear to be recognised.

focus on their relationship because the consolation is not interested in how living people interact. However, the philosopher Areus' description of Livia's relationship with Drusus suggests it was full of pleasant intercourse and intimacy (*convictus filii tui occursusque iucundos*, 5.4), and that Livia should take consolation in remembering these moments. The ambiguity of *filii tui*, the unnamed son, leaves a momentary discursive space to remember that Livia had two sons, and that her memories of one were less full of these moments.

The relationship between Tiberius and Livia, certainly after Augustus' death, was not particularly close; it was sufficiently strained for Tacitus to feel it credible to report that he did not even attend her funeral (*Annales* 5.1-2).[37] While Seneca does not explicitly comment on the state of relations between Tiberius and Livia, it is naive to suggest that the relationships between other mothers and sons who are mentioned in the consolation would not have been at the back of a reader's mind, given that there is so much glowing praise of the relationship between Livia and Drusus, and between Marcia and her son. For instance, *ad Marciam* 12.1-2 describes the joys and pleasure that Marcia gained from raising her son before his death, while 24.1-2 emphasises the amount of time that Marcia and her son spent together, far beyond what might usually be expected from a man of his age. By contrast, it appears that Livia's relationship with Tiberius brought her neither the pleasures she experienced with Drusus, nor the close intimacy that Seneca describes here and in his relationship with his own mother in the *ad Helviam* (15.1).

What the *ad Marciam* presents us with, then, is an imperial family that can show proper respect to its dead, but has difficulty in creating adequate relationships between

[37] It is worth noting that Tacitus explicitly models the relationship between Nero and Agrippina on the relationship between Tiberius and Livia, and creates many parallels between the two relationships beginning with calling Tiberius "Nero" at *Annales* 1.5 when he takes on the Principate.

those members who are still alive. The mechanism of *oikeiōsis* has not created the kind of close relationship that exists between Seneca and Helvia, or Helvia and her sister. Livia and Tiberius both display correct attitudes of mourning for their dead sons, but Seneca skims over more challenging questions of whether those relationships were always so ideal. This could be defended as Seneca tweaking his *exempla* to his subject and responding to Marcia's condition and needs. However, that explanation does not remove the undercurrents of tension in the cases that Seneca chooses to deploy – especially given the suspicious nature of the deaths of Tiberius' two sons and Livia's profit from the death of Octavia's son.

The complex nature of the relationships between mothers and sons (and other people's mothers) in the *ad Marciam* serves as a template of how to look for unspoken information in Seneca's writing about the imperial family. The relationships here are perfect only in death. The way they functioned in life, under all the pressures of a political dynasty working out how to shape itself, is never mentioned. Livia's perfect reaction as a mother to the death of Drusus is complicated by the reader's knowledge of her difficult relationship with the still-living Tiberius. It seems that only death can free these relatives from the external concerns of politics that beset them. Only in mourning can their examples be truly impeccable.

Augustus and Julia

The relationship between Augustus and his daughter Julia appears throughout Seneca's philosophical prose. I mentioned the predicament that Julia's adultery caused for her father's program of moral improvement earlier; yet after his daughter's

conviction, despite her misconduct and its breach of the imperial family's respectable façade, Augustus continued to portray himself as an ideal *paterfamilias*.[38] Examining how Seneca portrays the relationship between father and daughter will show how even the supposedly ideal behaviour of Augustus that he praises is undermined by his presentation of the material.

De Brevitate Vitae, written to Seneca's father-in-law Paulinus, explicitly mentions Augustus' relationship with Julia.[39] The work's main aim is to argue that though only a brief span has been allotted to man, it is up to him to decide how to use that time justly and to best effect. *Divus Augustus* appears as a man who longed to give up public affairs and spend his time in leisure. The promise of time for himself sustained him through the trials and tribulations that kept surfacing and occupying his attention (4.1-6). Seneca includes the matter of Julia in a list of the various troubles with which Augustus had to contend (4.5-6):

> Dum Alpes pacat immixtosque mediae paci et imperio hostes perdomat, dum ultra Rhenum et Euphraten et Danuvium terminos movet, in ipsa urbe Murenae, Caepionis, Lepidi, Egnati, aliorum in eum mucrones acuebantur. Nondum horum effugerat insidias: filia et tot nobiles iuvenes adulterio velut sacramento adacti iam infractam aetatem territabant Iullusque et iterum timenda cum Antonio mulier. Haec ulcera cum ipsis membris absciderat: alia subnascebantur; velut grave multo sanguine corpus parte semper aliqua rumpebatur.
>
> While he was pacifying the Alps and conquering enemies who were settled in the middle of peace and the empire, while he was moving borders beyond even the Rhine and the Euphrates and the Danube, in the very city itself the daggers of Murena, Caepio, Lepidus, Egnatius and others were being sharpened against him.

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[38] The sources that discuss Julia's fall are Velleius Paterculus 2.100.2-5; Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 7.149, 21.9; Tacitus, *Annales* 1.53.1, 3.24.2, 4.44.3; Suetonius, *Vita Divi Augusti* 65.1, *Vita Tiberii* 11.4; Cassius Dio 55.12-16; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 2.5. For a discussion of what facts about Julia's fall can safely be assumed from these sources, see Ferrill 1980. For an analysis of the erasure of Julia's memory from Rome after her fall, see Flower 2006: 163-7.

[39] Griffin 1992: 401-7 defends the hypothesis, and only the hypothesis, that *De Brevitate Vitae* was written in A.D. 55, although she does not insist on a firm dating. She thinks it sufficient to say that the work was composed between mid-A.D. 48 and mid-A.D. 55. For the evidence of Paulinus' identity as Paulina's father, see Griffin 1962: 106 n.30.

> He had not yet escaped from these men's plots – his daughter and so many noble young men, bound by adultery as if by a sacred oath, alarmed his already exhausted old age, as did Iullus, and a woman with an Antony who had to be feared again. He had cut off these sores with the very limbs: others sprang up afterwards; it was like a body, heavy with much blood, which is always being torn open in some part.

In this passage, Julia's adultery is explicitly paralleled to plots against Augustus' life, and her sexual behaviour is analogous to a threat to public order.[40] The word *filia* is prominent in this passage; it is impossible to ignore that it is Augustus' daughter who causes him such troubles. The familial relationship between the two is made explicit, as is its dysfunctional nature and Julia's own moral deficiency.

There are three important points to make here. Firstly, Augustus wishes to be free of public life, and indeed the thought of this freedom gives him a sweet consolation, albeit an empty one, in the course of his duties (4.2). Seneca knows that however much Augustus claims to want to retire, he will never actually get around to it, as he believes that everything depends upon him for its well-being (*omnia videbat ex se uno pendentia*, 4.4). The greatest of the obstacles standing between the *princeps* and his leisure is martial in nature, in that he must tackle threats to the empire and assassination plots. Yet Augustus' desire to retire from these trials is complicated by the fact that one of the conspirators against his life, in Seneca's account, is his own daughter; their interests, rather than being aligned through *oikeiōsis*, are at such extreme odds that she is actually a threat to his life. Augustus' primary concern with his political station has completely reversed the relationship that should exist between the two relatives. While the *princeps* may have desired to be released from public affairs, freedom from politics would not

[40] Modern scholarship sometimes gets overexcited about the political element of Julia's behaviour. I agree with Severy's assessment that "we do not need to invent a separate political conspiracy cloaked as a sexual scandal to understand why Augustus called this treason" (2003: 182). For a debunking of the evidence used to support such political readings, see Ferrill 1980.

have freed him from his daughter. True, the consequences of her adulterous behaviour would have been mitigated, as they would not have reflected badly on the program of moral legislation her father had instituted. Yet retirement from public life would not have spared Augustus from her. We cannot disentangle ourselves from the web of relationships within which we find ourselves. Even the most powerful man in the world cannot evade the consequences of these connections with other humans.

The second point arises from the function of the imagery in this passage. Augustus is imagined as a surgeon cutting off the ulcerated limbs of a patient, an act which removes the source of the problem as well as the infection. Williams comments that Seneca "draws here on the familiar analogy of the state as the 'body politic'. In imperial contexts the emperor is the master of that body, his subjects its *membra*" (2003: 144). This is certainly an important element of the image, but again, there is more at stake here. In using the analogy of the 'body politic', Seneca places it in direct opposition with the other common analogy that could be evoked by the language of this passage, that of the *pater patriae*. The inclusion of the word *filia* in such close proximity to the *ulcera* increases the likelihood that such an allusion would pass through a reader's mind. The interplay between these two images, both evoked through associative language rather than explicit discourse, problematises the surface image of a wise ruler that the medical analogy suggests. While it may be right for a doctor to undertake drastic amputation (the severity of which is suggested by the emphatic use of *ipsis membris*), for the *pater patriae* to take equally drastic measures raises more complex ethical questions. What does it mean for Seneca to say that the *pater patriae* cut off his daughter like an ulcerated

limb? And what does it mean if the *pater patriae*, who is supposed to exude fatherly compassion and concern for his subjects, can undertake this action?

The relationship between a parent and child is very different than that between a doctor and his patient's body; there is no sense of mutual concern or kinship connection between a doctor and patient. Indeed, following a description of the *pater patriae* in *De Clementia*, Seneca pictures what a father's reaction to being required to perform such drastic surgery should be (1.14.3):

> Tarde sibi pater membra sua abscidat, etiam cum absciderit, reponere cupiat, et in abscidendo gemat cunctatus multum diuque.
>
> A father would slowly cut away his own limbs from himself, and would even desire to replace them when he had cut them off, and during the cutting he would groan, delaying long and often.

This passage comes in the middle of a discussion of the duties of a good parent, and thus of a good *princeps* (1.14.1-2); since the *princeps* has been given the role of *pater patriae*, he should look to the relationship between parents and children and the obligations inherent within it for guidance on how to manage his rule. Seneca does not here claim that the *pater patriae* is incapable of performing the difficult action of amputation, but rather that it will be a last resort, slowly done, reluctantly, and with a desire to undo the surgery. In the *De Brevitate* passage, however, Augustus actually does *more* than he needs too – he does not just cut off the sores (*ulcera*), but also the limbs they are attached to (*cum ipsis membris*)! Not only does Augustus go about his actions with medical detachment rather than fatherly concern, he even goes beyond what would be strictly necessary to restore health. The only concern that Augustus feels in the *Brevitate Vitae* is for his own leisure, which he longs to obtain; he does not display the agonising consideration over each action that Seneca sketches in *De Clementia*. The interaction

between the two images, then, raises difficult questions for both Augustus' role as a father to Julia and as a father to the state. He behaves in a manner that is more fitting for a disinterested surgeon than someone bound by familial obligations and ties of love. Political expediency has conquered paternal affection.

Finally, at the opening of this section of the *De Brevitate Vitae*, Seneca deliberately refers to Augustus as *divus* (4.2).[41] This may not seem so strange on first glance, as *divus* was one of Augustus' frequently used honorific titles. However, it is once again necessary to remember that *De Brevitate Vitae* was written within a Stoic framework, and that the text includes explicit doctrinal discussion of the proper way of spending one's life.[42] The ascription of divinity to Augustus immediately before a catalogue of his woes, including his problems with his daughter, becomes double-edged. Stoicism did not describe mortals as divine, and the conventional gods are instead used as ciphers to express the universal divinity of reason. The property of divinity, from a purely Stoic perspective, belongs only to that which is perfect reason; even the Stoic sage does not aspire to be divine.

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[41] It was "the convention in official documents and early imperial prose that *divus* and not *deus* is conjoined with the imperial name" (Wardle 1997: 337). However, as Wardle's work on Valerius Maximus has shown, authors could use considerable flexibility in deciding which word to use, and pushed the boundaries of the convention. Gradel has significantly reformulated the importance of the word *divus*, arguing that according to the etymology put forward by Varro at the time of the award of the title to Julius Caesar, *divi* were eternal gods rather than men made gods; by the time of Cassius Dio, due to the common apotheosis of emperors, *divi* had come to be the lowest in the divine pantheon, so that Servius later wondered why Varro had got the two words confused (2002: 63-7). The semantic negotiation that is underway in this period makes the slippage between *deus* and *divus* work in Seneca's favour; as *divi* at this period had not yet become a subset of inferior divinities but were still an elite group of *dei*, Seneca does not need to 'bump up' Augustus' rank for the implied parallel with the Stoic *Deus* to function.

[42] For *De Brevitate Vitae* as a Stoic text, see Williams 2003:18-25 and Griffin 1995: 317-21; as Griffin correctly notes, while the text may not specifically recommend Stoic philosophy over any other sort of philosophy, the general argument it makes is Stoic in outline.

The conventional apotheosis of a Roman emperor, then, presents a locus of potential dissidence in the narrative of *De Brevitate Vitae*.[43] On the superficial level, Seneca does nothing more than pay normal lip-service to the title awarded to the first *princeps* on the occasion of his death and refers to Augustus with the nomenclature to which he is entitled. He is also not necessarily implying he believes Augustus is now divine.[44] However, on the Stoic level, naming Augustus *divus* carries a heavy ironic weight, as that ascription is followed by a catalogue of woes that clearly cause him suffering and from which he vainly wishes to escape. He does not, in fact, possess the divine reason that would make him truly happy. His occupation with earthly and political conflict means that his soul can never achieve the tranquillity needed for such equilibrium. Indeed, the desire Augustus repeatedly expresses to have leisure and to be unaffected by the actions of others can be interpreted as showing just how far he is from true happiness. Moreover, Seneca displays the exact opposite of the model he has constructed elsewhere, of the pursuit of virtue sustained by one's family – instead of supporting her father, a daughter adds to the sources of his mental distress and pulls him further away from happiness. The imperfect reality of family life precludes Augustus from obtaining his goals.

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[43] I take the word dissidence from Rudich, who uses the idea of the "rhetoricizing mentality" to explore the interplay between various levels of interpretations in various Neronian texts, including the works of Seneca (1997:5-11). While I do not wish to follow him in proposing that the ambiguity here is a result of Seneca's "rhetoricized mentality", which he describes as being "indifferent to truth and falsity and resist[ing] any attempt at consistency" (1997: 7), I follow his suggestion that "when a given text is susceptible to any political interpretation, it may betray something of its author's dissident sensibilities, be it deliberate or not" (1997: 11).

[44] For basic background on Roman apotheosis, see Beard, North and Price 1998: 140-9. Feeney 1998: 111 suggests that the existence of the *Apocolocyntosis* shows "that the [imperial] cult was a vigorous and muscular institution which could provoke and sustain interrogation and debate" rather than that there was elite scepticism about the custom. Cole suggests that Seneca's refusal to acknowledge Claudius' apotheosis is actually a means to retain "a meaningful incentive to extend to the young princeps Nero" (2006: 176); by not allowing the currency of apotheosis to be devalued by Claudius' supposed ascension, the ultimate reward of achieving divinity can remain an effective carrot.

In *De Brevitate Vitae* Augustus appears to provide some examples of the sorts of things that can distract us from spending our lives in the best possible way. It is telling that his relationship with his daughter should appear in that category, albeit couched in political terms – not because it implies one should avoid one's relations as distractions from leisure, but because of Seneca's implicit criticism of the way Julio-Claudian familial relationships have become defined by political machinations. When competition for dominance in the state becomes the primary way in which a *filia* relates to her *pater*, there is no stable ethical base between parent and child of the sort Seneca portrays in his other works.[45] Political motivations have overwhelmed Augustus' reactions to Julia's behaviour. It should come as no surprise that Augustus' ethical equilibrium is thus undermined rather than stabilised.

The other passage I wish to examine occurs in the *De Clementia*, a work written to Nero on the benefits of that virtue in a ruler. There are already some problems with the use of Augustus as an *exemplum* in a work dedicated to the ruling emperor; as Braund has noted, "although Seneca in some ways presents Augustus as a model ruler, he also more or less explicitly indicates Nero's inbuilt superiority to his ancestor" (2009: 63). Seneca is governed by his addressee's character, and so cannot afford to set up Augustus as a model who still has something to teach; in Braund's words, "Seneca introduces the *exemplum* of Augustus as a role model for Nero – but one that he has already surpassed" (2009: 64). This explanation addresses the question of Augustus' inadequacies as a ruler, but not the issues that are tacitly raised in this text about familial relationships. Of course, in terms of relationships between parents and children, Seneca still has to be on his guard

[45] It is worth noting that Augustus himself used Julia as a pawn politically in marrying her to Agrippa and then to Tiberius. Here, too, the machinations of empire intervened where they should not have done.

– as first Nero's tutor and then his advisor, he would have known of the tensions in his charge's relationship with his mother that eventually led to her murder.[46]

The locus of textual ambivalence I wish to focus on arises at 1.15, which discusses Augustus' involvement in the case of Tarius, presumably a member of the senatorial order, who discovered that his son was plotting to kill him. The details of the *exemplum* undoubtedly show Augustus in a good light, but the underlying associations create problematic connections between the behaviour of Augustus and that of Tarius in this difficult situation. On discovering his son's intention, Tarius did not go to extremes. Instead, after convening a *consilium*, he decided to keep his son in exile at Massilia and kept his allowance the same as it had been while he was in Rome (*annua illi praestitit, quanta praestare integro solebat*, 1.15.2). Tarius invited Augustus to attend the *consilium* where he made this decision. Augustus came to Tarius' house rather than insisting that the proceedings were heard at his own home and thus did not usurp Tarius' authority as a father to decide on the best course of action (1.15.3). He also suggested that votes should be cast in writing, so that nobody should be influenced by his opinion (1.15.4). The account of the incident closes thus (15.7-16.1):

> Mollissimo genere poenae contentum esse debere patrem dixit in filio adulescentulo impulso in id scelus, in quo se, quod proximum erat ab innocentia, timide gessisset; debere illum ab urbe et a parentis oculis submoveri. O dignum, quem in consilium patres advocarent! O dignum, quem coheredem innocentibus liberis scriberent! Haec clementia principem decet; quocumque venerit, mansuetiora omnia faciat!
>
> [Augustus] said that that a father ought to be content with the most gentle kind of punishment against a son driven to such a crime, in which he had carried himself

[46] In the question of dating the dialogue, Braund emphasises the importance of Nero's age, which is stated as being eighteen at the time of writing. This means the dialogue was composed between 15th December, A.D. 55, and 14th December, A.D. 56 (2009: 16). Although this dating causes some discomfort, as it is after the death of Britannicus in early A.D. 55, there is no textual justification for massaging the date so it is earlier. Agrippina was murdered in A.D. 59.

> timidly, which was very close to innocence; he should be removed from the city and from his parent's eyes. O worthy man, whom fathers called into their *consilium*! O worthy man, whom they made co-heir with their innocent children![47] This clemency is fitting for the *princeps*; wherever he goes, may he make everything more gentle![48]

Above all, Seneca praises Augustus' willingness to think the best of the son who has contemplated committing one of the crimes that was viewed with utmost loathing in Roman society.[49] Augustus views the betrayal of the father that parricide involves, and the subversion of the ultimate power of *patria potestas*, with mercy; the son does not deserve the traditional punishment of being sewn into a sack with a dog, a cockerel, a snake and a monkey, and being thrown into the Tiber. Indeed, the leniency of Tarius towards his son in allowing him to live in a relatively civilised part of the empire seems exceptionally generous, especially given that he continues to sustain his son financially at the same level as when he was living in Rome, in a region where his purchasing power would be greatly increased. Mercy in this case seems to involve a large dose of the benefit of the doubt, and an avoidance of scandal insofar as was possible. As Seneca comments, with a father this generous, nobody would think that the condemned man was actually guilty (15.2).

In this vignette, Augustus is charming in his modesty and reticence to take the lead, and lets a father's emotions lead the way in the case of the son who has threatened his life. On the surface, Augustus' behaviour is completely to his credit – yet there is an undertone of accusation here. Augustus himself did not replicate Tarius' behaviour when

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[47] The practice of making the emperor coheir to a will is found, for instance, at Petronius, *Satyricon* 76.2 and Tacitus, *Agricola* 43.4. Braund comments that "the practice of naming the emperor as coheir was designed to ensure that at least part of one's legacy would reach one's blood-heirs" (2009: 327).

[48] Braund observes that "it seems important to translate *clementia* as 'clemency' – an unusual word in English (the *OED* entry is very short), more unusual than 'mercy' or 'pardon' – because the Roman concept of *clementia* has no exact equivalent in modern western culture" (2009: 30). I follow her lead.

[49] Seneca provides a portrait of how a man should condemn a parricide to the traditional punishment at *De Ira* 1.16.5. For further discussions of *parricidium* in Roman law and society, see Cloud 1971, Lassen 1992 and Harries 2007: 15-17.

he was confronted with Julia's adultery. Tarius is an *exemplum* of merciful behaviour towards children, and Augustus is meant to further illustrate *clementia* through his own conduct in this particular situation. Any contemporary reader, however, would know that his response to Julia's crime was far harsher.

Adultery did not occupy the same category of seriousness in Roman consciousness as parricide – after all, it was only Augustus' own *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* that decreed cases of adultery should be tried before a *quaestio*, a court which investigated crimes against the state such as treason, corruption and parricide.[50] Augustus' reasons for making adultery a crime equivalent to these offences are not entirely clear, although the law did also specify that adultery with a woman from the imperial family was automatically classed as *maiestas*. There are fairly obvious strategic reasons for this classification, but this political motivation may explain why Augustus' reaction to his own daughter's transgression of these self-imposed rules showed none of the clemency he was able to show to Tarius' son. Admittedly, Julia had (allegedly) committed the crime she was accused of, where Tarius' son had stopped short of consummation, which is an important juridical distinction. However, the Romans seem to have viewed intent to commit criminal activity of this sort as equal to actually carrying out the action, as the multiple cases recorded in Tacitus of people executed for their intentions to overthrow the emperor ably attest, so the line in between intent and execution is fluid enough to permit the parallel between Julia and Tarius' son to stand.[51]

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[50] Richlin comments that the "alignment of what is essentially a civil or victimless crime with crimes of violence should be noted as an impractical touch and a serious weakness in Augustus' approach to moral legislation" (1981: 381). Harries 2007: 14-18 describes the relationship between the *iudicia publica* and the *quaestiones*, as well as the attempts from Sulla onward to rationalise how *quaestiones* actually worked.

[51] Tacitus' comment on Tiberius' approach to prosecution seems most relevant here: "for he brought back the law of treason into use, whose name was the same among the ancients, but different things had come under its judgements then, for instance the betrayal of the the army or insurrection of the people, in short

However, Augustus' response to Julia's actions was to have her exiled to Pandateria, a tiny island off the coast of Campania, where she was forbidden to drink wine or enjoy any sort of luxury, and without any visitors who had not been approved by her father first (Suetonius *Vita Divi Augusti* 65). After five years of this restricted confinement, Julia was moved to the mainland and treated somewhat more leniently, but was never formally recalled from exile. This is a far cry from the kind of civilised lifestyle that Tarius' son was allowed to live in Massilia, bankrolled by his father and without limits placed on his movements. Thus this *exemplum*, with all its associative echoes, provides an indication that Augustus was not a perfect parent himself, even though his behaviour around the familial problems of others may have been exemplary.

