

NATVRALES QVAESTIONES 4A PRAEF. 20 AND EP. 34.2:  
APPROACHING THE CHRONOLOGY AND NON-FICTIONAL  
NATURE OF SENECA'S *EPISTVLAE MORALES*\*

It is undeniable that the form of Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* we currently read is a work of literature, literature being here defined as a piece of work the author intended to publish. What Seneca claims in *Ep.* 21.3–5 is clear evidence of this:

exemplum Epicuri referam. cum Idomeneo scriberet et illum a uita speciosa ad fidelem stabilemque gloriam reuocaret, regiae tunc potentiae ministrum et magna tractantem, 'si gloria' inquit 'tangeris, notiozem te epistulae meae facient quam omnia ista quae colis et propter quae coleris'. [...] quod Epicurus amico suo potuit promittere, hoc tibi promitto, Lucili: habebō apud posteros gratiam, possum mecum duratura nomina educere.

However, this by no means implies that their nature is artificial or fictional, as many—perhaps most—Senecan scholars believe.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it is still worthwhile, once their ultimate literariness has been acknowledged, to investigate their genesis, for this may help us analyse the author's craft as well as go some way to revealing the historical circumstances behind their publication. Accordingly, I am going to portray the following scenario, according to which the *Epistulae Morales* should be considered real letters that an aged Seneca, reflecting daily on his experiences of human being, wrote to a friend.

*QNat.* 4a *praef.*, originally a letter to Lucilius, sets up the beginning of a new atypical correspondence, in which Seneca tries to divert his friend Lucilius from his everyday concerns, at the same time directing him toward a more philosophical—that is, Stoic—way of life.<sup>2</sup> In order to do so and knowing that Lucilius is already an Epicurean sympathizer, at first Seneca tends to use Epicurean quotations (including some of Lucilius'

\* It is my pleasure to thank Andrea Balbo, Andrew Laird, Ermanno Malaspina, Victoria Rimell and Julia Wildberger, who have read various drafts of this paper, giving me fundamental suggestions for improving it. I am also grateful to Philip Barras, Elisa Della Calce, Giovanna Garbarino, Bardo Maria Gauly, Bruce Gibson, Laura Nigro, Aldo Setaioli, Gareth Williams, Michael Winterbottom and an anonymous reader. It goes without saying that I alone am responsible for any remaining deficiencies.

<sup>1</sup> The idea that the *Epistulae Morales* are real letters destined to be published is already in P. Cugusi, *Evoluzione e forme dell'epistolografia latina nella tarda repubblica e nei primi due secoli dell'impero con cenni sull'epistolografia preciceroniana* (Rome, 1983), 195; G. Mazzoli, 'Le *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* di Seneca. Valore letterario e filosofico', *ANRW* 2.36.3 (1989), 1823–77, at 1850; I. Lana, 'Le «Lettere a Lucilio» nella letteratura epistolare', in P. Grimal (ed.), *Sénèque et la prose latine* (Vandœuvres, 1991), 253–311, at 260; and A. Setaioli, 'Epistulae morales', in G. Damschen and A. Heil (edd.), *Brill's Companion to Seneca. Philosopher and Dramatist* (Leiden, 2014), 191–200, at 194. For a general *status quaestionis* concerning the debate on the fictional or non-fictional character of the *Epistulae Morales*, cf. Mazzoli (this note), 1846–50, with an update in Setaioli (this note), 193 n. 19.

<sup>2</sup> The suggestion that *QNat.* 4a *praef.* was originally a letter, but is no longer in its present form (cf. note 6 below), is crucial for the development of this article, as it rules out the possibility that Seneca intended to follow the established custom of writing prefaces in epistolary form. This is somehow

own verses), believing that this would be the easiest way to make his friend approach the new life. However, he manipulates these quotations in such a way