Seneca's discussion of Augustus and Julia introduces a new element into my argument. For the first time, we see the realities of messy, complicated and imperfect every-day life juxtaposed with both the idealised political image presented by the *princeps* and the idealised family that Seneca discusses in the *consolationes* and the *De Matrimonio*. The conflict between Augustus and Julia represents a stage in moral development which should be worked through – that is, the assimilation of the interests of parent and child to each other as part of *oikeiōsis*. However, it is demonstrably clear that Augustus is stuck in this phase and cannot move beyond it. During an individual's life, she will encounter various shortcomings and imperfections in her lived experience

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deeds that threatened treason to the state of the Roman people: [among the ancients] deeds were accused, words were unpunished" (*nam legem maiestatis reduxerat, cui nomen apud veteres idem, sed alia in iudicium veniebant, si quis proditione exercitum aut plebem seditionibus, denique male gesta re publica maiestatem populi Romani minuisset: facta arguebantur, dicta inpune erant*, 1.72). Tacitus uses Tiberius' resurrection of the treason laws as his first example of words and intentions being sufficient for punishment, a theme which he continues throughout the *Annales*.

with her family; Seneca uses Augustus and Julia to model the kind of tensions, albeit magnified, that one needs to overcome on the path to virtue.

The Troubling Presence of Gaius Caligula

The final member of the Julio-Claudian dynasty to whom I now turn is Gaius Caligula. My decision arises partly because of what I have labelled his troubling presence in Seneca's works, "troubling" because of the unexpected dominance of Caligulan appearances in comparison to other Julio-Claudians. In a tally of substantive mentions made of Julio-Claudians, either as *exempla*, anti-*exempla* or characters in an anecdote, Gaius appears sixteen times.[52] This is almost on par with Augustus, who appears fifteen times, and far overtakes Tiberius, who is only mentioned nine times. Not all of these passages are related directly to Gaius' relationship with his own family, and his prominence as an anti-*exemplum* comes as much from his excessive and eccentric behaviour as anything else – for instance, at *De Ira* 1.20.8-9, Seneca recalls with some relish how Gaius became so angry when thunder disrupted a performance of pantomimists that he challenged Jove to a fight. Rudich writes that Seneca's tone of "particular disgust and outrage" in discussions of Gaius "is not surprising as regards the personality of that prince and the intimate knowledge of him Seneca must have possessed" (1997: 22). However, Seneca does not just invoke Gaius for the sake of his

[52] In compiling my catalogue of examples, I omitted passages where a Julio-Claudian was mentioned purely as a dating mechanism, for instance "in the reign of so-and-so", and similar passages where they did not play any significant role.

notoriety, to serve as an easy moralistic target – his presence as an anti-*exemplum* deserves further study.[53]

Gaius is often linked to families in some way, for instance in the anecdote in which he taunts his friend Asiaticus Valerius for his wife's inferior conduct during sex (*De Constantia* 18.2). However, I will focus on how he is portrayed solely in relation to his own family, which is featured in four of the passages in which he appears. There are good historical reasons for their prominence. While Seneca may use him to demonstrate inappropriate modes of behaviour, Gaius took considerable care to repair the reputation of his family when he became *princeps*. Germanicus' family needed rehabilitation. His posterity was understandably neglected because of his own indiscreet behaviour which seemed to threaten Tiberius' position, and his widow Agrippina's subsequently tense relationship with the emperor. Gaius did his best to remedy the situation and honour the memory of his deceased relatives; he marked this change of imperial policy immediately after Tiberius' death by recovering the bones of his mother and brother from the islands on which they had died and interring the remains in the Mausoleum of Augustus.[54] By highlighting the problematic aspects of Gaius' relationship with his family, Seneca implicitly criticises this agenda and the façade that Gaius tried to construct around his family.[55]

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[53] Gowing observes that "if in talking about a character from the past Seneca preserves a memory of that character, in not talking about someone he denies him or her memory" (2005:76). In the case of Gaius, the preservation of his actions in memory through Seneca's writings must indicate some motive for doing so on Seneca's part.

[54] Suetonius, *Vita Gaii* 15.1 and Cassius Dio 59.3.5. For more on Gaius' program of rehabilitation, see Ginsburg 2006: 65-7.

[55] Seneca's criticisms of Gaius' behaviour do not appear to fall only on the emperor's acts during the latter part of his reign. One of the major passages of criticism, which I will shortly discuss, deals with Gaius' response to his sister Drusilla's death in A.D. 38, only a year after his assumption of the principate; I think it is fair to say that Seneca's attitude to the entirety of Gaius' reign is a hostile one.

A revealing appearance of Gaius and his family occurs in *De Beneficiis* and describes a less-than-ideal consequence of the relationship between him and his parents (4.31.2):

> "Quare C. Caesarem orbi terrarum praefecit, hominem sanguinis humani avidissimum, quem non aliter fluere in conspectus suo iubebat, quam si ore excepturus esset?" Quid ergo? Tu hoc illi datum existimas? Patri eius Germanico datum, avo proavoque et ante hos aliis non minus claris viris, etiam si privati paresque aliis vitam exegerunt.
>
> "Why did [Providence] put Gaius Caesar in charge of the sphere of the worlds, a man most greedy for human blood, which he used to order to flow in his sight just as if he was about to receive it into his own mouth?" What now? You think that this was given to that man? It was given to his father Germanicus, and to his grandfather and great-grandfather, and to those before them, no less glorious men, even if they lived out their lives as private citizens and equal to others.

The purpose of the passage where this comment appears is to censure the honour given to unworthy people solely because of their illustrious forebears. Seneca continues with a particularly grotesque example of a candidate for the consulship whom Liberalis, the addressee of the *De Beneficiis*, supported because of his ancestry despite knowing about the man's proclivity for consuming menstrual blood. Indeed, Seneca makes a deliberate linguistic link between this practice and Gaius, by saying that the man would wait for the blood with gaping mouth (*ore hiante*), thus echoing Gaius' presumed desire to taste the blood he ordered to flow. The surface reading of this passage is clear – Gaius got to where he was supposed to be because of who his parents were, and who their parents were, as his own character was decidedly lacking in merit.[56]

The family is not without responsibility for the way that Gaius has turned out, given the approach Seneca takes to the family elsewhere and the ethical education that the family is supposed to provide to its members. Gaius could have had the kinds of

[56] Farney 2007: 21 notes that family identity was a way of providing a distinctive marker to a candidate for election even during the Republic, so that "a voter could expect or assume that a man's clan or background indicated certain character traits".

characteristics that would have made him worthy of ruling the world – but his family did not shape him in the same way that it had his father, his grandfather and his greatgrandfather.[57] They could have served as good models of virtue for him to follow, but the process through which he could have successfully emulated them did not occur. The family, in this case, did *not* serve as a place of moral instruction. Instead it functioned as a political stepping stone. As we have seen, the realities of political competition obstructed the relationships between Tiberius and Germanicus and between Octavia and Livia; Augustus' position as emperor effectively destroyed his relationship with Julia. Now, the imperial family has not only failed to develop a good character in Gaius, but actively promotes him to power despite his considerable failures. The prioritisation of political advancement over the consideration of moral worth was responsible for Gaius' progress, despite his unsuitability for the position of responsibility he was given.

However, Seneca not only condemns Gaius' reliance on his ancestors and their failure to properly prepare him for rule, but also his own behaviour within the network of familial relationships, which, as I have shown in previous chapters, is a key part of how we advance our progress towards virtue. The most extensive condemnation of Gaius' behaviour comes in the *ad Polybium*, when Seneca condemns his reaction to his sister Drusilla's death. It is worth quoting the passage in full (17.4-6):

> C. Caesar amissa sorore Drusilla, is homo qui non magis dolere quam gaudere principaliter posset, conspectum conversationemque civium suorum profugit, exsequiis sororis suae non interfuit, iusta sorori non praestitit, sed in Albano suo tesseris ac foro †et pervocatis et† huiusmodi aliis occupationibus acerbissimi funeris elevabat mala. Pro pudor imperii! principis Romani lugentis sororem alea

[57] I would argue that Seneca does not condemn Gaius' character outright here, but implies the potential for things to have been otherwise based upon his illustrious ancestors. That such potential has not been fulfilled makes Gaius' failings even more tragic.

> solacium fuit! Idem ille Gaius furiosa inconstantia modo barbam capillumque summittens modo Italiae ac Siciliae oras errabundus permetiens et numquam satis certus utrum lugeri vellet an coli sororem, eodem omni tempore quo templa illi constituebat ac pulvinaria eos qui parum maesti fuerant crudelissima adficiebat animadversione; eadem enim intemperie animi adversarum rerum ictus ferebat, qua secundarum elatus eventu super humanum intumescebat modum. Procul istud exemplum ab omni Romano sit viro, luctum suum aut intempestivis avocare lusibus aut sordium ac squaloris foeditate inritare aut alienis malis oblectare minime humano solacio.
>
> Gaius Caesar, when his sister Drusilla had died, that man, who in the first place was not able to grieve rather than rejoice, fled from the view and conversation of his citizens; he did not attend her funeral, or offer the funeral offerings to her, but he was lessening the evils of that most bitter funeral in his Alban home with dice and gaming board and other pastimes of this kind. For shame of the empire! Dice were the consolation of the Roman emperor as he grieved for his sister! That same Gaius in frantic inconstancy, now growing his beard and hair long, now traversing the coasts of Italy and Sicily as a wanderer, and never quite sure if he wished his sister to be mourned or worshiped, during the whole time that he was founding temples and shrines to her, afflicted those who were insufficiently sad with the most cruel punishment; for he was bearing the blows of adverse things in that same intemperance of mind with which, raised up by the occurrence of favourable things, he swelled up beyond human measure. May this example be far away from every Roman man, either to remove his grief with untimely games, or to aggravate it with the filth of humiliation and squalor, or to soften it with the evils of others, not a human comfort at all.

The *ad Polybium* uses Gaius as an anti-*exemplum* of how to manage one's grief on the death of a sibling, but also shows how his relationship with Drusilla is unbalanced. He does not give her the proper funeral rites, but founds temples to her supposed divinity.[58] Again, the theme of misapplied divinity appears in criticism of the imperial family. Seneca strongly implies that Drusilla does not deserve the temples she is given, although he never says so outright, by suggesting that Gaius founds temples to her because of his mental instability (*intemperie animi*) rather than from his conviction of her divinity.

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[58] Wood 1995: 459-60 suggests that Drusilla's deification may have been an effort to salvage a dynastic catastrophe; "if she was never to be the actual *genetrix* of the dynasty, she could be a symbolic one, a sort of protective patron goddess" (460). Rose notes that "there is no evidence for any widespread destruction of Drusilla's images after the Caligulan period" (1997: 37) and concludes that the cult seems to have quietly disappeared rather than been abruptly suppressed. For more details on the many honours paid by Gaius to Drusilla, see Rose 1997: 35-7.

Seneca's lengthy and detailed account removes any suggestion that the imperial family, in and of themselves, are above criticism. The interplay between the positive *exempla* of his relatives presented by Claudius and the considerable failings of Gaius creates a space in which to question any obedient consumption of imperial public imagery. Presumably the behaviour mentioned here, of raising temples to Drusilla, was couched in the same language which Gaius had used to explain the erection of other architectural features in honour of his family, for instance the statues of his dead brothers Nero and Drusus Caesar (Suetonius, *Vita Divi Claudii* 9.1).[59] The criticism of the temple building program implicitly questions the practice of memorialising architectural endeavours in general. This is especially true since the honours given to Drusilla were the same as those which had been awarded to Livia, including the construction of an arch in each woman's honour.[60] The whole traditional architectural rhetoric of imperial commemoration of the dead is tinged with the suspect nature of Gaius' excessive mourning.

Two other passages deal with Gaius' relationship with his mother, Agrippina the elder. Both appear in the *De Ira*. One is fairly straightforward, and again traces the theme of Gaius' emotional overreactions to events involving his family (3.21.5):

> Hic furor – quid enim aliud voces? – Romanos quoque contigit. C. enim Caesar villam in Herculanensi pulcherrimam, quia mater sua aliquando in illa custodita erat, diruit fecitque eius per hoc notabilem fortunam; stantem enim praenavigabamus, nunc causa dirutae quaeritur.

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[59] Such parallels in Gaius' treatment of his siblings were not unknown. For instance, the "three-sisters" sestertius from A.D. 37/38 mentioned in chapter two, which depicted Drusilla, Agrippina and Julia Livilla on its reverse, was paralleled by a dupondius that showed Gaius' deceased brothers Nero and Drusus on galloping horses. See Wood 1996: 461 for more details. For a discussion of Gaius' actions as an imperial builder more generally, see Barrett 1989: 192-212.

[60] Neither arch appears, in the end, to have been built. Tiberius said he would erect Livia's at his own expense and then conveniently forgot to do so. For parallels between the honours offered to the two women, see Barrett 1989: 86-7.

> This *furor* – for what else can you call it? – has also touched Romans. For Gaius Caesar destroyed a very beautiful villa near Herculaneum because his mother once had been held in custody in it, and through this act made her fate conspicuous – for we used to sail by it while it was standing, but now the reason for its destruction is enquired after.

This passage emphasises the counterproductivity of vindictive and angry action, a Roman counterpoint to Cyrus the Great forcing his army to dig the river Gyndes into three hundred and sixty runnels, thus drying it out (21.1-4). However, Cyrus' action is great in its scope and makes an impressive statement about man's command over the natural world. Gaius' destruction of a villa is on a far smaller scale and driven by a very different motive. He does not wish to overcome the elements – rather, he desires to erase the memory of his mother's incarceration, but only succeeds in indelibly marking it in the landscape of the Herculaneum area. The whole episode reads like a botched attempt at *damnatio memoriae*, which has the effect of enhancing rather than obliterating his mother's disgrace.

The second mention of Gaius' mother in the *De Ira* is rather more interesting for what it says about his character and her implied influence upon it. Seneca's work contains many examples of mothers having influence over their sons, not least his own mother's influence upon him. As I argued in chapter one, the maternal relationship and its relation to *oikeiōsis* is generally seen as a positive part of a human's upbringing, something that is key to the sage learning how virtue is defined and practiced. This is especially true of Helvia, Seneca's own mother, by whom Seneca claims to have been well taught, and with whom he shares his scholarly pursuits and (implicitly) the consequent struggle towards virtue. In Seneca's case, his relationship with his mother seems to have formed part of his ethical education, or at least he construes it as such in

the *ad Helviam*. However, the passage from the *De Ira* implies something rather more sinister about Gaius' relationship with his mother (3.18.3-4):

> Quid antiqua perscrutor? modo C. Caesar Sex. Papinium, cui pater erat consularis, Betilienum Bassum quaestorem suum, procuratoris sui filium, aliosque et senatores et equites Romanos uno die flagellis cecidit, torsit, non quaestionis sed animi causa; deinde adeo inpatiens fuit differendae voluptatis, quam ingentem crudelitas eius sine dilatione poscebat, ut **in xysto maternorum hortorum** (qui porticum a ripa separat) inambulans quosdam ex illis cum matronis atque aliis senatoribus ad lucernam decollaret.
>
> Why do I search through ancient things? Just now Gaius Caesar fell upon Sextus Papinius, whose father was a consular, and Betilienus Bassus, his own quaestor and son of his procurator, and others, both senators and knights, with whips on a single day, and tortured them, not for the purpose of interrogation but because of his mood; then he was so impatient of putting off pleasure, which his cruelty used to demand in exorbitant size without delay, that while walking with matrons and other senators **in the open promenade of his mother's gardens**, which separates the portico from the river banks, by lamp-light, he beheaded certain of them.

The key element of this account is Gaius' perverse enjoyment of gratuitous murder and torture. It would be easy to categorise this anecdote as a further example of his depravity and leave it at that. However, the geography of the passage hints that something else is at work here.[61] The location in which the initial torture takes place is not specified (although the mind conjures somewhere shadowy and damp, lit only by dribbly candles). Yet the location of the *adeo* clause is explicitly mentioned – Gaius spends an evening casually decapitating members of the senatorial elite *in the open promenade of his mother's gardens*. The specificity is startling and unsettling. Seneca clearly wishes to emphasise that not only was Gaius in a locale more suited to harmless diversions, but that these

[61] The importance of space, place and geography in early imperial literature is beginning to be acknowledged, although most scholarship deals with 'literal' spaces, for instance the construction of houses or the political impact of mapping borders onto the empire. Milnor 2007:16-22 analyses the importance of the language of urban environment in the speech made by the tribune Canuleius in book four of Livy's *Ad Urbe Condita* against the laws prohibiting intermarriage in the Twelve Tables. Riggsby 2003 examines the relationship between Pliny's treatment of space and time in his descriptions of two villas. Henderson 2004 provides a similar exploration of space for the villas mentioned in the *Epistulae Morales*. For discussions of space in the work of Apuleius, see Harrison 2002, Slater 2002 and Zimmerman 2002. Pagán 2006 and Cima and La Rocca 1998 specifically consider the spaces of gardens and their implications.

gardens had belonged specifically to his mother.[62] The sentence builds through the seemingly harmless setting – gardens, respectable *matronae* and other senators, lamps – to the shock of beheading.

The mention of Agrippina in connection to the gardens cannot be ignored. That the scene occurs in a garden of any kind sets off alarm bells. Gardens are, in and of themselves, a space of ambiguity in Latin literature, most often between the conflicting values of the *urbs* and the *rus*, but also between the emperor and the people he rules; as Beard puts it, gardens "acted as a location for the creation, definition and negotiation of the emperor as individual" (1998: 32). The garden itself as a location functioned as a "memory theatre", which von Stackelberg defines as "architectural spaces that promoted and controlled specific memories and ideas" (2009: 64), and so were used to direct public perceptions of their owners.[63] However, the owners of literary gardens themselves often turn out to be programmatic. The most famous example is the garden of Maecenas that appears in Horace's *Satire* 1.8, in which a fig-wood Priapus scares away witches who are trying to perform some wicked rite in the reclaimed graveyard. The fact that Maecenas owns the gardens invites the reader to consider *Satire* 1.8 a political allegory, where Priapus' protection of the garden from the old evils that used to stalk it before it was transformed provides a parallel to Maecenas' own deeds in the state.[64]

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[62] Boatwright suggests that Agrippina must have inherited these gardens from her father, Agrippa (1998: 77). Boatwright reads the reference to Agrippina as a Senecan comment on her condemnation "by Tacitus and others as arrogant and power-hungry" (1998: 77), which is appropriate to invoke given the condemnation of Gaius; however, I do not feel we have sufficient evidence to assume that Seneca shared the view of Agrippina put forward by Tacitus and other historians.

[63] The phrase "memory theatre" is used by Bergmann, in her discussion of the atrium paintings in the House of the Tragic Poet at Pompeii, to describe "a collection of pictures with temporal dimension – pictures of the past" (1994: 249).

[64] For more discussion of *Satires* 1.8 and the function of the garden, see Pagán 2006: 37-63. Edmunds 2009 discusses the history of Maecenas' gardens, specifically in view of the hypothesis that the Priapus of the poem was a well-known piece of public statuary which the first audience would have known.

Thus the fact that Agrippina owned the gardens where Gaius now commits slaughter implicates her in his actions; it suggests that her ownership makes the garden an appropriate place for Gaius to carry out his nefarious deeds. This sense of the connection between family and behaviour is heightened by the passage's place in the text. It occurs immediately after Seneca's description of Sulla's violent behaviour towards Marius – committed by his spiritual offspring, Catiline, "already training his hand in every crime" (*iam in omne facinus manus exercens*, 3.18.2). On this occasion, the wicked behaviour is committed by a child prepared by his parent for the outrage he commits. This example primes the reader to look for familial themes and the education of one generation by another as Seneca moves into Gaius' gardens.

Gaius chooses to commit outrage in a location specifically marked by his mother's ownership. The explanation that Gaius generally wishes to turn the world upside down, and subverts all moral norms by causing violence to his mother's memory, seems insufficient. If Seneca wished to make that point, he would have made rather more of it than a single adjective in the middle of an explicitly detailed architectural description.[65] The gardens are notable because they are a fitting backdrop to Gaius' crime, not because they form an inappropriate setting for them. Part of what makes them fitting (and that Seneca thus chooses to mention) is that they belonged to his mother. The ethical education his mother provided did not prevent Gaius from undertaking these vile deeds, and thus has in some sense enabled them to occur.[66]

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[65] Vitruvius discusses the correct function of a *xystum* within a palaestra complex at 5.11.3-4 and comments at 6.7.5 that while *xystus* meant a running track for the Greeks, for the Romans it means a promenade in the open (*hypaethrus ambulationes*). For the *xystus* in a Roman context, see von Stackelberg 2009: 19. For a discussion of the difficulties the modern scholar faces in identifying the functions of ancient domestic spaces which particularly addresses questions of material and textual evidence, see Allison 2001.

[66] Indeed, one might conjecture further that Seneca has Nero in mind here on some level, given that his own mother (also, of course, called Agrippina) schooled him in the ruthless extermination of his enemies, tactics

The symbolic force of the garden reference reinforces this point even more clearly. A garden functions as a place of culture and nurture; the owner of the garden cares for what is in it, even if in this particular case Agrippina probably did not spend much time getting her hands dirty. Seneca uses the imagery of the garden as a way to communicate that Agrippina failed to cultivate Gaius properly. She was responsible for his progress as a child, and provided the environment within which he developed. Now that Gaius is grown, he returns to a place that symbolises her cultivation and her role as nurturer – with the precise intention of committing a horrible atrocity. The theme from chapter one that the family has a certain function to play in the training of character resurfaces here, but in a different form. Whereas Helvia pointed Seneca towards virtue, here Seneca's literary approach shows the horrific results of dysfunctional nurture – which, in turn, argues implicitly for the necessity of good nurture to ensure positive character development.

The imperial family has failed to provide ethical support for one of its members. Seneca highlights Gaius' degradation and moral failings by showcasing them in contexts where his family aids and abets those failings. Gaius is the prime example of what happens when the focus of a family becomes distracted by the pursuit of power rather than virtue – it has catastrophic consequences both for individual members and for the unfortunate state in which they reside.

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which he promptly used against her. The first of these victims was Silanus, betrothed to Claudius' daughter Octavia, who committed suicide on the day Agrippina and Claudius married; see [Seneca] *Octavia* 145-54 and Tacitus *Annales* 12.8. Agrippina was also supposed to have poisoned Claudius in order to hasten her son's accession, a rumor that was current by the time of the *Octavia*'s composition; see 137-73 for a catalogue of Agrippina's crimes, although it is grudgingly admitted that she did not play a role in the death of Britannicus.

Conclusion

A brief survey of some of the occasions where the imperial family is discussed *qua* family reveals that Seneca often uses these remarks to indicate the problems that underlie the relationships between the *princeps* and the rest of the dynasty. Many of these issues spring from a false perception of what the family is for, that is, an inappropriate emphasis on using one's relations as tools for political advancement. Problems also arise from the emperor's role in an empire as the central holder of power, and the distortions that position causes in the relations between parents and children.

The flawed image of the imperial family presented by Seneca contrasts strongly with the public imagery that the principate itself generated. The trend started by Augustus of portraying members of the Julio-Claudian clan as morally upright and as perfect models to emulate is undermined by the examples Seneca provides. This criticism extends to the questioning of the divine status held by apotheosized members of the family, or rather the pointed reminder that while the dead emperor may be *divus* according to contemporary society, he is not at all divine according to Stoic philosophy. The overall effect of these *exempla* is to remind the reader that even the most powerful man in the world, the *princeps*, cannot meet the ideal of possessing a perfectly functional family, whatever his public image might suggest. The inference, of course, is that such perfect familial relationships are available only to the Stoic sage.

The texts examined so far have looked at individual types of relationships within a familial context, and at the opposing narratives of familial success and failure found in Seneca's discussion of the imperial family. However, I have only examined texts which are aimed at a wide readership. While Seneca may write for those with an in-depth

knowledge or Stoicism, or the broad general grounding in philosophy that might be expected of a well-educated member of the Roman elite, he also writes for an audience who are not fully committed to living the Stoic life. It is time to turn to the *Epistulae Morales*, a work I have consciously set aside until now, and to see what Seneca has to say to a reader who wishes to seriously pursue the path of a Stoic disciple.

Chapter Five: Rewriting The Family

The nature of the *Epistulae Morales*, as a letter collection, a repository of philosophical doctrine and an exercise in individual moral development, fundamentally changes how Seneca approaches the function of the family. Unlike the other prose works, the *Epistulae Morales* seek to guide the reader through a process of deliberate ethical education that revolves around a focus on the self.[1] Part of that process is to remove all external baggage from the aspiring Stoic pupil, so that he has no distractions as he begins to reorient his basic character towards virtue. The treatment of the family in the *Epistulae Morales* helps demonstrate how the letters are designed to function as a systematically organised collection, and serves as a microcosmic view of the collection's approach to wider philosophical issues. Seneca initially strips away all references to the family, even cautionary ones; as the reader progresses through the collection, and has absorbed enough Stoicism to cope with the topic, Seneca slowly reintroduces the family into the conversation of the letters. The external distraction and potential misinformation caused by the family is effectively inoculated by its removal and gradual reintroduction, so that it may take its proper place in the structure of the Stoic pupil's ethical thought.[2]

While the family itself as a theme has been neglected, scholars have done much work on how the *Epistulae Morales* function as a sequence and as letters.[3] The collection

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[1] Most scholarship on the *Epistulae Morales* is happy to accept the collection's emphasis on self and interior concerns. Henderson 2004: 1-6 goes further, postulating that part of this interiority involves removing all extraneous references to external objects. (He does not explicitly refer to the family, but it must be included as part of the totality of things he believes the Stoic disciple needs to expunge.) I take his conclusions in a different direction and apply them instead to the presence of the family in the collection.
[2] I have explained why I believe this approach does not contradict Seneca's approach to the family in his other works in the Introduction, page 26-8.
[3] Inwood summarises the academic *communis opinio* when he says that "Seneca's letters in their present form, whatever their relationship might have been to a real correspondence, are creations of the writer's

raises a number of scholarly issues that deserve attention before I begin my analysis, as they impact how one interprets the corpus. The correspondence lacks certain elements of 'genuine' epistles, although Lucilius, the addressee of the letters and the dedicatee of the *Naturales Quaestiones* and *De Providentia*, is undoubtedly historical.[4] For instance, the collection contains none of Lucilius' responses to Seneca, whereas the genuine letter collections of both Cicero and Pliny contain two-way correspondence. It is also stripped bare of the personal details that are found in those letters. However, the letters have many of the formal qualities associated with correspondence, including the customary *Seneca Lucilio suo salutem* to begin and *vale* to close.[5] The letters also address Lucilius in his particularity. They speak to him as the addressee, talk about the problems he faces in his

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craft" (2007a: xii). Richardson-Hay 2006 has recently analysed the thematic unity of book I of the *Epistulae Morales*; in this he continues the trend set by Cancik 1967 and Maurach 1970 of seeing the letters as a deliberately constructed work with an underlying conceptual framework that it is possible to recover. Cancik-Lindemaier argues that the letters are a fictional literary work (1998: 102). Russell believes that Lucilius' character helped shape the letters, but that this was not "an actual correspondence"; the epistolary format suited Seneca as it allowed for reflections on all manner of philosophical material (1974:78-9). Grimal makes the case for a three year long genuine correspondence between summer A.D. 62 and A.D. 65 based on dates mentioned in the letters (1978:155-64). Mazzoli 1989 argues that it is wrong to think of the letters as entirely artificial; he suggests that Seneca took a genuine correspondence and edited it to make it appropriate for publication, removing all irrelevancies and creating thematic unity where necessary. Graver, however, counters this by arguing that "to posit editorial revisions of such an extent" means that scholars "turn the editor into the creator of a new, essentially literary work", and concludes that the *Epistulae Morales* are aimed "not at Lucilius but at that wider public which Seneca knew well and for which he had often written before" (1996: 24). To some extent, the question of sincerity and insincerity can unhelpfully become the focus of scholarship instead of the actual content of the letters; for an approach to overcoming this problem in Pliny, see De Pretis 2003.

[4] At the time that the *Epistulae Morales* are set, he is governor of Sicily, although he appears to retire from public life on Seneca's advice during the course of the collection. The fact that Lucilius is the addressee of the *Naturales Quaestiones* and *De Providentia* does not detract from the *Epistulae Morales*' attempt to address a different audience from that which Seneca addressed in those texts; while the addressee may be the same, the content and style of the works are not. Russell points out that Lucilius himself plays a different role in the *Epistulae Morales* than he had in the other works dedicated to him – "he clearly is in some sense a character in the plot" (1974: 75). Schönegg argues that Lucilius actually is Seneca, and that the letters reflect an internal rather than external dialogue (1999: 93-5). Regardless of his reality or not, Altman astutely notes, on the subject of the eighteenth century epistolary novel, that "even when the internal reader's interpretation of the letter does not constitute part of the represented action of the epistolary work (we can know only indirectly, for example, what "reading" the recipient of unidirectional correspondence has given to the letters he receives), this reader is nonetheless a determinant of the letter's message" (1982: 88). Wilson 2001 also argues for the centrality of Lucilius to how we categorise and interpret the *Epistulae Morales*.

[5] For a discussion of what makes a letter a letter in the ancient world, see Gibson and Morrison 2007.

life, and respond to his questions and concerns. His personality as a correspondent shapes Seneca's process of composition, so readers get a sense of to whom these letters are hypothetically written. Yet Seneca expands ideas that Lucilius asks him to develop into general meditations upon wider themes and reaches out beyond Lucilius' personal experience.

The *ad Helviam* serves as a useful comparison for the interplay between the 'authentic' and the literary in the *Epistulae Morales*. There Seneca wrote supposedly to his mother, but the consolation aimed to reach a wider audience and seemed designed for publication. Although Seneca is not now motivated by the desire to escape exile, he reprises the same literary artifice for his letters to Lucilius. True, they are addressed to a real person, appear to follow genuine events in his life, and respond to queries he has posed. Didactic writing requires an addressee in need of instruction, and Lucilius takes his place in a well-established philosophical group of such pupils.[6] Yet I doubt that the letters as they now exist were ever actually sent. The thematic development through the corpus, the lack of personal detail and Lucilius' missing half of the conversation point towards the constructed and literary nature of this correspondence.

That said, these letters *are* written as letters, even if they were never exchanged like the letters of Cicero or Pliny. As Wilson 2001 has effectively argued, attempts to reclassify the letters as 'miniature essays', or as samples of 'hortatory' or 'pedagogical'

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[6] This observation was made even in antiquity; Servius, in his introduction to the *Georgics*, says that in order for a book to be didactic it must be addressed to someone, as teaching requires both a teacher and student (*hi libri didascalici sunt, unde necesse est, ut ad aliquem scribantur; nam praeceptum et doctoris et discipuli personam requirit*, *In Vergilii Georgicon Librum Primum Commentarius, Prooemium* 129 9-11 Thilo). Volk 2002: 37-8 identifies the "teacher-student constellation" as one of four defining characteristics of didactic poetry, to be viewed as distinct from the author-reader relationship. The essays collected in Schiesaro, Mitsis and Strauss Clay 1994 deal with the question of the addressee in didactic poetry, including Obbink's essay on Empedocles as philosophical poet, and Mitsis on Lucretius' approach to Memmius as a child in *De Rerum Natura*.

writing, overlook the richness that Seneca has built into them as part of their epistolary nature. To approach the letters as anything other than letters means simplifying their contents, and dismisses the varied stylistic elements of the letter that Seneca uses to his own advantage. Such an approach also discounts the history of the letter as a philosophical genre, best exemplified by the letters of Epicurus, or indeed the tradition of fictional poetic letters, such as those written by Horace and Ovid.[7] Equally, the belief that Seneca wrote the *Epistulae Morales* because of his desire to be a spiritual guide, whether to Lucilius or anyone else, can only be seen as "a risky characterisation of Seneca's central motivation as an author" (Inwood 2007a: xv); the letters are not written solely from a desire to educate. It is one of the purposes that motivates their composition, certainly, but it is not the only one. Given the overwhelming emphasis on death and mortality in the letters themselves, one could argue that Seneca sees himself as writing his philosophical legacy. Yet the epistolary format lends itself to so many motivations that attempting to identify a *central* motivation is unhelpful.

The question of epistolarity is inextricably intertwined with the question of audience –for whom does Seneca write?[8] The answer on one level is obvious – for Lucilius – but given the literary nature of the correspondence, Seneca must envision a wider public for his writing. However, the letters are not as approachable as the consolations were. In contrast to the allusive conceptual framework without explicit doctrinal discussion he used to construct the *ad Helviam*, *ad Marciam* and *ad Polybium*, Seneca discusses complex issues of technical philosophy if Lucilius asks him to. The

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[7] For Seneca's relationship to the letters of Epicurus as a model, see Inwood 2007b: 141-6.
[8] Whatever the answer to this question, the answer will always include the assumption that Seneca speaks to a male audience. Both the addressee and the reader are assumed to be male throughout, and Seneca makes no attempts at gender-equalising language. My discussion of the letters in this chapter reflects this fact.

didactic intentions of Seneca's writing also affect the question of audience. Many writers created an addressee in need of philosophical education; the most famous of these is obviously Epicurus himself, but Lucretius had used Memmius as his Epicurean novice in the *De Rerum Natura*.[9] In a similar vein, Horace composed his *Ars Poetica* to Piso on the subject of poetry. The didactic poetry of the Roman Republic and the philosophical letter merge together in the *Epistulae Morales*; however, the deeper engagement with philosophy suggests Seneca wrote for an audience he did not consider amateur.

Like Lucilius, Seneca's ideal reader wished to become a good Stoic, but needed specialised instruction. Seneca does not pretend to be the Stoic sage; instead, he paints himself as a fellow-traveller who may have the advantage of a head start on the journey, but who fully expects his protégé to catch up with and even overtake him. But to undertake this journey, the reader must be prepared to engage with philosophy in a serious and committed fashion. Who else would work through over twenty books of philosophical letters? Seneca composes the *Epistulae Morales* with the more philosophically mature reader in mind; thus he can write about Stoicism in more detail and demand more of his reader's intellect than if he were addressing someone who remained unconvinced of Stoicism's intrinsic appeal. For that reason, when I refer to the effect upon Lucilius of reading a particular letter, it should be understood that I also refer to the effect upon the reader belonging to this more general audience whom Seneca seeks to address. The general reader and Lucilius share their identities as aspiring Stoic

[9] While there is no doubt that *De Rerum Natura* is dedicated to Memmius and initially addresses him as Lucretius' envisaged reader, there is some controversy about the actual role he plays in the poem. Keen 1985:8 argues that "if the presence of Memmius as the exemplary reader has any meaning for the poem, it is to identify the poem within its historical context and to represent the [political] problem that Lucretius addresses by writing this work". Volk 2002: 73-5 interprets Memmius as an "intra-textual character" who helps the reader engage with "the teacher-student constellation typical of didactic poetry as a genre".

disciples, regardless of their individual circumstances. Seneca writes for the willing moral pupil in these letters, and thus the lessons he attempts to convey speak to readers beyond Lucilius.

Despite the overwhelming Stoic orientation of the *Epistulae Morales*, Epicureanism appears as a foil and sometimes as a starting point for Seneca's meditations. Scholars have often reacted with puzzlement to the tags from Epicurus that close many of the early letters, and the frequent references to Epicurean thinkers that occur throughout the collection. Unsurprisingly, Seneca was accused of philosophical eclecticism as a result of his decision to respond to Stoicism's principal rival meditatively rather than polemically.[10] Recent scholarship has examined the use of Epicureanism within the corpus more sensitively; rather than undermining the Stoic framework upon which the letters are constructed, Seneca deploys his references to reinforce key Stoic teaching.[11] However, regardless of Epicurus' influence on the collection overall, it does not extend to Seneca's treatment of the family. Epicureanism was not particularly

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[10] Quintilian criticised Seneca's philosophical work as insufficiently careful (*parum diligens*, *Insitutio Oratoria* 10.1.129), and this criticism seemed to shape scholarly views of his work up until the early 1980s; see Ker 2006: 21-22 for an analysis of Quintilian's approach. For instance, Motto and Clark speak of Seneca as someone who "created his own moral philosophy" (1968: 37) by taking principles from Stoicism, Epicureanism and any other school that attracted him. Manning speaks of Seneca as "quite willing to use the first two Epicurean consolationes, while rejecting the last with great vehemence", suggesting a pick-and-mix approach to consolatory technique (1974: 80). Costa 1988: 3 goes so far as to say that the *Epistulae Morales* "cannot be called a strict Stoic treatise". Dillon and Long 1988 attempt to reclaim eclecticism from the negative connotations Zeller gave it in *Philosophie der Griechen* (1909); for more on the history of the term, see Donini's contribution to that volume.

[11] Manning 1976 examines a supposed Epicurean stance on the *praemeditatio mali* in Letter 98 and shows it to in fact be a Stoic criticism of that stance. Armisen-Marchetti 2008 develops this idea, with a wider examination of *praemeditatio* in the prose works and how Seneca uses Epicurean vocabulary to Stoic ends. Wilson 1997 does something similar with his examination of consolatory techniques in the *Epistulae Morales*. Hachmann 1995: 220-37 analyses Seneca's references to Epicurus in the *Epistulae Morales* as a whole, and concludes that he consistently praises those teachings which are congruent with Stoicism, but saves his sharpest criticism for those, like the pursuit of *voluptas*, that are not. Graver 1998: 625-6 reflects on Seneca's use of Epicurean *sententiae* up to Letter 29, and the accusations of effeminacy laid against his aphoristic style discussed in Letter 33. Henderson 2004 traces a deliberate engagement and disengagement with Epicurean ideas as the collection progresses. Inwood 2007b: 146 comments that "the entire theme of Epicureanism in the early letters is a tribute to a generic model and a deliberate indication of the target of Seneca's literary rivalry" rather than an indication of philosophical influence.

concerned with the family, concentrating instead on the importance of friends to achieve happiness;[12] instead, Stoicism shaped Seneca's approach to familial relations.

Families play a prominent role in other Latin epistolary collections. A large group of Cicero's letters are written directly to his brother Quintus, and when he writes to Atticus and other friends, his family play a large and engaging role in his day-to-day life. His letters to Terentia and the references he makes to her in letters to others record his relationship with her; they also record his concern for Tullia, and his great grief when she dies.[13] Pliny's letters to his wife Calpurnia, and the letters he writes to others about her well-being, preserve a similar in-depth portrait of their relationship.[14] Indeed, Carlon has argued that "no study of women in Pliny would be complete without consideration of his presentation of ideal wives", suggesting that the domestic sphere is key to understanding Pliny's epistolary self-presentation (2009: 16). In these more 'realistic' letter collections, families provide both addressees and subject matter for the person composing a letter; they form part of the overall frame for the world in which the writer lives.[15]

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[12] Epicurus' own opinions on marriage have only survived in Diogenes Laertius 10.119, which is textually suspect; see Chilton 1960. However, the consensus is now that Epicurus thought marriage and child-rearing should be avoided in general, but he permitted both under special circumstances; see Brennan 1996. Rist 1980 analyses how Epicurus' views against marriage and childrearing dovetail with his advice to seek happiness and safety from friends alone.

[13] Book 14 of the *Ad Familiares* comprises 24 letters addressed to Terentia, and covers such diverse topics such as his political activity during exile, their shared finances and family life. Many of the letters to Atticus report Cicero's grief on the death of Tullia; *Ad Atticum* 12.12 records his decision to build a shrine (*fanum*) in her memory and discussion of this project continues through books 12 and 13, although the plan never came to fruition. Claassen 1996 considers the evidence in the letters for the cause of Terentia and Cicero's divorce. Grebe 2003 analyses the letters Cicero sent to Terentia from exile. For a comprehensive overview of the lives of the women in Cicero's letters, see Treggiari 2007.

[14] The three famous love letters to Calpurnia herself are *Epistulae* 6.4, 6.7 and 7.5. *Epistula* 4.19, addressed to Calpurnia Hispulla, Calpurnia's aunt, praises Calpurnia's character and the upbringing (provided by Calpurnia Hispulla) that made her such a good wife for Pliny. *Epistulae* 8.10 and 8.11 announce Calpurnia's miscarriage to her aunt and her grandfather. Carlon 2009:138-85 examines Pliny's depiction of the ideal wife through three portraits meant to symbolise the stages of maiden, young wife and matron. However, as Carlon astutely notes, "in the idyllic world of Pliny's letters there are no argumentative wives, no disagreeable children" (2009: 214); Pliny conveniently ignores any less ideal moments.

[15] This is not to suggest that relationships which actually existed between an author and another individual could not be given a literary spin. Marchesi's recent work on Pliny provides many examples of how

All the more striking, then, is the absence and elision of family from Seneca's letters. He does not refer at any point to any family of Lucilius', and his mentions of his own close family are few and far between. In Letter 50, his wife is mentioned only as the owner of the clown Harpaste; in Letter 78, Seneca remembers how concern for his father stopped his youthful hand from committing suicide; Letter 104 contains the touching vignette of Seneca's departure for Nomentum and Paulina's concern for his health while he is away from her, with a passing mention of his brother; and in Letter 108, Seneca reminisces about the time he gave up vegetarianism on his father's advice. That is all we see of Seneca's immediate family; they are elided from his epistolary world. These brief mentions of his own family all occur once the collection is well advanced. While they provide glimpses of Seneca's private life, my analysis shows that they are all supported by significant qualifications about how the aspiring sage should interact with his family.

The *Epistulae Morales* centre on the individual, and one's internal moral composition; this leads to a corresponding lack of emphasis on community. The major themes of the collection, such as how to cope with the fear of death, recalibrating one's desires so as to want little rather than luxury and adapting to the vicissitudes of fate, revolve around the individual rather than the collective.[16] Foucault argued that the cultivation of self became the focus of attention in philosophical writing during the Hellenistic and Roman period (1986); Edwards applies that observation to Seneca's letters, and contends that they are part of "a tendency within Stoic thought to focus on the

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conventional epistolary features can work to emphasise the overall meaning of a collection. For instance, the first letter of the collection addressed to Septicus Clarus (1.1) and the last letter addressed to Pedanius Fuscus (9.40) make it clear that the letters chart the progress of a literary day, "metaphorically spanning the period from dawn till dusk" (Marchesi 2008: 249-50).

[16] For a non-exhaustive selection of letters dealing with the fear of death, see Letters 4, 12 and 54; for adapting to want little rather than a lot, see Letters 5, 8 and 17; for accepting fate, see Letters 9, 13 and 16. Bartsch and Wray 2009 is an example of the current academic interest in this subject; many of the twelve essays on the question of Seneca and the self focus on the *Epistulae Morales*.

interior disposition of the individual" (1997: 36). This emphasis on what Edwards calls "the urge to self-scrutiny and self-transformation" explains the lack of interest in the environment of the letter writer and the letter reader, both in terms of objects and other people. In a work obsessed with the individual, lengthy disquisitions on how to engage with others would be out of place; for advice on interpersonal relations, we would turn to the *De Ira* or *De Clementia*.

But the letters have something to say about the family, even if it does not form a central part of the discussion; after all, Letter 121 provides one of the fundamental texts on *oikeiōsis*, which chapter one explained is vital to the Stoic concept of the family. Moreover, the examples of families are drawn from the real world. This approach significantly differs from what we have seen in other texts up to this point, where Seneca has either discussed the family in terms of idealised relationships or through *exempla* (which are by their very nature divorced from day-to-day life). The families of the letters exist in the messy, confusing world; the Letters' focus of the individual *qua* individual serves to consider how one might best negotiate the complexities raised by reality. While Seneca does in the *Epistulae Morales* focus first and foremost on the relationship one must have to oneself in order to begin the pursuit of virtue, the next step, only hinted at in the latter stages of the corpus, would be the relationships with those in the next circle out from the innermost one which contains oneself – that is, the connections we have with our parents, spouses and children.

Seneca makes many passing references to familial relationships which I will mostly omit from my discussion, since they do not contribute to an extended argument. They are normally very brief and used for illustrative purposes. As an example, I omit a

reference to a girl giving birth in Letter 24.14, where Seneca compares her endurance of birth-pangs to a gouty complainer with an upset stomach. Although the girl will become a mother, her status as such has nothing to do with her inclusion as an illustration of brave suffering. Similarly, in Letter 74.2, as an illustration that no man is control of the vicissitudes of Fate, Seneca uses the example of men who are sad when their children die, become ill or act disreputably; this is followed by men who are tortured by *amor* for their own wives or wives of others, as well as those who are grieved both by failing to obtain political office and by actually serving the state. Again, the familial examples, along with the political examples, are there as illustrations of things external to our control. The passages I discuss are those in which Seneca seems to express a concern with the family and its ethical operation, and the different issues raised by that subject.

I have one final comment to make about how I approach the collection before reaching the texts themselves. The *Epistulae Morales* are constructed as a letter collection. They are designed to be read as letters, received in the set sequence in which they are presented;[17] the recipient of the letters would know the content of those already received, and would be ignorant of those yet to come. As Altman puts it, "like tesserae, each individual letter enters into the composition of the whole without losing its identity

[17] Inwood 2007a: xiii-xv addresses the question of how complete our extant collection is. It is tempting to think that the surviving 124 letters in twenty represents the full corpus, but Aulus Gellius quotes from a letter on style which came in book 22 (12.2); clearly the manuscript tradition has lost a significant chunk of the collection. It is generally assumed that the order in which the letters survive is the order in which they were published. Works such as Cancik 1967, Maurach 1970, Coleman 1974, Schönegg 1999, von Albrecht 2004, Richardson-Hay 2006 and indeed any scholarship that traces themes through the collection rely on this principle. Maurach suggests that the book divisions are Seneca's own, and thus are important for any analysis of the collection (1970: 19). One example of the deliberateness of the order of letters comes from Letter 33, where Seneca replies to Lucilius' complaint that the Epicurean tag which finished Letters 2 to 29 has been dropped; this kind of internal reference relies on the integrity of the order of the preceding letters and implies the deliberate order of subsequent ones. We do not know under what circumstances the letters were published in antiquity, although we do know that the book divisions as they currently stand were in place by the time of Aulus Gellius; they could therefore have been Seneca's own. For problems involved in shifting around epistolary collections in modern editions, see Beard 2002 on Cicero. For a comparative example of a very deliberately constructed letter collection from antiquity, see Carlon 2009: 6-7 on Pliny.

as a separate entity with recognizable borders" (1982: 167).[18] Working with the letters becomes a challenge because of the need to maintain the integrity of this structure, and the effect that each letter would have had on the recipient (or original reader).[19] The popular modern method of cherry-picking useful fragments of text to illustrate 'solid' points of Stoic doctrine generates misleading conclusions. Wilson has illustrated the limitations of this approach in his analysis of the work of Habinek and Too (2001: 169-74). Although he restricts most of his comments to their attempts to classify letters into inappropriate genres, he also criticises them for being "selective in the epistles or parts of epistles they choose to highlight as indicative of [Seneca's] practice" (2001 169).[20] Some selectivity is inevitable, as the corpus does contain 124 letters; however, ignoring the wider scope of the collection leads to errors like Habinek's insistence that Seneca wrote only for Lucilius, overlooking the evidence of Letter 8.2 that he writes for posterity, and of Letter 27.1 that he writes for himself as well as his readers (Wilson 2001: 171). A selective approach inevitably simplifies the text and opens the way for misinterpretation, which is why I have in the main postponed discussion of the letters until this chapter.[21] The overall preoccupations of the *Epistulae Morales* mean that the family of necessity plays a more minor role than it has in other works I have examined; nevertheless, as we will see, the family is still given a potential role in the moral formation of the aspiring sage.

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[18] Maurach 1970: 17 uses a similar image, referring to the collection as a *corpus* having its own thematic *membra*.

[19] Of course, the nature of the collection means that it could always be re-read, giving a different reading experience to a second or third reader. However, I address the experience of the first-time reader here.

[20] Habinek 1992 concentrates on Letter 90, and Too 1994 concentrates on the end of Letter 108.

[21] In terms of dating, the *Epistulae Morales* is a late work, probably the latest in the Senecan corpus; Griffin 1992: 396 gives its publication date as between summer or autumn A.D. 64 and spring A.D. 65. The precise dates, however, do not affect my overall contention that the general principles of Stoicism that Seneca has explored in his earlier works also inform his later composition.

The Initiation

The first twelve letters, which form the first book of the *Epistulae Morales*, make a programmatic statement about the purpose of the collection, and what the prospective Stoic initiate is letting himself in for. As Cancik puts it, the first book is conceived as the entrance to the work as a whole (1967: 4); successful passage through this initiation ritual shows the requisite dedication to the cause.[22] Henderson takes this idea to its logical conclusion (2004: 6):

> By contrast, the rest of those textual apostles will by then have loaded the book in favour of principles, away from principals. Dicta, not data; eleven to one. Disorientation of the reader is the first objective of the correction programme. Scrubbing the interrogation clean of external coordinates is part of a sensory-deprivation therapy which aims to reconfigure and redirect the new recruit, inside, inside the mind, wherever morals live.

The first twelve letters aim to completely remove any external distractions that might trouble the reader; Henderson focuses on the geographical. He observes that only one geographically specific place occurs in this first book, and that this is the *only* location the reader can firmly grasp – but the action that takes place in the space, the battle of individual wills, is more important than the space itself. The reader cannot concentrate on the important matter of internal transformation unless he retreats inside his own head; the first twelve letters achieve that goal by making sure they do not refer to anything except the internal world.

The one incident that provides a geographical anchor occurs in Letter 9; interestingly, the family intrudes into the same letter, only to disappear again until book four. This is the moment where identifiable externals break in *en masse* into the

[22] The introductory function of the first twelve letters is also explored by Maurach 1970, who argues that Letter 12 is not in fact structurally part of the first book but instead acts as a bridge between Letters 11 and 13; Richardson-Hay 2006: 30 rejects this, saying that "the relationship between [Letters 1 and 12] giv[e] the Book a thematic shape that binds it together with progression, decision and outcome".

depersonalised, theoretical vestibule of the *Epistulae Morales*; they include not only geography and family, but historical names and events as well. Nor are they just any names and events; Seneca describes the showdown between Demetrius Poliorcetes, sacker of cities, and the Megaran philosopher Stilbo, just after Demetrius had captured the city and despoiled it, as was his wont. Letter 9 claims to respond to Lucilius' question about a letter of Epicurus in which he rebukes Stilbo for believing the wise man is self-sufficient and does not need friendships.[23] The letter explains the notion of *impatientia*, or non-suffering, and self-sufficiency; while the wise man does not need friends, he will nevertheless still have them. Seneca warns that fortune can always strip a man of his friends as well as everything else. But the wise man's self-sufficiency and reliance on the Supreme Good (*summum bonum*, 9.15) will keep him afloat whatever misfortunes befall him – and here Seneca tells the story of Stilbo (9.18-19):

> Hic enim capta patria, amissis liberis, amissa uxore, cum ex incendio publico solus et tamen beatus exiret, interroganti Demetrio, cui cognomen ab exitio urbium Poliorcetes fuit, num quid perdidisset, 'omnia' inquit, 'bona mea mecum sunt'. Ecce vir fortis ac strenuus! ipsam hostis sui victoriam vicit. 'Nihil' inquit 'perdidi'; dubitare illum coegit an vicisset.
>
> For Stilbo, when his fatherland was captured, his children lost, his wife lost, came out of the common conflagration alone and yet blessed. When Demetrius, whose *cognomen* was Poliorcetes from the ruin of cities, asked him whether he had lost anything, he said "all my goods are with me". Lo, a brave and vigorous man! He conquered the very victory of his enemy. Stilbo said, "I lost nothing"; he forced Demetrius to doubt whether he had won.

The letter closes by praising Stilbo's self-sufficiency, and presents the closing motto which is the hallmark of these initial letters. Today's is "he is not blessed, who does not think himself so" (*non est beatus, esse se qui non putat*, 9.21). Seneca offers some final reflections on his theme, and signs off with the conventional *vale*.

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[23] The letter to Stilbo is not extant, and Seneca is the only ancient source to refer to it.

This sudden intrusion of the real world comes in the middle of a letter telling us precisely how *little* we need the real world. Seneca trusts Lucilius not to become distracted by the specificity and the poignancy of the vignette *because* he has already spent seventeen sections of the letter explaining why those kinds of details are irrelevant to virtue. Lucilius should be insulated from the irrational desire to call Stilbo heartless and unfeeling, to rebuke him as Epicurus did. It is certainly a hard passage to read. Stilbo says "I have lost nothing"; we wonder how he can be so callous about his lost family and wife. The clue lies in the language. His family are called *amissis liberis, amissa uxore*, but he himself says *nihil perdidi*. Latinists tend to translate both *amittere* and *perdere* as 'to lose'; however, Seneca's choice of two different words indicates a rather specific nuance that using the same English word elides.[24] *Amittere* is the milder of the two; it can mean simply to dismiss or send away, which then comes to mean lose through the intermediary meaning of slipping away. *Perdere* is much stronger – other meanings include to destroy or ruin beyond recovery. The difference between these two words, then, is crucial. Yes, Stilbo may have lost his family in one sense – but he has not lost anything so that it is irrecoverable, so that it is destroyed utterly, so that it is so far beyond recovery that he too is destroyed by its loss. His family may have been dear to him, but their loss does not destroy his equanimity. Seneca here appears to present a good potted anecdote about the principles that apply to the family, and that he will expand in later letters; they are good things to have, but their loss does not equate to the loss of

[24] Lewis and Short s.v. *amitto* give 'to send away from one's self, to dismiss' as the first meaning, then 'to let go or slip', and finally 'to lose'. Lewis and Short s.v. *perdo* give 'to make away with; to destroy, ruin; to squander, dissipate, throw away, waste, lose, etc.' as the initial group of meanings, followed by 'to lose utterly or irrecoverably'.

virtue. Such loss is not unnoticed or unfelt, but Seneca shows that the wise man, like Stilbo, will not be uprooted from virtue because of it.

The immediately preceding passage reinforces this message, by explaining how the Stoic sage will balance his self-sufficiency with the normal duties of a human being (9.17):

> Quamdiu quidem illi licet suo arbitrio res suas ordinare, se contentus est et ducit uxorem; se contentus <est> et liberos tollit; se contentus est et tamen non viveret si foret sine homine victurus. Ad amicitiam fert illum nulla utilitas sua, sed naturalis inritatio.
>
> As long as he [the wise man] may order his own affairs through his own judgement, he is content in himself, and marries a wife; he is content in himself, and raises children; he is content in himself, and yet would not live, if he were to live without mankind. No personal benefit carries him to friendship, but a natural stimulus.

Seneca sees no conflict between the sage's self-sufficiency and following the draw of one's natural desires, so long as these decisions are guided by rational judgement (*sui arbitrio*) and not by irrational passions. As the Stoics equated living in accordance with nature to living virtuously, and friendship, marriage and procreation are all considered natural (*naturalis*), obedience to nature provides the main imperative for the sage's decision to start a family. But this is uncontroversial; it is the logic behind the sage's *engagement* with his family once he has created one that I hope to unpick. While this passage suggests that the sage cannot live without other humans, it also suggests that the normal rhythms of life will shape that engagement; death, alongside birth and marriage, forms part of the natural pattern which Seneca invokes here.

One might argue that Seneca's comment that it is impossible for the sage to live without mankind (*sine homine*) appears to undermine the radical self-sufficiency that elsewhere suffuses descriptions of the wise man. However, the Stoic theory of suicide

comes into play here. There are certain circumstances under which it is acceptable for a sage to decide to end his own life, for instance if he is incurably ill, or is living under a tyrant. It is possible for him to make this choice whilst still being content in himself (*se contentus*), because all that is required for this happiness is his reason. It is *only* acceptable for a sage to consciously make such a decision, because only a sage is fully in control of his reason, and thus capable of weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of continuing to live, and to judge whether committing suicide would in fact be the rational thing to do under any given set of circumstances.[25] We can now make sense of Seneca's assertion that "he is content in himself, and yet would not live, if he were to live without man" (*se contentus est et tamen non viveret si foret sine homine victurus*). The implication behind 'would not live' is that the sage would choose to die – that is, that living without man would be one of the circumstances in which Seneca believes the choice of suicide could be rationally justified. Living without man, we may surmise, includes living without the wife and child Seneca has just said a sage may choose to take. Should the sage lose his family, then, it is *possible* for suicide to be the rational response – but, as the *exemplum* of Stilbo shows, it does not become the *inevitable* response.

One can be self-sufficient and obey natural imperatives that involve interactions with other people. So long as these relationships are governed by reason, then their loss will not disturb the sage's equanimity. Family and friends serve the same purpose; the

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[25] Cato, the Stoic speaker in Cicero's *De Finibus*, says that "in a life in which there are more things which are according to nature, it is a man's duty to remain; however, in that life in which either there are or it appears there will be more things contrary to nature, it is man's duty to depart from life" (*in quo enim plura sunt quae secundum naturam sunt, huius officium est in vita manere; in quo autem aut sunt plura contraria aut fore videntur, huius officium est de vita excedere*, 3.60). He explains that this is why it is possible for the wise man to commit suicide despite being happy, for virtue does not necessarily require him to live (3.61). Diogenes Laertius also mentions that the wise man may commit suicide, for the sake of his country or his friends, or because he is experiencing very harsh physical pain, has been maimed or is suffering an incurable disease (7.130).

sage obtains both for natural reasons, and does not locate his virtue in either. They give him space to demonstrate his virtue (as Seneca specifically says of friends at 9.8), but do not define it. But we are still in the first letters, the initial crossing into Stoicism. Of course the reader cannot think of the family as anything but completely external to virtue; to talk of the sort of environment that nurtures virtue, as Seneca has in other works, risks placing responsibility for developing virtue on something outside the individual. Lucilius must undertake this journey entirely on his own. Just as Stilbo is stripped of his wife and children, so we must be stripped of our families to enter the *Epistulae Morales* and begin our journey towards wisdom.

Before leaving book one, following Henderson's footsteps, I want to pause in Letter 12. Seneca visits his country home (*suburbanum meum*, 12.1) and castigates his baliff for the tumbledown state of the place; he comes face to face to an old slave he doesn't recognise, and asks where on earth the bailiff got him and why he sits at the door given his decrepit state. The slave reveals that he is the ironically named Felicio, who used to be Seneca's *deliciolum* when they were both children (12.3). Henderson emphasises Seneca's alienation from himself and his difficulty accepting old age and mortality, symbolised by the crumbing estate and the dilapidated childhood pet slave (2004: 24). Yet Seneca's estrangement from this ancestral estate symbolises a further distancing; Seneca has not just lost touch with his childhood, he has lost touch with all of his relatives. He has obliterated them from the memories of his already remote infancy. Although Felicio talks of Seneca bringing him little images (*sigillaria*, 12.3), presumably as a childish sign of affection, Seneca's childhood in this letter is otherwise devoid of people – no mother, no father, no brothers. They are completely absent from the picture;

as they do not meet Seneca during his visit to jog his faulty memory, they never surface in the narrative. Felicio makes the absence even more striking by reminding Seneca that he is the son of the bailiff Philositus (12.3); the slave gets a father, but the philosophically inclined master does not.

Henderson takes the family language further in his analysis of the estate's neglected plane-trees: "those precious philosopher's trees planted by Seneca's own hand are children of his praxis" (2004: 25). Henderson would argue that there is a family of a sort here, one perhaps formed more by the *familia* of slaves than the nuclear family, and one where children come from one's actions rather than one's loins - but the biological family has disappeared completely. Letter 12 primarily explores the collapse and eventual death of the individual human, and how one might best prepare for that; hence the anecdote about Pacuvius, who practised his own funeral daily, just in case he had in fact reached his final hour (12.8-9). In preparation for the dissolution of self, Seneca takes away the comfort that Lucilius might have found in contemplating support from his family; he must face death on his own, without that reassuring crowd about him.

Advance Warning

The family now disappears from the letters until the sequence of Letters 31, 32 and 33. These three form a unit instructing Lucilius in the best way to guarantee his progress – and his family are not necessary for that journey. The use of the same theme and idea in this sequence of letters justifies examining them a little more closely rather than assuming these are casual references to the family. Seneca has something significant to say here about the relationship between being an ethically responsible individual and

one's interaction with one's parents, and focuses in on this very specific relationship. The scene is set in Letter 31. Seneca warns Lucilius to stop up his ears with wax like Ulysses used for his companions, because of the siren songs sung by those around him (31.2):

> Illa vox quae timebatur erat blanda, non tamen publica: at haec quae timenda est non ex uno scopulo sed ex omni terrarum parte circumsonat. Praetervehere itaque non unum locum insidiosa voluptate suspectum, sed omnes urbes. Surdum te amantissimis tuis praesta: bono animo mala precantur. Et si esse vis felix, deos ora ne quid tibi ex his quae optantur eveniat.
>
> That voice which used to be feared was charming although not public – but this one which must be feared resounds not from a single rock but from every part of the world. Therefore, sail by not one place doubtful with treacherous pleasure, but all cities. Make yourself deaf to those who are most affectionate: they pray for evils with good intention. And if you want to be lucky, beg the gods that nothing of those things that they desire befalls you.

The letter at this point does not explicitly identify the people who most love Lucilius, but makes it clear that their fond prayers do not desire anything that is truly good. Seneca continues by discussing how work can and cannot be good, and then makes it clear to whose prayers he previously referred (31.5):

> Non est ergo, quod ex illo <voto> vetere parentum tuorum eligas quid contingere tibi velis, quid optes; et in totum iam per maxima acto viro turpe est etiamnunc deos fatigare.
>
> Therefore there is no reason why you should select what you wish to affect you or what you desire from that old prayer of your parents; and in general, already it is shameful for a man who has moved through the greatest things still to exhaust the gods.

Lucilius' parents did not pray for the right things. All that Lucilius needs to do is make himself happy; he will not get any extra satisfaction from chasing after external things like glory or honour. The letter continues to explain the knowledge of things is truly good (*rerum scientia*, 31.6) and the lack of knowledge of things is truly bad (*rerum imperitia*); the wise man's ability lies in the choices he makes on the basis of this knowledge. Seneca exhorts Lucilius to work towards this possession alone, and cheerfully reminds him that

he will not need to travel through such harsh terrain as he did for the reward of his little procuratorship (*procuratiunculae pretio*, 31.9); while he does not ignore Lucilius' political career, he suggests that there are other things upon which he should concentrate his mind. The letter closes by reminding Lucilius that the soul makes the difference, and that the soul does not care whether it lives inside a knight, a freedman or a slave; the external substance is irrelevant to the material within (31.10).

Two important themes emerge from this letter that Seneca will develop further, both in the collection as a whole and in the letters that immediately follow. The first theme emphasises that parents, or indeed the people who love you most (*amantissimis tuis*, 31.2), do not want what is best for you. They do not actively set out to harm you, but their aims and desires for you are not founded on the knowledge of what is and is not truly good. They want you to pursue things that society thinks are good, like political power, without thought of the consequences for your pursuit of virtue. This is a very different family to the sort found elsewhere in Seneca's prose writings; for instance, it is rather hard to imagine statements of this sort in the *ad Helviam* given the emphasis Seneca placed there on Helvia's ability to participate in the study of virtue with him. In this letter, parents do not undermine their children's ethical development from deliberate malice, nor do those who love us wish us to have what will harm us – they are simply ignorant of the knowledge that Seneca identifies as so key to the wise man's identity. But in the world of the *Epistulae Morales*, where the emphasis is on the individual's responsibility for himself, the wise man cannot rely on his family to direct his steps. Lucilius' impulse to ethical advancement must come from within himself, and not from external influences – while Seneca himself was fortunate, not every mother can be a

Helvia. At this stage in the *Epistulae Morales*, Seneca does not ask Lucilius to withdraw from his family completely, but he makes a compelling case that the serious Stoic disciple must ultimately rely on his own inner drive towards virtue, and not on the comfort he may derive from his family.

The second theme that emerges from Letter 31 highlights the relative *lack* of importance that the family has for Lucilius. This comes only at the letter's close, when Seneca reminds us that a soul which is upright, good and great (*rectus, bonus, magnus*, 31.11) can descend into anyone, whether a knight, a freedman or a slave. After all, these are just names given from ambition or injury (*nomina ex ambitione aut ex iniuria nata*, 31.1). They have no impact on the substance of a man's soul. The point here is subtle but sets the stage for a concept of the family that Seneca will return to in a dozen or so letters' time; ancestry is irrelevant for the pursuit of virtue. Here, Seneca makes the point in terms of status, but the status of knight and slave were hereditary. *Libertinus* is somewhat more problematic, as it can mean 'a freedman' or 'the son of a freedman', although the former meaning is more common.[26] That said, the basic point is still clear; a man's ability to possess virtue is utterly unconnected to his social status. The tricolon of possible bodies for the good soul ostensibly frames that irrelevance in terms of being free, once having known slavery and being enslaved; more subtly, it reinforces the lack of importance the hereditary status of knighthood confers upon the knight, and thus undermines the importance of that political status for the aspiring sage.

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[26] For examples of the former use, see Quintilian 5.10.60; Plautus *Poenulus* 4.2.10; Cicero *De Oratore* 1.9.38 and Suetonius *Vita Divi Augustii* 74. For examples of the latter use, see Suetonius, *Vita Divi Claudii* 24 and Isidorus, *Origines* 9.4.47. Lewis and Short s.v. *libertinus* begins with the definition 'of or belonging to the condition of a freedman' before giving 'freedman' as a secondary meaning and 'son of a freedman' as a transferred meaning dependent upon that definition.

Letter 32 is shorter, and reports that Seneca has been asking everyone who might know about Lucilius' progress – and is pleased that none of them seem to know (31.1)! Apparently this is a good sign, as it shows Lucilius is not fraternizing with those who desire things incompatible with virtue and thus delay his moral progress (32.2). The letter once more rejects Lucilius' parents' prayers (32.4):

> Optaverunt itaque tibi alia parentes tui; sed ego contra omnium tibi eorum contemptum opto quorum illi copiam. Vota illorum multos compilant, ut te locupletent; quidquid ad te transferunt alicui detrahendum est.
>
> Your parents wished other things in this way for you; but I wish you to have scorn for all those things for whose abundance they desired. Their prayers pillage many to enrich you. Whatever they hand over to you must be taken away from someone else.

The letter concludes with Seneca's wish that Lucilius would stop wandering and come to rest, understanding that all true goods are within our possession. This final section revisits the themes of Letter 31, just in case they had slipped Lucilius' mind; Seneca wishes him to progress towards this goal. The juxtaposition of Lucilius' parents' wishes with those of Seneca marks out the extreme difference between the two viewpoints in a more stark way than Letter 31. Seneca's superior friendship trumps the parents' conventional wishes. Indeed, Seneca's exhortation that Lucilius avoid keeping company with people who are different to himself and want different things (*non conversari dissimilibus et diversa cupientibus*, 32.2), in tandem with this warning about misguided parents, reads as a further recommendation to withdraw from one's biological family lest they provide erroneous direction. Seneca knows precisely what is good for Lucilius and thus serves as a better companion on the road to virtue than the well-intentioned but ill-advised family provided by fate.

Letter 33, following on the footsteps of this caveat against familial advice, does not mention the family directly but has generated much scholarship as a moment of transition in the collection. Letter 32 omitted the by now customary Epicurean tagline, and Lucilius has written to complain. Seneca responds that the time to use such potted wisdom is past, and Lucilius will never achieve virtue by memorising phrases, no matter from whom they are taken. The letter explores the issue of providing such snippets at great length, but the key point with which Seneca closes his argument is that those who rely on the words of great men never attain their own mental independence (*qui numquam tutelae suae fiunt*, 33.10). *Tutela* is a loaded word. Fatherless minors who had not yet reached the legal age of maturity had to be under the control of a guardian, and women were considered to need the permanent *tutela mulierum*.[27] The word carries overtones both of the legal process needed to obtain independence and the familial basis on which this rested. Guardians were only required for young men whose fathers had died, and only until they reached the age of fourteen and were then considered mature enough to transact their own business.[28] A guardian would also often have been a family member, either appointed in a parent's will, or through the process of statutory guardianship, where the duty fell to the nearest male agnate. To not gain one's own intellectual *tutela*, then, and to rely on the guidance of others to gain virtue, is framed in terms of a young man obtaining legal independence in the eyes of the Roman law – it is to have the potential to obtain full power over one's own actions, but to never escape the

[27] All children who were *sui iuris* and *impubes*, or fatherless and below the legal age of puberty, required a *tutor impuberis*. Boys were considered legally mature at fourteen, at which point they became legally independent. Girls reached puberty at twelve, but then required a guardian to provide *tutela mulierum*. Augustus' *Lex Papia Poppaea* in A.D. 9 released free women with three children and freedwoman with four children from the need of *tutela*; this privilege was known as the *ius liberorum*. For more on *tutela* and guardianship, see Gardner 1986: 5-29 and Borkowski and du Plessis 2005: 139-47.

[28] Of course, a young man whose father had *not* died and who had not emancipated him would have continued to be under *patria potestas*, which *tutela impuberis* was intended to replace.

need for another's authorization.[29] The serious Stoic disciple must distance himself from the influence of his biological family if he ever hopes to understand truth (*veritas*, 33.11), just as he must move beyond blindly following the words of his philosophical predecessors and begin to see them as guides rather than masters (*non domini nostri sed duces*, 33.11).

What *Is* A Family?

The next section of the *Epistulae Morales* that explicitly deals with the family subtly questions precisely *what* the family is, and what kinds of inheritance Lucilius should be concerned with.[30] These references look at a different type of familial relationship to the one explored in Letters 31-33. There, Seneca was explicitly interested in the relationship between the Stoic disciple and his biological family. In this unit, beginning at Letter 44, the focus changes to a more capacious concept of family, and a different set of issues. For the time being, Seneca puts aside the discussion on how to interact with one's parents, and turns to the social question of how a family is defined and the broader implications of families. This examination zooms out from the microscopic level of one-on-one relationships, and asks how families function in the wider community.

Letter 44 develops the theme of Letter 31 that pedigree is irrelevant to philosophy. Lucilius has been complaining that he is small and insignificant (*pusillum*, 44.1), but Seneca loses patience. The good mind is attainable by all (*bona mens omnibus patet*,

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[29] This theme intertwines with that identified by Edwards 2009: 154-5, namely the articulation of control over one's self in terms of the difference between a slave and a free man.
[30] For a discussion of the difference between various Latin words for family, and the sort of family that I believe Seneca refers to here, see the Introduction, pages 11-13.

44.2), so Lucilius worries fruitlessly about his ancestors. Other philosophers have not been of noble descent (44.3):

> Patricius Socrates non fuit; Cleanthes aquam traxit et rigando horto locavit manus; Platonem non accepit nobilem philosophia sed fecit: quid est quare desperes his te posse fieri parem? Omnes hi maiores tui sunt, si te illis geris dignum; geres autem, si hoc protinus tibi ipse persuaseris, a nullo te nobilitate superari.
>
> Socrates was not of patrician rank. Cleanthes drew water and set his hand to watering the garden. Philosophy did not receive Plato noble, but made him so. Why then do you despair of becoming equal to these men? All these are your ancestors, if you behave in a way that is worthy of them; but you will bear yourself so if you first persuade yourself that you are surpassed by nobody in nobility.

Seneca intends to redraw the boundaries of the family, replacing Lucilius' imperfect relations with a pantheon of idealised philosophers. Socrates, Cleanthes and Plato were all made noble by philosophy rather than their inherited status, and thus form a worthy group for Lucilius to take as his ancestors – presumably in place of the Roman family tree which must have been the source of some pride. Seneca repeatedly emphasises the motif that all humans come from a common ancestor (44.4), so in some ways it is a perfectly legitimate tactic for Lucilius to pick which of the human race he wishes to claim as his relatives.[31] But again, Seneca counsels Lucilius of the importance of relying on his own merits rather than those of his forebears (44.5):

> Non facit nobilem atrium plenum fumosis imaginibus; nemo in nostram gloriam vixit nec quod ante nos fuit nostrum est.
>
> An *atrium* full of smoky images does not make a man noble. Nobody lived for our glory nor is that which came before us ours.

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[31] Seneca expresses a similar idea in *De Brevitate Vitae* 15.3, where he says that while we cannot choose our parents, we can choose whose children we will be; he describes the philosophical schools as being families of the most noble characters (*nobilissimorum ingeniorum familae*). That Seneca thought of philosophical schools in familial terms is clear from a passage in the *Naturales Quaestiones* which refers to *familiae philosophorum* which perish without successors (7.32.2).

The smoky images (*fumosis imaginibus*) of the aristocrat's *atrium* would have been a familiar sight to Lucilius, frequently seen in his own house and those of his friends. Admittedly, the rise of the principate meant that the *imagines* no longer held the political force they had had during the Republic; then, they were used to signify the power of holding office associated with an ancestor who owned the mask, and "served as constant and powerful advertisements of a family's achievements and eminence" (Flower 1996: 65). However, the *imagines* remained a potent symbol of past power and doubtless came with significant bragging rights for their owners.[32]

Yet Seneca dismisses these compelling objects as utterly irrelevant to the pursuit of nobility, or at least, nobility as defined by virtue. He advises the *proficiens* to discard the traditional trappings of the family, presumably along with the family that accompanies them. Seneca began by rejecting the conventional prayers of Lucilius' parents in Letter 32, and replaced them with his superior ones. Now he goes further and suggests a whole range of philosophical ancestors for Lucilius to appropriate in place of his deficient 'normal' family. The letter closes with the usual warning that men who think the apparatus for gaining a blessed life is the blessed life itself are mistaken (*instrumenta eius pro ipsa habent*, 44.7). However, the central point still stands; there is no need for Lucilius to worry about being a *pusillus*, because philosophy does not worry about that sort of thing either. Lucilius' social status provides no hindrance, or indeed any help, for his pursuit of virtue. Obviously this is a sore spot for Lucilius personally, as Seneca dwells on his specific complaints about both nature and fortune treating him grudgingly (*naturam prius, deinde fortunam*, 44.1) before scolding him for his preoccupation with

[32] This letter was composed before the great fire in A.D. 64, "which destroyed most of the old aristocratic homes together with their traditional decorations" (Flower 1996: 259). For more on the general history of the *imagines* under the Republic and empire, see Flower 1996.

irrelevant matters. But Seneca does not take away the comfort Lucilius takes (or wishes he could take) in his ancestors. Rather, he shows Lucilius how he could fashion his *own* ancestral identity, creating his own family of philosophers to whom he may turn for inspiration – remembering, of course, that they are *duces*, not *domini*.

Letter 44 blurs the border between Lucilius as addressee and general reader as addressee through its discussion of this concern with familial prestige. It begins with the very particular, very specific complaints of Lucilius. Although Seneca does not repeat his precise complaints, it is clear that he feels hard done by (*malignius*, 44.1); he has achieved the rank of *eques* through his own efforts (*industria*, 44.2), but apparently this is not enough. The beginning of the letter, then, is firmly rooted in Lucilius' personal grievances, and Seneca sets out to remonstrate with him. Yet the letter swings from the personal to the abstract, abandoning the concrete particulars of Lucilius' grumbling. When he mentions the *imagines* in the *atrium*, Seneca does not personalise those *imagines*; he does not say 'the image of so-and-so, who won this campaign and that political office, will not make you noble, Lucilius'. Instead, the impersonality of the image means that the reader can picture any house with such a smoky corner – even his own. One might object that a moment of specificity returns when Seneca asks the reader to imagine that he is a freedman rather than a Roman knight (*puta itaque te non equitem Romanum esse sed libertinum*, 44.6), but even here, there is space for the senator to think 'and rather than a senator too'. Seneca makes his advice about reconstructing one's family to include philosophers sufficiently general for every reader to consider doing so.

The concept of the family twice resurfaces briefly in unexpected ways that reinforce Seneca's decision to rework how Lucilius and the reader should define the

family. The first of these examples comes in Letter 47, which is one of the better known of the *Epistulae Morales* because of its lengthy handling of how the Stoic slave owner should treat his slaves.[33] The whole letter relies on the Stoic paradox that the wise man is the only person who is truly free, and as such Seneca stresses the fundamental humanity and potential for wisdom of master and slave throughout. One passage raises interesting questions about the ethics of the family. It comes about two thirds of the way through the letter, and argues that those who rail against living on friendly terms with slaves have forgotten the *mos maiorum* on the issue (47.14):

> Ne illud quidem videtis, quam omnem invidiam maiores nostri dominis, omnem contumeliam servis detraxerint? Dominum patrem familiae appellaverunt, servos, quod etiam in mimis adhuc durat, familiares; instituerunt diem festum, non quo solo cum servis domini vescerentur, sed quo utique; honores illis in domo gerere, ius dicere permiserunt et domum pusillam rem publicam esse iudicaverunt.
>
> Do you not see even this, how our ancestors removed all ill-will from masters, and all insult from slaves? They called the master the 'father of the family', and said the slaves 'belonged to the family', which still endures even now in mimes. They established a holiday, not as the only day when masters ate with slaves, but certainly on that day; they let slaves have honours in the household and speak justice, and determined that the home was a miniature state.

Seneca wishes to make an etymological point – in order to correctly characterise the relationship between a master and his slaves, the ancients called the master a 'father of the family' (*pater familiae*), and said that the slaves 'belonged to the family' (*familiares*). This deliberate choice of language, Seneca holds, indicates the sort of relationship the ancients believed should exist between a master and his slaves, as does the festival they established when master and slaves must eat together, and the honours they let slaves

[33] This letter has been the source of much criticism levelled at Seneca; it has shored up accusations of hypocrisy, in that he advocates the kindly treatment of slaves but never suggests they should be emancipated or that slavery is an abomination against the very humanity he claims to honour. However, to expect Seneca to espouse modern opinions of slavery is an anachronism, especially given the Stoic theme in the collection that one's condition as freeborn or slave is irrelevant to one's pursuit of virtue, and I do not propose to offer any further comment on this well-worn topic. For further discussion, see Bradley 1986 and Edwards 2009.

obtain in the household. So far, this seems a perfect example of the flexibility of the Latin word *familia* which, as I noted in my introduction, included both slaves and members of the nuclear family as we would describe it.

However, this passage offers a problem of interpretation. This passage is the *only* point in Letter 47 where the word *familia* appears. It is, of course, not the only time it appears in the *Epistulae Morales* as a whole, and there are other occasions when Seneca uses it specifically to mean a household in the general rather than strictly biological sense. For instance, in Letter 96.1, Seneca gives a list of common evils that have befallen him, including the fact that his slaves have fallen sick (*familia decubuit*). In Letter 119.11, he includes a *familia* obviously chosen for its physical beauty or admirable attire as one of the symbols of wealth that blinds the populace (*aut corporibus electa aut spectabilis cultu*). Letter 27 includes a more lengthy anecdote about a wealthy man named Calvisius Sabinus who gathered a group of slaves trained to recite Homer, Hesiod and the nine lyric poets for him, in a failed attempt to appear cultured; this *familia* was so expensive because he had them specially made (27.6). These passages provide parallel examples of master-slave relationships in which the word *familia* appears, and illustrate how common this particular use is in the *Epistulae Morales*. Yet Letter 47, which deals in such close detail with the question of slaves and their relationship to their masters, completely elides the word *familia*, apart from a single example.

One could argue that Seneca deliberately avoids the label *familia* because of its wide semantic range, and in this particular letter wants to keep a clear division between the free and non-free through this simple linguistic choice. However, it is possible that the deliberately casual appearance of the word *familia* here is meant to remind the reader

of the other contexts in which Seneca has discussed the issue of control of the self. An earlier discussion of freedom occurred in Letter 33, which used the word *tutela* to parallel a young man's freedom from familial control with a Stoic disciple's independence from his teacher. The letter explicitly concluded that we should view others as teachers, not masters. Letter 47 explicitly links the family to a master – which is precisely what Letter 33 said a figure of authority should *not* become. Of course, this is incidental to the main themes of Letter 47, which is concerned with the Stoic idea that only the wise man is free and the practical ethics of slave ownership. However, in this passage Seneca creates an uncomfortable juxtaposition between the *familia* and personal autonomy, creating an intratextual allusion to earlier letters in a way that emphasizes the problematic connection between parenthood and slavery, and the implications for the relationship between a parent and child if it is somehow kin to that between a master and slave.

The second brief mention of family comes in Letter 50, and at first glance also appears innocuous. It occurs right at the beginning of the letter, when Seneca wishes to give Lucilius an illustration of his point that we are blind to our own faults. He tells the story of Harpaste, a household *fatua* or fool, who has recently gone blind (50.2):

> Harpasten, uxoris meae fatuam, scis hereditarium onus in domo mea remansisse. Ipse enim aversissimus ab istis prodigiis sum; si quando fatuo delectari volo, non est mihi longe quaerendus: me rideo. Haec fatua subito desiit videre. Incredibilem rem tibi narro, sed veram: nescit esse se caecam; subinde paedagogum suum rogat ut migret, ait domum tenebricosam esse.
>
> You know Harpaste, my wife's fool, has remained in my house, an inherited burden. Myself, I am especially opposed to these sorts of monsters. If I ever wish to be pleased by a fool, I do not have to look far – I laugh at myself. Anyway, this fool suddenly stopped seeing. I tell you an incredible but true fact – she did not know she was blind. She repeatedly asks her guide to move. She says that the house is shrouded in darkness.

Harpaste, Seneca continues, illustrates our own inability to understand that we may be greedy or lustful, but at least she realises she must ask for a guide, which those with moral blindness fail to grasp.[34] The letter closes with the reassurance that once the mind has begun to take its philosophical medicine and look at its own faults, virtue will make the process both wholesome and sweet (*salutaris et dulcis*, 50.9). The letter seems to contain no references to families – except here, in a very underhand way, Seneca makes the first mention of his *own* family. Harpaste is not in the household because Seneca wants her there – he himself is most ill-disposed towards fools (*aversissimus ab istis prodigiis sum*, 50.2). She is there because she is the fool of Seneca's wife (*uxoris meae fatuam*, 50.2).

This brief phrase both tantalises and frustrates the reader.[35] On the one hand, finally here is some sign that Seneca does not live in an entirely isolated bubble on his own. He has a wife, he has a family, he potentially has a normal social existence.[36] On the other hand, his wife appears only in the most opaquely fleeting of ways. She happens to be the owner of the *fatua* that Seneca uses as an example, and is not a willing owner herself. Seneca makes it clear that Harpaste only belongs to his household because of a legacy (presumably to his wife), which is a burden rather than a gift (*hereditarium onus*, 50.2). Although the concept of an inheritance immediately points to the wider social context within which Seneca, or at least his wife, moves, Seneca does not bother to explain who would leave his wife a gift in such apparently poor taste, or why his wife

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[34] Harpaste in Greek means 'carried away', so presumably the name refers to the woman's wits having been snatched away, which means she is a *fatua*. I thank Darcy Krasne for this insight.

[35] I mean here the reader who is *not* Lucilius; presumably Lucilius would be aware of the composition of Seneca's household.

[36] Details of Seneca's political life never appear in the *Epistulae Morales*, despite Seneca's obvious comfort with discussing political matters; Nero, too, is strikingly absent. If, out of the Senecan corpus, only the *Epistulae Morales* had survived, we would have very little grounds to connect the author to the Neronian adviser recorded in Tacitus.

feels obliged to keep Harpaste rather than selling her on.[37] Indeed, I assume that Paulina shares her husband's discomfort with the *fatua*, although Seneca does not say so directly. She merely appears as the owner of the person that Seneca *really* wants to talk about.

Paulina remains anonymous while Harpaste is named, an inversion of what convention might lead us to expect. Seneca gives the dignity of identity to a slave whom he openly detests, but does not bring his wife into the narrative in the same way. If the passage occurred in a work addressed to a public audience such as a legal speech, where retaining Paulina's anonymity would have been more respectful, I would not highlight this omission. Similarly, were this one letter among many where Paulina had appeared, with her name, and participated in scenes of domestic life as recorded by Cicero and Pliny, perhaps this passage would arouse no comment. But the *Epistulae Morales* do not provide an equivalent of Cicero's chatty tone to Atticus, memorably dropping in a mention of Terentia's rheumatism at the close of a letter that has covered Cicero's grief at the loss of a cousin, the marital problems between Atticus' sister and Cicero's brother, and Cicero's management of Atticus' business in his absence (*Ad Atticum* 1.5).[38] Instead, Seneca's first explicit mention of his home life chooses to show us a freak he feels alienated from and a practically invisible wife who is responsible for this monstrosity. Granted, Seneca shows some consideration towards Harpaste. Despite his revulsion at her

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[37] It was possible, in a bequest, to forbid the sale of whatever was being left to the legatee. *Digest* 34.2.16 refers to a woman who charged her heir not to sell on her jewellery, gold, silver or clothing, but to keep the property for her daughter. It was also possible in a bequest to forbid that a slave should be manumitted; the will of Dasumius (*CIL* VI.10229), for instance, stipulates that the legatee's maternal aunt should not free Paederotes and Menecrates, but keep them in the same jobs as he gave them.

[38] Of the 426 letters in the *Ad Atticum* collection, not all of which are authored by Cicero, Terentia is mentioned 49 times, either by name or indirectly, and Tullia 48 times. The domestic aspect in Pliny is particularly marked; Carlon suggests that all the female addressees in the collection were probably his relatives by marriage (2009: 76). These women also appear in letters which are not addressed to them; for instance, he mentions his wife Calpurnia, although not always by name, in letters to Calpurnius Fabatus, her grandfather (4.1, 8.10); Calpurnia Hispulla, her aunt (4.19, 8.11); Pontius Allifanus (5.14); Maximus (8.19); Fuscus Salinator (9.36); and even the emperor Trajan (10.120).

and people like her, he does not mock her blindness or whatever physical or mental affliction makes her a *fatua*. However, this rare glimpse that Seneca permits us into his personal life implies he does not wish Lucilius to rely on the comforts of domestic bliss any more than on the prestige of his biological ancestors.

Gradual Inoculation

At this stage in the *Epistulae Morales*, other themes concerned with the individual take prominence in the collection. But mentions of the family, interesting in their specificity, continue to appear, exploring both the intimate relationships and the wider social dimensions of the family that the letters have already touched on. This section of the chapter will, of necessity, be somewhat fragmented, but it will show that Seneca develops the same ideas and themes he established earlier in the letters, such as the importance of one's inner orientation over the family's external influence, in tandem with the collection's wider themes. However, he also begins to incorporate positive familial associations, provided they appear in a suitably protected context.

Letter 60 recapitulates the theme from Letters 31-33 that people who care for you can pray for things which are harmful to you (60.1):

> Queror, litigo, irascor. Etiamnunc optas quod tibi optavit nutrix tua aut paedagogus aut mater? nondum intellegis quantum mali optaverint? O quam inimica nobis sunt vota nostrorum!
>
> I complain, I sue, I am furious. Even now, do you want what your nurse wanted for you, or your *paedagogus*, or your mother? Do you still not understand how much evil they desired? Oh, how hostile to us are the prayers of our own people!

Letter 60 is very short, and the remaining three sections form a bombastic denouncement of those who require excessive luxury to believe they are living happily. This introduction returns to the motif Seneca emphasised in Letters 31 and 32, as if Lucilius

has forgotten the previous advice and needs to be firmly reminded not to give in to conventional ambition. But this example is far more developed, far more dramatic than the previous passages. Lucilius, we may surmise, has slid backwards and needs to return to the Stoic basics. Seneca provides a short, sharp and flamboyant reminder of earlier lessons.

Yet he also embroiders upon the theme. Unlike Letters 31 and 32, where ill wishes were unintentional, now the evils that we suffer are specifically attributed to the ill-wishes of our parents (*inter execrationes parentum crevimus*, 60.1). Seneca explicitly creates the negative image of the ethical support structure that the family should provide. In other prose works, the family served as the safeguard for children, their safe haven in which to learn correct moral orientation, where the influence of *oikeiōsis* would draw them towards the good.[39] Here, any such influence has completely disappeared. There is no positive intention behind the prayers of these parents. We can no longer say that they are acting out of ignorance; they actually wish evil for their offspring (*quantum mali optaverint*, 60.1). This is in keeping with the theatrical excesses of the rest of the letter, which includes a dramatic comparison of man's appetites to those of an elephant.[40] Seneca perhaps expects his readers to realise from his style that they require a pinch of salt with this particular epistle. Yet the strategic amplification of the evils brought upon us by our parents strengthens the sense that our biological family do not necessarily provide us with what is best for us.

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[39] See chapter one, pages 42-3.

[40] "The bull is filled by grazing just a few acres; a single forest is enough for a multitude of elephants; man grazes both on land and on sea. What then? Did nature give us such an insatiable stomach, although she gave us such modest bodies, so that we surpass the appetite of such exceptionally vast and particularly hungry creatures?" (*taurus paucissimorum iugerum pascuo impletur; una silva elephantis pluribus sufficit: homo et terra et mari pascitur. Quid ergo? tam insatiabilem nobis natura alvum dedit, cum tam modica corpora dedisset, ut vastissimorum edacissimorumque animalium aviditatem vinceremus?*, 60.2-3).

Letter 66 is a monster of a composition, running for fifty-three sections.[41] The overall unifying theme is a discussion of virtue, its categories, its rewards, its effects and so forth, and the letter ultimately addresses the question of how all goods can be considered equal. This wide brief lets the letter meander through varied territory, and it eventually refers to how a parent should relate to a child (66.26):

> Num quis tam iniquam censuram inter suos agit, ut sanum filium quam aegrum magis diligat, procerumve et excelsum quam brevem aut modicum?
>
> Surely no-one would make such an unjust judgement between his own children so as to love a healthy son more than a sick son, or a tall and lofty son more than a short or average-sized one?

In the previous section, Seneca lampooned the man who maintains friendship with one of two equally virtuous men on the basis of which one is better dressed; this passage extends the point, illustrating that parents love their children equally and not on the basis of external and irrelevant things like health or height. This natural affection is based on the theory of *oikeiōsis*, a natural impulse, and Seneca makes the follow-up comment that wild animals do not distinguish between their offspring. The point of all of this is to reinforce that virtue, too, loves her offspring equally (66.27):

> Quorsus haec pertinent? ut scias virtutem omnia opera velut fetus suos isdem oculis intueri, aeque indulgere omnibus, et quidem inpensius laborantibus, quoniam quidem etiam parentium amor magis in ea quorum miseretur inclinat.
>
> To what end are these things applicable? So that you might know that virtue looks at all her works like her children with the same eyes, is tender to them all equally and in fact more lavishly to those who suffer, since the love of parents turns more to those for whom it has compassion.

The use of a deliberately biological phrase, *fetus suos*, strikingly foregrounds the procreative aspect of virtue, and strengthens the parallel to the man who does not prefer his healthy son over his sick son, or his tall son over his short son. The continuation of

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[41] Hachmann 2006 provides detailed discussion and commentary for this letter. Inwood 2007a:155-81 provides a more philosophically-orientated commentary.

the biological image, and the consequent personification of virtue, must be deliberate.[42] Virtue models the ideal of a parent who loves all her offspring equally, which Seneca gradually builds up to by using other examples; hence the deployment of the sick and healthy son. Of course, in the eyes of Seneca's contemporaries, it might have been possible to argue that actually a healthy son was preferable to a sick son for personal and political advancement, but Lucilius is considered sufficiently far along in his philosophical education that he does not need that sort of error explicitly discussed and debunked. He knows better than to make that mistake.[43]

This passage appears to be the first time that the family has appeared in a positive light in the *Epistulae Morales*. It occurs in the middle of a wide-ranging letter that discusses the key Stoic notion of the definition of virtue; that letter is placed just after the midpoint of the extant collection, sixty-sixth in the surviving series of a hundred and twenty four. Before Seneca presents an unequivocally positive image of the family, and provides this image of how family relations can mirror our relationship to virtue, he wants Lucilius to have made his way through not only the sixty-five letters that come before this one, but also the twenty-five sections meditating on virtue before it, and the twenty-six that follow. The reader only encounters this image when it is safely insulated, both by the collection and by the letter which enfolds it; the process of Stoic doctrinal formation means that the reader will concentrate on what this means for his relationship with virtue rather than becoming distracted by the secondary matter of the family. That

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[42] Hachman 2006: 205 suggests that this image ultimately comes from Diotima's speech in *Symposium* 207a5-212c3, specifically the comparison between the *opera virtutis* and biological children.
[43] Inwood 2007a: 171-2 argues that Seneca here suggests a "kind of compensatory pity for the weaker offspring" to account for the phenomenon that parents sometimes do feel an affective difference in their emotions for their children. However, I am not convinced that the actual language of the parental example Seneca uses supports this interpretation.

said, Seneca still *wants* to make the point that virtue is like a parent to us, and presumably the counterpoint that we should try, as parents, to treat our children on the basis of their inner virtue rather than their external qualities. However, this is very much a secondary message; Seneca wants to engage the reader's mind with the question of virtue and its functions rather than digress into the subject of familial ethics.

Family takes on an unexpected particularity in Letter 70, where Seneca tells the story of the suicide of Drusus Libo.[44] Letter 70, a reasonably lengthy letter, primarily concerns itself with the proper time to die. Seneca illustrates his point with a naval metaphor. If life is a journey, and death the final port, the man who reaches it swiftly has no more to complain about than a sailor who has had a swift voyage (70.3). It is not always correct to cling to life – it is not enough to live, but to live *well* (*non enim vivere bonum est, sed bene vivere*, 70.4). Naturally this *sententia* leads into a discussion of under what circumstances it is appropriate to end one's own life, and that examination introduces the anecdote about Libo's suicide (70.10):

> Scribonia, gravis femina, amita Drusi Libonis fuit, adulescentis tam stolidi quam nobilis, maiora sperantis quam illo saeculo quisquam sperare poterat aut ipse ullo. Cum aeger a senatu in lectica relatus esset non sane frequentibus exequiis (omnes enim necessarii deseruerant impie iam non reum sed funus), habere coepit consilium utrum consciscerret mortem an exspectaret. Cui Scribonia 'Quid te' inquit 'delectat alienum negotium agere?' Non persuasit illi: manus sibi attulit, nec sine causa. Nam post diem tertium aut quartum inimici moriturus arbitrio si vivit, alienum negotium agit.
>
> Scribonia, a severe woman, was the aunt of Drusus Libo, a young man as dim as he was noble, hoping for greater things than in that age anyone could hope for – or indeed than he could in *any* age. When he was carried away sick from the senate in a litter, certainly not with numerous rites, all his clients wickedly deserted him now he was not a defendant but a dead man; he began to hold a council on whether he should anticipate or await death. Scribonia said to him, "What pleasure does it give you to do another man's business?" She did not

[44] Reydams-Schils 2005: 45-52 gives a general overview of the Roman Stoics' opinions about suicide and which factors besides oneself should be taken into account when considering it.

> persuade him; he laid hands upon himself, and not without cause. For if a man about to die by his enemy's decision lives beyond the third or fourth day, he does another man's business.

The familial frame is arguably superfluous here, as the point of the anecdote lies in Libo's choice to die before Tiberius makes the decision for him. Seneca introduces the anecdote through Scribonia, marking her out very deliberately as Libo's aunt (*amita Drusi Libonis fuit*), although the anecdote which he wishes to tell is actually about the nephew. Libo, under prosecution for conspiring against Tiberius, decides to commit suicide against the advice of Scribonia. Yet Libo's decision to ignore his aunt and commit suicide wins Seneca's approval. There was no point in continuing to live when he lived at another man's pleasure rather than his own.

The question, then, is *why* Seneca decided to include the assertive and severe Scribonia in the narrative at all. The anecdote works just as well without her, simply saying that Libo chose to die rather than live at another man's whim. Any suggestion that Seneca includes her to provide a spot of colourful 'human interest' to his letter will not do. The *Epistulae Morales* as a whole use contextualised anecdotes and named individuals as *exempla* with a purpose rather than as light relief. The answer lies in Scribonia's advice, and Libo's decision to ignore it. Indeed, in some ways Scribonia is the antithesis of Arria, who encouraged her husband to commit suicide by stabbing herself first and handing him the dagger with the cheerful words "it doesn't hurt, Paetus" (*Paete*, *non dolet*).[45] Where Pliny makes Arria the embodiment of good Stoic womanhood, Scribonia reflects the social mores of the unphilosophical world at Rome.

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[45] Pliny *Epistulae* 3.16.13. This incident took place under the reign of Claudius in A.D. 42, and it is thus probable that Seneca was aware of it. It is tempting to think that Pliny may have been deliberately referencing this letter because of the reference in 3.16.9 to the widow of Scribonianus whom Arria criticizes for not joining her husband in suicide, but this may be wishful thinking. See Carlon 2009: 43-8 for a more detailed interpretation of Pliny's portrait of Arria.

The key to interpreting her inclusion comes from the theme introduced in Letter 31, that those who love us do not always wish what is best for us. Seneca presents a 'worked example' of a real-life situation where the wishes of a close relative were not in the best interests of the individual. Thankfully, Libo recognised this and followed his own rational judgement. Despite Scribonia's qualifications as a morally respectable woman (*gravis femina*), qualities prominently introduced at the same time as her relationship to Libo, she does not determine the appropriate course of action. In the context of Seneca's thought, Libo made the correct judgement, and chose to leave life freely; his aunt's desires would have deprived him of that choice.

The complexity of interpersonal familial relationships again appears in Letter 75, through the use of a very strange image Seneca uses to illustrate his relationship with his writing, and consequently with Lucilius. This passage repays a little attention, as it provides an interesting example of how Seneca uses familial language to illustrate his own relationship with philosophy. The letter as a whole discusses the various illnesses from which the soul can suffer, but the introductory section begins some distance from this theme. Lucilius has apparently complained that Seneca has been sending him less polished letters (*minus accuratas epistulas*, 75.1). Seneca resents being expected to produce works of oratorical excellence, and points out that one of the things he enjoys about writing to Lucilius is that their letters feel as if they are sitting in one another's company and chatting (75.1). He continues to defend his stylistic lack of elegance (75.2-3):

> Etiam si disputarem, nec supploderem pedem nec manum iactarem nec attollerem vocem, sed ista oratoribus reliquissem, contentus sensus meos ad te pertulisse, quos nec exornassem nec abiecissem. Hoc unum plane tibi adprobare vellem, omnia me illa sentire quae dicerem, nec tantum sentire sed amare. Aliter homines

> amicam, aliter liberos osculantur; tamen in hoc quoque amplexu tam sancto et moderato satis apparet adfectus.
>
> Even if I were to hold forth, I would not stamp my foot nor wave about my hand nor raise my voice, but I'd leave that sort of thing to the orators, happy to have brought you home my observations, which I would neither have tarted up nor thrown away. This one thing I should like to completely prove to you: I feel all the things that I say, and I don't just think them, but love them. Men kiss their girlfriend in one way and their children in another; however, enough affection also appears in that embrace, so holy and restrained.

This image brings the reader up short (or certainly, it brings *this* reader up short). Seneca says that he loves *all* the things he thinks (and presumably writes), but follows that thought with an image of men who love their girlfriend in one way and their children in another. This image raises the obvious question of which things Seneca views as the illicit girlfriend and which are the children, and indeed which of these Lucilius receives. The *point* of the illustration seems clear. Seneca's 'embrace' of the ideas he communicates in the letters is, like the father's embrace of his children, affectionate and sincere. However, it may look somewhat less impassioned than his 'embrace' of ideas in his other writing, just as the father's embrace of his mistress is (almost by definition) more amorous and energetic. Nevertheless, just because the performative nature of the two 'embraces' differs does not make the embrace the father gives his children any less genuine.

But while the rhetorical aim of this illustration makes sense, the situation itself raises more questions. Firstly, Seneca deliberately juxtaposes men's relationships with their *amicae* and their *liberi* to create an uncomfortable clash; while the children are, presumably, legitimate and from a recognised marriage, the word *amica* seems deliberately chosen to jar with the image of benign paternity that follows it.[46] All the

[46] Catullus 72 creates a similar clash of affectionate imagery, when the poet compares his love not to the way that the mob loves a mistress (*vulgus amicam*), but as a father loves his children (*pater gnatos*).

values that are implied in the embrace of children are completely at odds with those implied in embracing a mistress;[47] that the embrace the children receive is holy and restrained (*sancto et moderato*) implies the embrace given to the girlfriend is most decidedly not.

The moral complexity here raises a further question about Seneca's relationship to the *Epistulae Morales* and thus to Lucilius. Seneca targets his criticism here at the beguilement of oratory and its ornate style (*exornassem*), which he enjoys being able to leave behind in his conversations with Lucilius. Yet Seneca himself knows that he deals with oratory. He lives a double life between the mistress of public writing and his philosophical children, of whom Lucilius is one. That Seneca should have a different approach and emotional attachment to different sorts of composition makes sense. There is even something rather attractive in seeing the speeches Seneca writes for Nero, or indeed the *Medea* and other plays, as a passionately-embraced literary *amica* in this context. However, the *amica* is a dangerous figure, not just because of the destabilising influence of adultery upon the family as a unit that I outlined in chapter three, but also because of the dangers associated with men who become infatuated with courtesans and squander their resources upon them.[48] By writing for other audiences, Seneca risks losing his commitment to engaging fully with philosophical thought. In admitting the truth of his double literary life, and the disjunction between the purity of his philosophy and the mendacity of his other literary compositions, Seneca owns up to his own imperfect

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[47] While *amica* is not explicitly obscene, the context here implies Seneca uses it to mean a mistress. Lewis and Short s.v. *amicus* give *amica in bonam partem* to mean a female friend, but comment that this use is very rare. *In malam partem*, the meanings given are 'concubine, mistress, courtesan'. See Aulus Gellius 6.8; Plautus, *Curculio* 5.1.3; Terence, *Andria* 1.3.11; Catullus 72.3; and Cicero, *Ad Atticum* 10.10.

[48] These were a stock trope in comedy. Mistresses stereotypically were characterised as demanding and extravagant; see Clitipho's speech at Terence, *Heauton Timorumenos* 213-29 for a comparison of his greedy mistress with Clinias' virtuous one. See chapter three, pages 146-7 for a discussion of the destabilising effect of adultery.

commitment to the Stoic path. He cannot resist the temptations of writing for the *amica*, although he knows he should.

The image contains an implied rebuke for Lucilius, too, for *desiring* the kind of oratorical flourishes that Seneca can produce in his other life. Lucilius has read over half-way through the letter collection, and so should be getting a firm grasp on the basics of Stoic reorientation by now, yet he still desires to be unfaithful to philosophy and longs for the comforts of his stylistic *amica*. Lucilius has been passing himself off as an accomplished Stoic, but clearly there are still things to root out if he feels the need to ask for that kind of writing rather than the sort that Seneca has been giving him. Indeed, given that the theme of the letter as a whole is the diseases of the soul, this image provides a gentle, chastening reminder that Lucilius' soul is still infected with these kinds of ailments. He needs to commit himself completely to the innocent purity of philosophy rather than seeking solace in the embrace of the enticing literary *amica* of polished rhetorical style.

Letter 78 gives us the second glimpse into Seneca's own family in the collection. Following a sequence of letters that continue to consider the nature of suicide, Seneca begins by consoling Lucilius on his frequent catarrh and fevers (*destillationibus crebris ac febriculis*, 78.1). Seneca himself suffered from something similar in his youth, and at first bore them bravely (78.1-2):

> Deinde succubui et eo perductus sum ut ipse destillarem, ad summam maciem deductus. Saepe impetum cepi abrumpendae vitae; patris me indulgentissimi senectus retinuit. Cogitavi enim non quam fortiter ego mori possem, sed quam ille fortiter desiderare non posset. Itaque imperavi mihi, ut viverem; aliquando enim et vivere fortiter facere est.
>
> Then I succumbed, and was brought to the point that I myself dripped away, drawn out in the end to emaciation. I often had the impulse to break off my life;

> the old age of my most tender father restrained me. For I thought about not how bravely I could die, but how he was not able to bravely miss me. And so I ordered myself to live. Sometimes even to live is to act bravely.

Sometimes it is braver, and more proper, to suffer through a difficult situation rather than to end one's life. The letter explains that it was Seneca's philosophical studies, the work of the mind, that gave him the comfort he needed to persevere, and so continues to discuss the benefits of properly directed mental activity as a general-purpose cure. But let us turn back to the beginning of this letter, the first time Seneca's *father* is mentioned in the collection, as a recollection, in connection with a particularised choice about suicide. The closest parallel in the preceding *Epistulae Morales* is the story of Libo Drusus and his aunt Scribonia from Letter 70. If that incident were the guide for how to deal with one's family in the case of suicide, clearly Seneca himself is at fault here by being persuaded by concerns for his father rather than ignoring them. However, the situation is rather different. Libo was under a likely sentence of death from Tiberius; Seneca is held hostage by his own body, not the power of another man. Libo is fairly certain that the sentence of death will come within a couple of days; Seneca knows that he may, eventually, recover. Libo, at least as far as the anecdote is concerned, has no family dependent upon him, and Scribonia makes no appeal to obligations he has to others; Seneca views his responsibility towards his father as a significant factor in his decision not to commit suicide. Scribonia speaks directly to Libo to give him her misguided advice; Seneca the Elder remains a silent but significant presence in his son's deliberations.

Whether Seneca *actually* had this conversation with himself during a period of extreme illness is immaterial, just as it is immaterial whether Lucilius *actually* suffered

from a severe bout of catarrh.[49] The memory is included because it once more shows the family in a positive light, where a son reasonably incorporates his concern for his father in a rational decision not to commit suicide. Seneca does not object to taking one's family into consideration; it follows that the family can play an important role in an individual's life. If families were dispensable and to be disregarded, Seneca would not have taken his father into account at all when making his decision. Instead, he paints a touching image of the grief he knows his father will suffer at his loss, making a convincing case for sparing Seneca the Elder the emotional pain of his suicide. The contrast between his decision and Libo's, however, rests firmly on the fact that nobody offers Seneca advice. He makes up his own mind up, whereas Libo disregards his aunt's unwise counsel.[50] Families, then, can be a good and important part of our lives, but we must not be misled by their ill-informed guidance into ignoring our own reason.

The reader only sees Seneca's positive relationship with his father when he has been sufficiently inoculated against drawing the wrong conclusion from such a display. The story of Libo taught that family members do not always give the correct advice in matters of suicide; Seneca's story shows that does not mean the family should be rejected completely from such situations, but sensibly considered as people who will be affected by one's decision. After all, the Stoic wise man is not inhuman. He would not make a

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[49] As Edwards comments, "however much we may want to interpret such remarks as rare glimpses into the personal experience of one of Neronian Rome's most complex characters, even these few plausible details are hardly to be trusted" (1997: 23). Griffin notes the problem that "the surviving prose works ... tell us little about Seneca's external life or about the people and events that formed its setting" (1992: 1), but does her best to construct as detailed a history of Seneca's life as possible from the fragments. In her discussion she assumes that comments of this sort in the *Epistulae Morales* are based on at least a grain of truth. Inwood also cautions that "the not infrequent notion that the Seneca we know from the letters is the man himself should not be accepted uncritically" (2007b: 137)

[50] Of course, in reality Seneca the Elder did offer his three sons a considerable amount of advice through writing the *Controversiae* and *Suasoriae* for them as oratorical guides.

decision to kill himself without considering the impact on his wife, children, parents and friends, because that would be against his nature as a human.

Now that the reader is further along the *Epistulae Morales*' developmental path, examples that would have been dangerous at the beginning of the journey are safe enough to read. But Seneca is careful to always provide a reminder of the dangers associated with the family, lest the aspiring Stoic disciple wander in the wrong direction.

Teaching With Precepts

At this stage, the *Epistulae Morales* reaches a turning point in Seneca's portrayal of the family. Following the careful immunisation of the reader against familial examples, such examples begin to occur more frequently. Letters 88, 94 and 95 all discuss questions of education, what should be taught to children, and how to teach them. These pedagogical issues tie into wider questions of how one should go about ethical education, and the family as a place where that education takes place. Working out how the two strands interact provides further insight into how Stoicism and the family should operate at this more rarefied level. The gradual introduction of discussion concerned with familial matters indicates that Lucilius should have absorbed enough Stoic theory by this point to properly process matters of the family. The fact that these references come in an explicit discussion of education reflects on Lucilius' own educational progress through the *Epistulae Morales* that has led him to a stage of readiness for tackling these previously dangerous subjects.

Letter 88 takes on the question of liberal studies (*de liberalibus studiis*, 88.1), and what we might call professional studies. Seneca states that he believes no study good if it

produces money (88.1). However, even liberal studies is a tortured term. While a *grammaticus* may busy himself with looking at language, it does not necessarily bring him any closer to virtue (88.3). The only *true* liberal studies, in Seneca's view, are those which contribute to the individual's moral growth; everything else is ultimately trivia. Homer serves as the *bête noir* to Seneca's irritation. Homeric scholars busy themselves with questions such as whether Homer or Hesiod was older, why Hecuba handled her old age so badly, and what the respective ages of Patroclus and Achilles were (88.6-7). Such enquiries are totally pointless, argues Seneca (88.7-8):

> Hoc me doce, quomodo patriam amem, quomodo uxorem, quomodo patrem, quomodo ad haec tam honesta vel naufragus navigem. Quid inquiris an Penelopa pudica fuerit, an verba saeculo suo dederit? an Ulixem illum esse quem videbat, antequam sciret, suspicata sit? Doce me, quid sit pudicitia et quantum in ea bonum, in corpore an in animo posita sit.
>
> Teach me from him how to love my country, my wife, my father, how to sail to these noble things even when shipwrecked. Why do you ask whether Penelope was *pudica*, or if she tricked her own generation? Or if she suspected that man she saw was Ulysses, before she knew? Teach me what *pudicitia* is and how great a good is in it, whether it is located in the body or in the soul.[51]

Rather than minutiae which could be debated forever, scholars of Homer should search out the ethical lessons he has to teach us about our interactions with others. What is particularly significant here is the aspect of Homer from which Seneca chooses to pick these lessons. He could have chosen the guest-friendship shown by Nestor to the young Telemachus, the hospitality the Phoenicians showed towards Odysseus, the mercy that Achilles showed to Priam when the Trojan king came to reclaim his son Hector's body. But instead, he microscopically zooms in on the characters of Ulysses and Penelope, suggesting that from this story we could extract all the guidance we need about how to navigate through these difficult ethical waters.

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[51] Here I follow the convention I established in chapter three of leaving *pudicitia* and *pudica* untranslated; for a discussion of why, see pages 134-5.

Unpicking this passage a little more shows that the familial connections form a key part of its function. Seneca wants the story of Ulysses to teach him how to love his fatherland (*patriam*), his wife (*uxorem*) and his father (*patrem*); two of these are explicit family relationships, and the etymology of *patria* points to the same kind of intimate connection. Seneca does not look to Ulysses for evidence of how to live according to virtue in general terms, nor for advice on how to treat his friends well. Rather, he wants guidance on matters of familial ethics, how to relate to the people closest to us – those with whom *oikeiōsis* brings us into first contact. The liberal arts should prepare us for virtue by giving us guidance on these close interactions; after all, as we saw in chapter one, *oikeiōsis* is the primary mechanism that teaches us how to act justly towards each other.[52] The relationships included in the first stages of *oikeiōsis*, those we have with our parents, children and spouses, are fundamental to our journey towards virtue. Homer can genuinely be useful to us if he can show us how to correctly navigate those relationships.

In the same way, Penelope is not useful to us because of the debate over her *pudicitia*. Rather, she provides a model of what a *pudica* wife ought to be, or at least a starting place for that conversation. As we saw in chapter three, within a discussion of the ethics of marriage Seneca reconceptualised *pudicitia* as a genuine outlet for feminine Stoic virtue.[53] That discussion frequently emphasised the difficulty of actually defining *pudicitia* and what it should look like. Here Seneca suggests that Penelope might play a useful role in this ethical debate by providing a springboard for wider discussions about *pudicitia* that themselves lead into bigger questions, such as debating the nature of the soul. Literature can address the ethical problems posed for women, and indeed familial

[52] See chapter one, pages 31-4.
[53] See chapter three, pages 134-41.

ethics in general, but it must do so as a stepping stone towards virtue rather than an end in its own right.

Seneca continues to deplore badly-taught liberal arts that do not, in fact, teach anything of value or help the pupil aspire towards virtue. He refuses to admit painting, wrestling or similar activities into the list of liberal arts, as that would only open up the gate for cooks and perfumers (88.18). Skills that bring us pleasure are not the same as studies that bring us virtue. However, Seneca does not wish us to question the virtue of the liberal arts entirely (88.20):

> 'Quare ergo liberalibus studiis filios erudimus?' Non quia virtutem dare possunt, sed quia animum ad accipiendam virtutem praeparant.
>
> "Why, then, do we instruct our sons in the liberal arts?" Not because they can give virtue, but because they prepare the mind to receive virtue.

Seneca is specifically concerned with the education we give *our sons* (*filios*). He has shifted his frame of reference from the wider community's responsibility to its young people, which he discussed a moment earlier.[54] He now frames the debate in terms of the specific duty that we, presumably parents, have towards our children. We are duty-bound to provide an education which provides the groundwork for virtue. Here Seneca explicitly makes it the duty of *parents* to establish their children's moral characters wisely. Seneca's reader is stuck with the parents that he has. There is nothing to be done about their moral state, except assume the worst and avoid being misled by their incorrect desires for us (as seen in Letters 31 and 32). Yet the children of Seneca's reader may fare better. The reader can ensure that they are brought up understanding the correct values of

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[54] "Or do we believe that is a liberal study for our youth, whom our ancestors taught to throw a spear upright, to twist a stake, to urge on a horse, to wield arms? They used to teach their children nothing which could be taught to people who were lying down" (*an liberale studium istuc esse iuventuti nostrae credimus, quam maiores nostri rectam exercuerunt hastilia iacere, sudem torquere, equum agitare, arma tractare? Nihil liberos suos docebant quod discendum esset iacentibus*), 88.19.

things, and with the kind of education that will make the continuing journey towards virtue easier than if they had to begin from scratch. This is a more practical approach to the role of a parent in forming their child's moral character. Rather than relying on the *oikeiōsis*-based approach he used in other works, which assumed an osmosis-like passage of moral knowledge from adults to children, Seneca almost sets out a model curriculum for the education of his disciple's child.[55] We do not know if Lucilius himself had children for whom this would be appropriate. Nevertheless, for those readers of the collection who were in charge of their offspring's education, this would have been intensely practical, straightforward and applicable advice on how they could prepare their child for their own moral battle.[56]

Letters 94 and 95 form a fascinating pair of complementary views on the value of education through precepts.[57] Letter 94 lays out at some length the arguments of people like Aristo, who claim that attempting to teach philosophy by precepts is at best meaningless and at worst actively harmful, and then demolishes them point by point.[58] Letter 95 argues that while precepts have curative properties, in and of themselves they are not enough to bring someone to virtue. Both letters use evidence drawn from familial contexts to make their point, and so continue to reinforce the sense that moral education is irreversibly connected to our relatives.

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[55] It is presumably no surprise that Letters 94 and 95, describing as they do a system of philosophical pedagogy, follow so soon upon this discussion; see Schafer 2009: 85-110.
[56] Letter 88 continues to discuss the nature of the virtues at considerable length, but its content is not relevant to the present discussion. The imagery of battle and fighting is very strong throughout the *Epistulae Morales*; see Wilson 1997: 63-7 for a discussion of this language in relation to conquering grief.
[57] Schafer 2009 provides a thoughtful study of these letters and their implications for the didactic program of the *Epistulae Morales* as a whole. He concludes that Letters 94 and 95 defend and explain Seneca's philosophical pedagogy, and demonstrate the controlled artistry that helps structure and reinforce whole collection.
[58] The debate on the best pedagogical approach was a well trodden one. For more discussion of the arguments involved, see Kidd 1978 and 1988: 646-51.

Letter 94 introduces precepts and their purpose with a familial example. They tell a husband how to behave towards his wife, or a father how to treat his children, as well as instructing a master how to treat his slaves (94.1).[59] The structure of the letter is slightly confusing, as Seneca first lays out the objections to precepts, only to refute them. Aristo contends that precepts are pointless, as the wise man should learn how to live well full stop; that final goal automatically includes behaving correctly towards one's wife and children (94.3). The lengthy criticism of precepts, which Seneca will proceed to refute, actually specifically targets those who claim to offer advice to the married (94.15):

> In matrimonio praecipies quomodo vivat cum uxore aliquis quam virginem duxit, quomodo cum ea quae alicuius ante matrimonium experta est, quemadmodum cum locuplete, quemadmodum cum indotata. An non putas aliquid esse discriminis inter sterilem et fecundam, inter provectiorem et puellam, inter matrem et novercam? Omnes species conplecti non possumus: atqui singulae propria exigent, leges autem philosophiae breves sunt et omnia alligant.
>
> In marriage, you will advise in what way a man should live with a wife whom he married as a virgin, in what way with her who has experienced someone else before the marriage, in what manner he should live with a wealthy wife, and with one without a dowry. Or do you not think there is some difference between the barren and the fertile woman, between the more mature woman and the young girl, between the mother and the step-mother? We cannot grasp all kinds: but each one demands their own discussion; yet the laws of philosophy are brief and bind up everything.

This obvious *reductio ad absurdum* shows that attempting to provide precepts for each and every situation is an endless task, and indeed a fruitless one. There will *always* be a new variation on any given interaction between a married couple. General statements about how married people should behave are useless because of the differences in what constitutes a 'married couple'. Trying to provide precepts for all types of married couples is equally useless, as the task would be never-ending, and philosophy should have discrete boundaries. Wisdom, not precepts, should answer questions about proper

[59] This follows Aristotle's conception of the component parts of the household found in the *Politics* (1253b).

conduct. Precepts, in and of themselves, either are so vague as to be useless or become many-headed hydras. Seneca's use of marital advice as the particular target for this attack shows that marriage remains an important locus for ethical behaviour – but, the interlocutor argues, the disciple will not find the key to correct conduct in precepts.

Seneca's refutation of his interlocutor's points returns to the marital theme. He explains that the point of advice and precepts is not to create a cure but to point out the obvious; it reminds us what we already know (94.25). As Inwood puts it, "the specific character of *praecepta* makes the instructions more useful to the moral agent" in helping him apply a principle to a particular dilemma (2005: 118). Seneca then lists examples of situations where we know we are doing the wrong thing, yet do it anyway (94.26):

> Scis inprobum esse qui ab uxore pudicitiam exigit, ipse alienarum corruptor uxorum; scis ut illi nil cum adultero, sic tibi nil esse debere cum paelice, et non facis.
>
> You know that the man who demands *pudicitia* from his wife while being the corruptor of the wives of others is a scoundrel; you know that just as there should be nothing between your wife and a lover, there should be nothing between you and a concubine, and you do not act accordingly.

Seneca returns to marriage and shows the kind of preceptual advice that *would* actually be useful, in that humans need reminding that adultery is bad for both men and women. Precepts need to provide these broad reminders about conduct. As a rule of thumb, within a marriage adultery by either partner is *never* acceptable, regardless of the individual natures of the partners.[60] The ethics of this particular situation imply that while the dynamics of individual relationships may vary, some overarching rules apply to all marriages. Precepts work by reminding us of them. In this case, Seneca uses the example

[60] I say 'as a rule of thumb' because the Stoic theory of ethics does allow for exceptional situations where the rational action may in fact be what is unacceptable 99.99% of the time. Inwood 2005: 95-131 provides an excellent discussion of the role of rules, *precepta* and *decreta* in Stoic decision-making, and how these provide a flexible framework for moral reasoning.

of adultery as always unacceptable; he describes broad behaviours rather than particularised individuals as his interlocutor does. His argument that precepts *can* provide us with helpful moral advice in this way, and thus guide our decision making, implies that there are some fixed standards of moral behaviour. Such guidance applies to familial relationships as much as it does to friendship or other social connections. Seneca clearly believes that precepts can provide appropriate guidance for how to live well with one's family.

Of course, not just any precepts will do. Seneca continues to refute his interlocutor's points, explaining that precepts are not actually infinite, and that not all precepts are worth paying attention to. We need someone to act as our preceptor who can speak against the precepts of the world at large (*opus esse nobis aliquo advocato qui contra populi praecepta praecipiat*, 94.52). We are surrounded by people who give us false advice (94.54):

> Non licet, inquam, ire recta via; trahunt in pravum parentes, trahunt servi. Nemo errat uni sibi, sed dementiam spargit in proximos accipitque invicem.
>
> I say, it is not permitted to walk a straight path. Our parents, our slaves drag us into crookedness. No-one errs on his own, but sprinkles his insanity on those closest to him and receives it in his turn.

Seneca revisits the trope that our parents give us bad advice, although less theatrically than he did in Letter 60. Once again, parents are only among a number of people who give us bad advice through their ignorance of virtue, and slaves are just as guilty of offering false moral guidance. The juxtaposition of the two relationships raises interesting questions about the parent-child and master-slave relationship, but suffice to say any human with whom we interact could lead us into the wrong behaviours if we do not carefully judge the precepts they offer us. Seneca goes on to offer the solution of Nature

as our guardian. She does not reconcile us with any vice, and only produces health and freedom in us (94.56). Nature, our ultimate parent, can be trusted to give us wise and true advice; our biological parents cannot.[61] This reminder of the theme that Seneca developed so much in the earlier letters serves to once more protect the reader from mistaking the concern of people we love for the true path to virtue. Even the devotee who has made it this far through the *Epistulae Morales* still has to be reminded lest he deviate from his true course.

Letter 95 continues to use familial themes as part of the interwoven fabric of the wider discourse on preceptual education, although the first mention of families in the letter is rather less serious. Acknowledging that Letter 94 was rather lengthy, taking 74 sections to make its point, Seneca says that Lucilius has only himself to blame if, after reading Letter 95, he starts to feel like a husband whose ambitious wife is driving him round the twist (95.3)![62] This is a standard trope in Latin literature, but Seneca puts himself in the position of the pushy wife and casts Lucilius as the hen-pecked husband. This is reminiscent of the rather strange image in Letter 75 that deliberately juxtaposed men's reactions to their children and girlfriends to expose both Seneca's and Lucilius' moral failings. Seneca uses negative images of familial relationships to describe his relationship with Lucilius in ways that undercut the supportive relationship the letters try to create between friends aspiring to philosophy together. Seneca pairs the image of the

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[61] For more on Nature as parent in the Stoic universe, see the discussion in chapter one, pages 40-2.

[62] "I will protect myself with all pity laid aside, and dash a huge letter against you, which if you read it unwillingly, you will say 'I brought this upon myself', and consider yourself among the number of those men whose wife twists them, drawn by a great ambition; among those, whose riches, acquired through much sweat, treat them badly; among those, whose honours sought by a great deal of skill and labour torture them, and others who are masters of their own misfortunes" (*ego me omissa misericordia vindicabo et tibi ingentem epistulam inpingam, quam tu si invitus leges, dicito 'ego mihi hoc contraxi',* ***teque inter illos numera quos uxor magno ducta ambitu torquet****, inter illos quos divitiae per summum adquisitae sudorem male habent, inter illos quos honores nulla non arte atque opera petiti discruciant, et ceteros malorum suorum compotes*).

henpecked husband with the man harassed by his own riches and those burdened by the honours they worked so hard to gain (26.3). These are all examples of things people bring upon themselves; in this context, a wife is a self-inflicted source of suffering, but then so potentially is Lucilius' request that Seneca explain whether precepts on their own are sufficient to gain virtue. Hopefully, Lucilius will get more than a headache out of this letter, and hopefully a husband would get more out of his relationship with his wife than ambitious pressure. The negative image suggests what *could* happen, but not what *should* happen.

This idea that what *should* happen does not always happen reappears later, in a similar way to the image in Letter 94. Again, a man may know keeping a concubine is an insult to his wife, but he does it anyway (95.37). This is the final example in a list of things people know they should not do but do anyway, because of our incorrect understanding of what we should admire and what we should fear (*falsa admiratio et falsa formido*, 95.37); only when we have the correct understanding about what is truly to be admired and feared will we stop doing things we rationally know we should not do. Precepts provide no help in removing those false conceptions. The aspiring Stoic must work to remove them first so that they do not stand in the way of effective application of the precepts, which "flow from" the "Stoic physical principles (holism, rational teleology, a part-whole understanding of the cosmos) and of the natural foundation of human sociability" which lie at the heart of the Stoic understanding of how the universe functions (Inwood 2005: 122).

The passage provides the key to why references to the family are so thin on the ground in the *Epistulae Morales*. There is no *point* in discussing how to relate to one's family until the fundamental barriers to those relationships have been removed (95.38):

> Nihil ergo proderit dare praecepta nisi prius amoveris obstatura praeceptis, non magis quam proderit arma in conspectu posuisse propiusque admovisse nisi usurae manus expediuntur. Ut ad praecepta quae damus possit animus ire, solvendus est.
> Therefore it is of no benefit to give precepts unless first you have removed what stands in the way of precepts, no more than it benefits to place weapons in sight and to move closer unless the hands are set free for use. For the mind to be able to go to the precepts which we provide, it must be set free.

References to the family have been expunged for the reader's own safety. Just as approaching an enemy with weapons nearby but no hands free to use them would probably result in severe injury at best and outright slaughter at worst, approaching dangerous moral ground with an understanding of the ethical tools at one's disposal but unable to actually use them can only harm the person travelling towards virtue. The *Epistulae Morales* strip away these external dangers until the reader has got his hands free by reorientating his inner moral landscape. He now has come some way towards eradicating these false ideas about what is good and bad in the world, and so can begin to cautiously approach the enemy.

Similarly, Seneca mentions Marcus Brutus' work *peri kathēkontos*, or *Concerning Duties*, which provides precepts concerning parents, children and brothers. But, says Seneca, it will be no good unless a person has something to refer back to, an underlying principle in accordance with which to act (95.45). There is no benefit in having precepts until the foundations of virtue are in place which let an individual apply them properly. Seneca's deliberate elision of the family from the first part of the collection, followed by a slow and sparing re-introduction of them towards the end, springs from an approach to

philosophical education that believes it is vital to get the basics firmly in place before approaching more significant challenges. This lengthy initial stage of education means that the family's gradual introduction begins late in the collection, and so the family never achieves a substantial presence in the letters.

Seneca Gets Personal

As the end of the extant collection approaches, Seneca seems to feel that he can relax a little. Lucilius has a good grasp of the basic tenets of Stoic philosophy, so more detailed accounts of people and Seneca's relationship to them begin to appear. We have seen two references to Seneca's own family, a one-word allusion to his wife in Letter 50 and a brief mention of his father in Letter 78. Suddenly, in the last thirty or so letters, specific mentions of relationships with families, complete with context, occur four times – astonishingly frequent for the *Epistulae Morales*, despite its small size statistically speaking. Now that the reader has been primed for specifics, he is given specifics, in the hope that he will process them correctly and extract their meaning.

The first of these concrete examples comes in Letter 97, which takes as its theme the refutation of Lucilius' belief that the time in which he lives is particularly corrupt, because all ages are full of vice. To prove it, Seneca brings out the occasion when Clodius was on trial for adultery with Julius Caesar's wife, and attempted to bribe the jury through sexual favours (97.2):

> Credat aliquis pecuniam esse versatam in eo iudicio in quo reus erat P. Clodius ob id adulterium quod cum Caesaris uxore in operto commiserate, violatis religionibus eius sacrificii quod 'pro populo' fieri dicitur, sic summotis extra consaeptum omnibus viris ut picturae quoque masculorum animalium contegantur? Atqui dati iudicibus nummi sunt et, quod hac etiamnunc pactione

> turpius est, stupra insuper matronarum et adulescentulorum nobilium stilari loco exacta sunt.
>
> Would anyone believe that money was turned over in that case in which P. Clodius was the defendant on the charge of that adultery which he committed with Caesar's wife in secret, violating the religious obligations of that sacrifice which is said to occur for the people, with all men moved away from the enclosure to the extent that even pictures of male animals are covered over? But money was given to the jury and, what is more shameful than even this bargain, in addition the debauchery of matrons and noble youths was demanded in place of a *stilarium*.[63]

This was a considerable scandal in its own day. Clodius, a Roman senator, infiltrated the sacred rites of the Bona Dea, which was supposed to be a women-only sacrifice. The rumour was that he was having an affair with Julius Caesar's wife Pompeia, and that this was the reason for his presence. When the Senate referred the matter to them, the pontiffs and Vestal Virgins decided that a sacrilege had been committed and Clodius was prosecuted accordingly, although he seems to have been rather blasé throughout the proceedings.[64] Seneca describes the trial and Clodius' attempts to bribe the jury in considerable detail, even quoting Cicero in case his own testimony of such outrageous facts appears unbelievable. Clodius' disregard for both religious and legal propriety, says Seneca, should convince Lucilius that no age has ever truly been golden; every man is susceptible to lust and greed. From this specific (and juicy) anecdote, Seneca moves into a more abstract consideration of various vices and the propensity of souls towards virtue. It is astonishing, given the paucity of specific anecdotes in the *Epistulae Morales*, that he chooses to begin the discussion with such a vivid, detailed and frankly salacious example.

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[63] The phrase *stilari loco* is very difficult to translate, but appears to mean something like 'as an additional reward' or 'in place of an honorarium'.

[64] We are lucky enough to have three letters from Cicero to Atticus giving a good gossipy account of the affair in its various stages (*Ad Atticum* 1.12, 1.13 and 1.16). Plutarch, *Caesar* 9-10 also gives a full account of the scandal. Balsdon 1966 summarises the sources and course of events, arguing that the prosecution was forced by a *factio* of Clodius' enemies. Mulroy argues for a more sympathetic reading of events, suggesting that the original incident was exaggerated for political purposes by Cicero and that Clodius' presence at the sacrifice may have been a "a faux pas born of ignorance or miscommunication" (1988: 177). Tatum 1990 examines Cicero's motives for becoming involved with the prosecution of the case.

Clearly the reader is well-insulated enough to cope not only with particularity, but with sexual content as well.

The anecdote focuses on adultery – adultery begins it, with Clodius' adultery with Caesar's wife (who, interestingly, is not named, just labelled 'Caesar's wife'), and adultery concludes it, with jurors promised sex with respectable *matres familiae* (97.5). Adultery makes a fitting centre for this story. As we saw in chapter three, the fundamental problem with adultery is uncontrolled passion, when irrational desire overtakes reason in determining a man's decisions.[65] Clodius provides a great example of someone who not only allows his own judgement to be undermined by irrationality, but tries to make other men give in to their passions as well.[66] Again, Seneca tries to communicate that the people around us try to lead us into their mistakes. Just as they give false precepts, they give false models of behaviour to imitate, and that has been the case for as long as humans have existed. Companions in wickedness mean we degenerate (97.10); it is much harder to find companions in the pursuit of virtue. Adultery here stands for the victory of irrationality and thus vice in human society. Yet as Seneca concludes his letter, these crimes are not without punishment, even if people like Clodius do manage to subvert their legal trials. Those who commit evil are constantly scourged by the whip of conscience (97.15). Adulterers too will suffer for committing crimes that nature condemns (*quam natura damnavit*, 97.16).

Seneca illustrates his point with adultery, and with the story of Clodius in particular, in order to drive home to Lucilius that people in previous ages really *were* just as vicious as he believes those living in the current age are. The story has to be shocking

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[65] See chapter three, page 147.
[66] I use the word 'passions' here in the technical Stoic sense; for further details, see the introduction, page 20 and chapter three, pages 131-2.

and presented in meticulous detail to make that point effectively. However, Seneca then steps back from the particular to the general, moving into the abstract and the competing attractions of virtue and vice. Clodius and adultery act as springboards into a deeper discourse about how one should live and the temptations of life. By this point, Seneca hopes the reader of this letter will be well-grounded in Stoic philosophy, if he has followed the increasingly sophisticated doctrinal content of the collection. The scurrilous particulars should therefore enhance rather than detract from the reader's understanding of the wider point – as indeed they will, if the reader can make the connection between adultery and action guided by irrational lust. The crime against the family, then, that Clodius has committed becomes emblematic of every vice in opposition to virtue; the secure family becomes the positive counterpart to the family destabilised by the effects of adultery.

Letter 99 also engages with a particular moment more than earlier letters did, although the presentation of this particular missive has created some difficulties in its interpretation. It is not a normal letter. Rather, Seneca sends on to Lucilius another letter he wrote to Marullus on the death of his son. The tone of the enclosed letter is markedly different to that of the *Consolationes* to Helvia, Marcia and Polybius. The content appears much harsher, opening with an order for Marullus to prepare himself to receive reproaches instead of comfort (*solacia expectas? convicia accipe*, 99.2). However, to take this as evidence for Stoic heartlessness misses several important points about the wider context in which the letter is presented.

First, the very introduction of the letter, where Seneca explains the circumstances under which the letter to Marullus was written, makes it clear that it is not grief *per se* that he wishes to rebuke, but indulgent grief (99.1):

> Adflicto enim et magnum vulnus male ferenti paulisper cedendum est; exsatiet se aut certe primum impetum effundat: hi qui sibi lugere sumpserunt protinus castigentur et discant quasdam etiam lacrimarum ineptias esse.
>
> For a little while, one must yield to someone afflicted by a serious wound and bearing it badly; let him satisfy himself or certainly pour out the first attack; those who consume themselves with grief immediately should be chastised and learn there are certain follies even of tears.

Just like Marcia, Marullus appears to have given in to heartache in the long term rather than overcoming it. Seneca upbraids him not for mourning his son, but for indulging in performative sorrow and extravagant displays of his emotional distress. The location of the letter matters as well. Immediately before this, in Letter 98, as part of a discussion of indifferents, Seneca said that a man needed to realise that his wife, children and property were not going to be his always so that he could avoid misery when he did lose them (98.5).[67] It seems that the thought of losing possessions was in some ways easier for Seneca's contemporaries to mentally prepare for; hence his advice to Lucilius very early on that he should set aside a certain number of days to live as if in poverty, with the most vile food and rough, harsh clothing (18.5). Seneca advised Lucilius to prepare for the loss of *things* at the very beginning of the collection, but the loss of *people* is more difficult to handle. The letter to Marullus stands in stark contrast to the account of the death of Bassus back in Letter 30. Although Bassus was preparing himself for death from old age,

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[67] "Moreover, thus he will be composed if he thinks on what the variety of human affairs is capable of before he experiences it, if he possess his children and wife and inheritance just as if he will not always have them and as if he will not be more miserable because of this, if he ceases to have them" (*sic autem componetur si quid humanarum rerum varietas possit cogitaverit antequam senserit, si et liberos et coniugem et patrimonium sic habuerit tamquam non utique semper habiturus et tamquam non futurus ob hoc miserior si habere desierit*).

he seemed to do so in a complete vacuum. Seneca spoke of his body giving up, despite his efforts to hold it together, and the still healthy state of Bassus' mind; he did not mention Bassus' family, or his dependents, or indeed any effect that Bassus' death might have on anyone but Bassus.

The letter to Marullus puts death in its proper context for the first time. The reader can now cope with the realities of what it means to treat a member of one's family as an indifferent – not to lose concern and care for them entirely, but to moderate their grief by remembering that they did not belong to you. Wilson says that this letter "revisits the theme of grief broached in *Epistle* 63 but with this disconcerting departure: it turns back on itself to question the value of some forms of consolation as well" (1997: 50). He is correct that this letter is different to Letter 63, which consoled Lucilius on the death of his friend Flaccus, but even there Lucilius was told to grieve appropriately (*plus tamen aequo dolere te nolo*, 63.1). Further, the relationship in Letter 99 is between parent and child, one of the fundamental human relationships, the one from which *oikeiōsis* builds, in some ways the starting point of the Stoic moral universe. Marullus gives into his grief because that is the automatic inclination of a parent who is not a sage. The tough advice that Seneca has to give him needs to be heard by all parents, so that they may be ready for this situation if they have the misfortune to encounter it. By this stage in the *Epistulae Morales*, the reader knows that interpersonal relationships matter, but also that the family is ultimately a gift of fate that can be readily taken away. That build-up makes this letter less abrupt than Wilson suggests.

Similar to Letter 97, the specifics of Marullus' situation soon give way to more general advice. A specific family provides the stage upon which to examine the working

out of ethical problems on the microcosmic scale, with the discussion then expanding out to the macrocosmic implications. Wilson notes that Seneca uses "a sophisticated rhetorical technique whereby the discussion oscillates between examining grief on an abstract and on a personal level" (1997: 51), refusing to engage with the specifics of Marullus' loss except in very restricted circumstances. This generalisation of themes means that Seneca can make his advice about loss, and excessive grief, applicable to *any* reader, not just Marullus or someone in his situation. It also applies the general advice given in Letter 98 about how to cope with losing indifferents to a real-life case study, giving practical form to abstract ideas. Applying these ideas is not easy. Losing a child genuinely hurts. Yet a man with a correct understanding of what is and is not important will not be adrift in grief, whatever happens. Instead, he will take pleasure in the memory of what has been lost (99.11). Seneca does not ask Marullus to be negligent or heedless of his loss. Rather, he wants him to put his bereavement in perspective, through the Stoic theory of indifferents, so that he may stop his obsession with grief and enjoy his memories of his son. As Henderson notes, the letter seems to prepare Lucilius for a similar fate, "rallying him against any loss *he* may [soon?] suffer" (2004: 43).

The personal relationship between Marullus and his son that we see in Letter 99, then, soon moves into general advice which the reader can apply to himself. The particular once more serves as a springboard into the general, a lead-in to widely applicable wisdom of the sort that Seneca praised in Letters 94 and 95. We can abstract these general rules of behaviour from specific situations, but with care. Seneca presents a test case of how to analyse an individual situation and produce such broad advice. The reader may then telescope back down to his own specific circumstances and apply that

advice as appropriate, but the transition between the general and specific occurs through the mediation of personal relationships.

Letter 104 has already appeared, briefly, in chapter three.[68] In it, Seneca writes about his wife Paulina's tender concern for him as he departs for his villa at Nomentum, and spends a short while describing in poignant detail how her care for him revitalises his own zest for life. He also mentions his brother Gallio, who advised him to leave Achaia when he went down with a fever, because it came from the location rather than the body (104.1). Seneca nowhere else mentions two members of his family in the *same* letter at the *same* time. This is also the only evidence of Paulina's name internal to Seneca.[69] The letter continues by relating the improvement in Seneca's health when he got to Nomentum, but warns that ultimately a man carries his own troubles within him. No matter how far you travel, you cannot escape the evils of your own soul.[70] Seneca again admonishes the reader to think of his nearest and dearest as mortal, like a flourishing plant that will eventually wither (104.11), and emphasises the importance of study over travel to heal one's mental state. If you must move, then move to be close to sensible people like Cato, Laelius and Tubero – and if you must have Greeks, then spend time with Socrates, Zeno, Chrysippus and Posidonius (104.21-22). The letter closes by praising the models of Socrates and Cato the younger, who faced death bravely and on their own terms.

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[68] See the discussion in chapter three, page 152.
[69] Her name is also recorded in Tacitus' account of Seneca's suicide.
[70] The travel motif frequently appears in the collection, both as a description of a literal journey and as a metaphor for the soul's philosophical journey; Henderson 2006 explores this theme in Letter 57. Other letters that develop this idea include Letters 28.1-4, 53.1-5 and 70.1-6.

The portrait of husbandly affection at the start of this letter, then, is almost completely undermined by its content. As soon as Seneca gets away from Paulina, he recovers his health – as Henderson puts it (2004: 40):

> He bolts by carriage to an estate of his 'at Nomentum'. Away from fever, and for that reason from the City [of Rome]: from his wife, his wife, his brother, his health, his (Senecan) old age, his wife, his fear. From Pompeia Paulina. From Gallio. The moment he touched the vines, it was a case of 'Once let into pasture, I went for my food' (104.6) and the recovery of his SELF (full concentration on study).

Seneca *explicitly* runs away from his family. For all his later protestations that travel does not help one escape from one's own demons, it seems to do him a power of good. Interpretations of this letter also ignore the admonition of Letter 103, which the reader will just have perused. This short letter warns that man delights to ruin man (*homini perdere hominem libet*, 103.2), and tells the reader to guard against the everyday danger (*cotidianum periculum*, 103.1) which comes from other people.

Seneca's decision to bolt, then, makes sense – he *has* to get away in order to be free of the dangers posed by others. The extreme caution of Letter 103 does not extend as far as abandoning social interaction altogether, so Seneca's criticism of his own journey to Nomentum acknowledges that running away from one's problems will not actually get rid of them. Yet he has still chosen to run, implying that the place in which he finds himself causes him sickness, just as Gallio told him his fever came from sojourning in Achaia. Seneca is not just escaping from Rome, of course, but also from his wife – it is surely not coincidental that Paulina is the only family member who truly intrudes on Seneca's voice in the *Epistulae Morales*, and from whom he has to escape to be his old self again (*repetivi ergo iam me*, 104.6).

Seneca's choice to use Socrates as one of his *exempla* towards the end of the letter further complicates the sentimental tone we are tempted to read into the opening section. In sketching the hardships with which Socrates lived, Seneca emphasises the difficulties of his home life (104.27):

> Si tamen exemplum desideratis, accipite Socraten, perpessicium senem, per omnia aspera iactatum, invictum tamen et paupertate, quam graviorem illi domestica onera faciebant, et laboribus, quos militares quoque pertulit. Quibus ille domi exercitus, sive uxorem eius reminiscimur moribus feram, lingua petulantem, sive liberos indociles et matri quam patri similiores.
>
> However, if you want an example, take Socrates, a most long-suffering man, tossed through all harsh things, however unconquered by poverty, which his domestic burdens made more heavy, and by the labours which military service brought too. He was exercised by these at home, whether we recall his wife, fierce in her habits and insolent in her speech, or his unteachable children who were more similar to their mother than their father.

Seneca highlights the toils and tribulations that Socrates suffered because of his wife and children, yet also remarks that nobody ever saw him too sad nor too happy (104.28).[71] Of course, plenty of other things caused Socrates discomfort, not only his family, but Seneca foregrounds that element, providing a stark contrast to his blissful portrait of home life with Paulina. A detractor might suggest that the mention of Xanthippe should signal that all families cause some degree of *Sturm und Drang* for their members; Seneca provides two sides of the same coin to accurately portray the complexity of these relationships in our lives.

The fundamental messages of Letter 104 clash. On the one hand, Paulina's love reinvigorates Seneca's care for himself; on the other, he has to run away from her to the no-man's-land of Nomentum to regain his mental clarity and sense of self. On the one hand, travel cannot help us escape from our mental turmoil; on the other, Seneca travels precisely to relieve his mental as well as physical fever. The letter in which Paulina plays

[71] *Usque ad extremum nec hilariorem quisquam nec tristiorem Socraten vidit.*

the greatest part is also the one in which Seneca makes it clear he can do perfectly well without her. These conflicting ideas emphasise the ambivalent nature of the family. On the one hand, it supports and nurtures Seneca, but on the other, he has to get away from its distractions from time to time to regain his equilibrium. The reader needs to identify a fine balance between dedication to self and interaction with community, between isolation and participation – and that includes his relationship with his family.

The final letter in which Seneca mentions his own family, Letter 108, another lengthy piece coming in at 39 sections, discusses knowledge, and the best way to obtain it. Seneca reminisces about the advice his own teacher Attalus gave him about how to learn when Seneca laid siege to his school (*scholam eius obsideremus*, 108.3), the first student to arrive and the last to leave, and takes as his central theme how one should learn philosophy from a philosopher. He outlines various sorts of student and pedagogical approaches, continuously returning to his own experiences as a pupil of Attalus, and of Sotion and Sextius.[72] Sotion explained the Pythagorean rationale for vegetarianism to him, and he ardently pursued it, but eventually gave up the habit (108.22):

> Quaeris quomodo desierim? In primum Tiberii Caesaris principatum iuventae tempus inciderat: alienigena tum sacra movebantur et inter argumenta superstitionis ponebatur quorundam animalium abstinentia. Patre itaque meo rogante, qui non calumniam timebat sed philosophiam oderat, ad pristinam consuetudinem redii; nec difficulter mihi ut inciperem melius cenare persuasit.
>
> How did I stop, you ask? The time of my youth fell in the early reign of Tiberius Caesar. Foreign religious rites were being removed then, and among the evidence of superstition was placed refraining from certain animal flesh. And so when my father asked me, who himself was not frightened of malicious prosecution but

[72] Sextius was the founder of a philosophical school at Rome that combined both Stoic and Pythagorean doctrines, as seen from Seneca's comment on his doctrinal affiliations in Letter 64.2; although the school did not last long as an institution, it seems to have been influential on Neronian philosophers. See Manning 1987 for a discussion of the school and its members. Sotion was a Pythagorean, whom Seneca discusses separately from the Sextii, but as associated with them. Attalus was a Stoic philosopher, Seneca's first teacher to profess 'pure' Stoicism; according to Seneca the Elder, he was banished by the machinations of Sejanus (*Suasoriae* 2.12). For more on Seneca's philosophical education, see Inwood 2005: 13-16.

> hated philosophy, I returned to my old habits. Nor did he find it difficult to persuade me to begin eating better.

The passage presents a number of strange conflicts. Pythagoreanism argued against eating meat in case one should accidentally attack the reincarnated soul of a parent by using a knife or teeth on the carcase of the unfortunate animal into which they had been reincarnated (108.19).[73] Yet Seneca's respect for his father manifests itself in precisely the opposite behaviour. The passage initially suggests that Seneca gave up vegetarianism because of its political danger, only to promptly undermine that by explaining that Seneca the Elder had no worries on that front, but just detested philosophy. Seneca does not explain if his father took advantage of the political situation to persuade him to begin eating meat again, or if he explicitly opposed the practice because of its philosophical origin; in some ways, that is as irrelevant to the function of this anecdote as whether it ever actually happened. The important message that the passage communicates is that it was under his father's influence that Seneca chose to disregard the philosophical teachings of Sotion.

Interestingly, Seneca is only wooed away from Sotion's teachings, not those of Attalus. This returns to the idea of philosophical parentage Seneca explored earlier in the *Epistulae Morales*, especially in Letter 44. One 'parent', Attalus, stays in the ascendant and has considerable influence over the young Seneca's moral development, while Sotion

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[73] "But Pythagoras used to say that there was a connection of all things between all things, and a traffic of souls moving into different and other forms. If you believe him, no soul perishes, nor indeed ceases to be except for a short time, while it is poured across into another body. We will see through what alternations of times and when, after wandering through many homes, it returns into man; meanwhile, he created the fear of crime and parricide for men, since they were able, unknowing, to attack the soul of a parent, and violate it with iron or with a bite, if the kindred spirit of someone was being housed in something" (*at Pythagoras omnium inter omnia cognationem esse dicebat et animorum commercium in alias atque alias formas transeuntium. Nulla, si illi credas, anima interit, ne cessat quidem nisi tempore exiguo, dum in aliud corpus transfunditur. Videbimus per quas temporum vices et quando pererratis pluribus domiciliis in hominem revertatur: interim sceleris hominibus ac parricidii metum fecit, cum possent in parentis animam inscii incurrere et ferro morsuve violare, si in quo <corpore> cognatus aliqui spiritus hospitaretur*).

is eclipsed by Seneca the Elder. Seneca does not regret this. As he himself says, he did not require a great deal of persuasion to return to eating meat. Indeed, almost to reinforce the difference between Attalus and Sotion, Seneca immediately follows this incident with the fact that he still uses a hard pillow that resists the body, just as Attalus recommended, even though he is now an old man (108.23). He claims he mentions this to show how newcomers to philosophy become zealous in obeying every pearl that falls from their teacher's lips without rational consideration, but the fact that this particular habit has stuck shows that Seneca has chosen not to abandon it; his teacher's influence still holds.[74] The juxtapositions of these anecdotes implies that our philosophical family's advice will survive our biological family's interference if that advice truly comes from wisdom. If it does not, then our biological family's suggestions to abandon it might actually help us separate out sound advice from more eccentric positions. Letter 94 acknowledged that the world at large can give misguided precepts. Now we see people who call themselves philosophers can mislead too. Our two families can co-exist, and check the more excessive impulses of each other.

This letter presents a complex vision of a student's loyalties to his biological and philosophical father, but in Seneca's case things worked out for the best. Seneca neither encourages us to separate ourselves from our biological family as he did in earlier letters, nor to rely solely on the advice from our philosophical family. He integrates the two, but can only do so because he draws on his own experience. Providing only vague precepts of how the interaction between the philosophical and the social should work would fail; a particular case must demonstrate it. Seneca the Elder, in advising his son to give up

[74] This is not the only habit from his early philosophical training that Seneca maintains; in *De Ira* 3.36.1-3, he attributes his habit of self-scrutiny before falling asleep to Sextius, who had the same habit.

vegetarianism, provided him with valuable moral guidance despite the fact that his motivations came from his distrust of philosophy. Seneca's family *does* provide him with moral guidance of the sort he has depicted elsewhere in his prose works, but Seneca cannot write a definitive guide to how interactions between that environment and the wider world of philosophy should work. However, he can provide a worked demonstration from his own experience, and let the reader draw his own conclusions about how the two spheres feed into each other. By juxtaposing the positive influence of his two fathers, Seneca the Elder and Attalus, he reminds the reader that there is more than one place to learn about virtue.

Of course, Letter 108 cannot leave well enough alone and complicates matters by returning to the sorts of pointless study that students undertake if left to their own devices. Seneca takes Cicero's *De Re Publica* and posits three hypothetical students – a philosopher, a philologist and a *grammaticus*. The philosopher wonders how Cicero could have spoken so much against justice (*contra iustitiam*, 108.30), while the *grammaticus* submerges himself in the uses of words like *reapse* and *re ipsa* and *sepse* and *se ipse* (108.32). But the philologist first observes that we cannot tell who Servius' mother was or who Ancus' father was, although we know Numa was his grandfather (108.30); these are the most important points the text has to offer him. We know from Letter 88 that we are supposed to follow the path of the philosopher. Yet the fact that Seneca chooses to illustrate the pointless pursuit of knowledge through an obsession with royal ancestry says something about the general futility of examining ancestry of *any* kind. The choice to refer to Cicero may also imply a third kind of familial tie – the one

that Seneca has to his literary ancestors.[75] Given the influence of Cicero's letter collection on the *Epistulae Morales* and his groundbreaking work in making Latin a language capable of communicating philosophy, he serves as a model for Seneca in several ways. Yet Seneca does not agonise over his literary ancestry. Despite the time he spends in Letter 108 mulling over his personal philosophical family tree, and its interactions with his biological family, he does not intend to become obsessed with any of these inheritances. It matters more that a person receive wise instruction than where he receives it from.

A Postscript

The family more or less disappears for the rest of the *Epistulae Morales*. The remainder of the collection talks about questions of style and oratory, of education and what is 'according to nature', and continues to explore the themes of virtue and vice. But it would be foolish to end this chapter without acknowledging Letter 121, which quietly presents one of the key themes that I have returned to again and again – the theory of *oikeiōsis*.

Seneca is in the midst of a series of letters discussing character (*mores*) with Lucilius, and promises that while the relevance of the topic he is about to handle may not immediately be apparent, all will become clear. He wishes to spend some time considering whether animals have any sense of their own constitution (*constitutionis suae sensus*, 121.5). He describes personal *oikeiōsis* rather than social *oikeiōsis* – that is, how a living being gains a sense of their own physical self and the urge to care for that self

[75] I am indebted to Caroline Bishop for this insight.

(121.17).[76] The inborn sense of self-preservation (*naturali amore salutis suae*, 121.20) lets us love ourselves – and from that same root, although Seneca does not explore this, we gain the capacity to love others. We might consider it strange that Seneca privileges an exclusive discussion of personal rather than social *oikeiōsis*, but given the *Epistulae Morales*' overwhelming concern with the individual and the self, that emphasis is coherent with the rest of the collection's project. However, it should also be noted that the collection is incomplete. We cannot know whether the missing letters examined the mechanism of social *oikeiōsis* further, and how the self fits into a community.

The slow build of material that deals with the family, and how the self should relate with it, leads to the theory which will eventually explain the basic mechanics of that interaction. Seneca has prepared the reader for this theoretical doctrine, but has also taken great pains to make that preparation as straight-forward and readable as possible. After all, if a burgeoning disciple of Stoicism has made it this far into the *Epistulae Morales*, he has digested a considerable mass of fresh ideas and complicated material. Now, and only now, that he has got his priorities straight and a sense of where his values should lie, he is ready to handle heavy theory.

The *Epistulae Morales* have come around to where I began with in chapter one, with the *Ad Marciam* and *Ad Helviam*. Despite beginning from a different starting point, the emphasis on the individual's inner orientation, the collection has worked its way back to *oikeiōsis*. Seneca's points in Letter 121 introduce idea of how the individual develops her interest in her own good, and as we know from our knowledge of the theory, the family functions in this context as an element of progress both towards individual and social *oikeiōsis*. The focus on the individual eventually shows us how and why the family

[76] For a discussion of social *oikeiōsis*, see chapter one, pages 31-4.

comes into a discussion of moral development, even if the initial framing of the discussion appears fiercely individualistic. The deliberate ordering of the collection into a thematic whole builds towards this moment, which addresses the individual's need for a family from a different perspective from the rest of Seneca's philosophical works.

Conclusion

Our journey through the *Epistulae Morales* has shown how Seneca completely purges his work of all references to the family, before gradually reincorporating it as the reader gains more philosophical expertise and establishes a solid moral foundation. Certain key elements needed to be in place before any useful discussion could begin, such as a correct understanding of what is good and the true nature of virtue. Once Seneca is confident that his student has a firm grounding in these important concepts, he slowly reintroduces the family – always cautiously, and always buttressed with reminders of other important ideas the reader needs to have in mind, but an ethics of the family gradually emerges even from the work that seemed most hostile to the institution, and most obsessed with the individual.

The *Epistulae Morales* is structured as a deliberately ordered collection with a well-conceived didactic purpose that makes this development possible. Indeed, the very nature of the letters *qua* letters adds to their pedagogical effectiveness. As Letters 94 and 95 demonstrated, Seneca could not have delivered moral instruction on how to get from being a normal person to being a sage by writing a handbook of rules or guidelines; one has to learn how to navigate that terrain through experience and making one's own judgements on situations rather than relying on rules. However, the genre of the letter is

uniquely fitted to communicating the salient aspect of an individual's particularised journey towards virtue, and thus acting as an successful pedagogical device. Seneca chooses the letter as a literary form, rather than writing a philosophical treatise like the *De Ira* or *De Clementia*, because it captures the essence of his personal experience, and allows the lessons he has learnt to be conveyed to Lucilius without reducing them to precepts or formulae. Letters preserve the narrative of personal experience without obscuring the philosophical points Seneca wishes to convey.

The family still presents dangers, and there are no hard and fast rules to guide the aspiring student. The fundamental complexity of the family cannot be reduced to easy precepts, although they play their part in guiding our behaviour. The initial suspicion that we are encouraged to have of our parents and their misguided intentions for us gives way to a vignette of Seneca's father leading him in the right direction – and ultimately to a discussion about the theory which makes parents love their children and want to protect them. We advance from a sceptical attitude towards the family to one which cautiously accepts them as a positive influence in our lives, although we cannot let our guard down and allow ourselves to be misled by their mistaken concepts about what is good and what is virtuous.

The *Epistulae Morales*, then, present a picture of the family that is not as unambiguously positive as those found in Seneca's other prose works, but that eventually presents the possibility that the family can provide positive moral formation. The work's emphasis both on the development of the individual soul and the need for cautious interaction with other humans means that the family of necessity gets pushed to one side, and cannot form a focal point in the same way it does in works like the *ad Helviam* and

ad Polybium. Equally, the explicitly didactic intentions of the work lead Seneca to take a very different approach to Stoicism than he does elsewhere in his prose writing; he has different priorities, and different goals in communicating fundamental Stoic truths. Yet when the collection does touch on the theme of familial ethics, despite an emphasis on rational prudence and self-governance, the picture that Seneca eventually constructs preserves the possibility found in his other works that one's biological family can contribute to successful moral development.

Conclusion

The family's importance to the Stoic theory of moral development has been underestimated. The focus on the autonomy of the sage, and the supposed dehumanisation caused be the extirpation of the *pathē*, have obscured the importance that Seneca's texts place on close personal relationships. I have worked through Seneca's oeuvre in search of his thoughts on the ethics of the family. I have not, of course, found a systematic doctrine, helpfully laid out in bullet points. But instead, I have outlined a consistent framework that helps us understand how Seneca approaches the family, and how he visualises it working at its very best. I have also shown that Seneca recognises the limits of the family – most of us are, after all, human and imperfect, and as long as we are still ruled in any degree by our irrational passions, it is impossible for the family to always function as it should. That said, human fallibility does not provide an excuse for not attempting to live up to the ideal. To strive towards perfection and imitate sage-like behaviour, following the *exempla* provided by one's teachers, may one day lead to attaining virtue.

The family's role in providing *exempla* for imitation has a strong Roman precedent, but Seneca takes it in a new direction by using family members as models for specifically Stoic ethics. Helvia modelled *oikeiōsis* for her children, while she herself had the example of her sister to guide her through her grief over Seneca's exile. Marcia acts as an *exemplum* to herself. Polybius has his brothers, biological and spiritual, to whom he has a duty to be an example of upright conduct. The *De Matrimonio* fragments suggest that a wife and a husband can provide good examples to each other, and thus mutually

nurture each other towards virtue. The imperial family, of course, worked in the opposite direction; they provided examples of how *not* to do familial ethics, and demonstrated what preoccupations and obsessions to avoid within families. The historical figures used as *exempla* in most didactic works are present in Seneca, but to a lesser extent than in works such as that of Valerius Maximus. Seneca recognises that due to *oikeiōsis*, and the intimacy of the family, moral instruction we receive from those closest to us is much more likely to take root in our souls.

The Stoic sage is capable of living life without relying on familial relationships, but the pursuit of virtue is certainly aided by such relationships. The demands upon the *proficiens* are very different to those upon the sage, as Seneca himself acknowledges in his letters. Those who pursue virtue are by definition weak, and need to create an environment for themselves that will most likely cultivate virtue. While the *Epistulae Morales* emphasise the importance of rebuilding the moral foundations of the soul so that the disciple is not confused about what is truly good and truly bad, by necessity an inner private activity, the letters allow for the possibility that a disciple's external environment might be ordered so as to help her progress towards virtue. The presence of family members who provide beneficial *exempla* and who share the same goal of attaining virtue thus becomes an indifferent worth seeking precisely because of its potential contribution towards achieving the ultimate good.

Seneca is ultimately a realist about philosophy. He knows that the overwhelming majority of us will never make it to the enlightened state of sagehood, although that fact in and of itself is no reason not to make the attempt. He is also sensible enough to realise that, despite the Stoic fondness for Cato as an exemplar, the meticulous and formal

bearing of the statesman may not appeal to everyone. He thus makes allowances – he appeals to the figures whom his reader will find most intellectually accessible, their family members, to provide his bitter cup with its Lucretian rim dipped in honey.

Seneca's realism extends into the genuine workings of the family, for families go wrong sometimes. The *Epistulae Morales* constantly emphasise how important it is for a *proficiens* not to rely too much on others, family or friends, lest she be distracted by their false value judgements into thinking happiness is predicated on something other than virtue and perfect reason. The *De Matrimonio* outlined circumstances in which marriage would be unable to achieve its ideal purpose. Families can help, but they can also unseat us, as Seneca's deployment of the imperial family in his *exempla* clearly illustrates. There, the greatest goal of Roman culture, the achievement of political power, displaces the pursuit of virtue with devastating effect for the Julio-Claudians. Seneca's commentary is subtly countercultural, but, as he knows from his own first-hand experience, the results of this ill-informed preoccupation with political power speak for themselves. Seneca acknowledges that families go wrong – and when they do, the moral consequences are shattering.

The role of the family in the basic infrastructure for achieving virtue relies upon well-established Stoic theories such as *oikeiōsis*, which appears to date from the very early years of the school. Seneca takes these abstract notions and puts them into practice. He feels no need to outline elaborate explanations of how the ethics of the family should work, partly because of the problems with giving preceptual advice that he discusses in Letters 94 and 95, and partly because the basic ethical concepts upon which those ethics depend have already been adequately expounded by his philosophical predecessors.

Instead, he concentrates on putting those ideas to good use, explaining to the uninitiated what use the family has for them in their situations, and gently correcting the *proficiens* in case she mistakes the role of the family as necessary rather than incidental (but helpful) to the pursuit of virtue.

Seneca constructs his family ethics from his Stoic philosophy. He uses them to undermine the common cultural assumptions about the family that his peers subscribe to. Marriage is a solemn undertaking that deserves proper intellectual consideration, not merely an opportunistic decision driven by the lust for sex or property. The imperial family is not as perfect as it wishes its subjects to believe it is. Managing the assets of your wards should be done according to their interests as if they were your own, not purely for your own self-interest. There is more to a family than political wheeling and dealing, wealth consolidation and property interests. Obligations between family members extend beyond the corporeal into the moral realm. Families should work as environments to support their members in the pursuit of virtue, not money or high office. Money or high office may, of course, be unexpected side effects of the pursuit of virtue, especially if you happen to be a member of the senatorial class with the leisure to attend to philosophy in the first place, yet they should never take priority over the journey to attaining perfect reason. Families should be prepared and willing to lose such indifferents in that journey.

At the end of chapter two, I mentioned the risk that my argument would make it seem as if the family was constitutive rather than instrumental to virtue, that is, that the family played a role that meant the sage could not possibly achieve virtue without it. I promised to return to this question in my conclusion, because I believe the *Epistulae*

Morales help provide an answer. The family in the letters is, in the main, a family as it might occur in the real world, complete with imperfections and difficulties, which is opposed to the idealised family of the *consolationes*. In Letter 44, Seneca offered Lucilius the possibility of stepping away from his actual imperfect family and instead creating for himself an idealised family of philosophers, from whom he could draw inspiration. This point, I believe, illustrates the distinction we need in order to argue that Seneca both believes the family *is* necessary for virtue, but at the same time retains its status as an indifferent. What matters is not the imperfectly instantiated biological family, but the roles that they perform in modelling virtue for us and in drawing us forward in the path of moral development. The sage is able to identify his own role models to hold those positions, and one might argue that the *cosmopolis* is an excellent example of a way in which the sage does define his own community. However, for most of us, the important roles in moral development are usually performed by our family members – and their imperfect performance of the functions that Seneca idealises contributes to our pursuit of virtue.

Where do we find ourselves at the end of this study? I hope I leave you convinced, after close readings of the texts, that Seneca viewed the family as playing an integral role in a human's moral development. I have also argued that the sage's self-sufficiency is paradoxically nourished by life in community. Without a community within which to learn virtue, it is unlikely that anyone would reach sagehood and thus be able to live autonomously in the first place. Seneca never elevates the family to an essential for virtue, of course, as that would risk miscategorising it as a good rather than an indifferent. However, his use of the family in his philosophical writing as a space for ethical

cooperation and progress strongly suggests the high value he places on it. I hope I have demonstrated that ancient philosophy, and that of Seneca in particular, is an underused resource for the study of the ancient family, and that thinking about familial ethics provides a rich vein for further research. After all, pursuit after knowledge is a community activity; without participation in the community of scholars, this is as far as I can go alone.

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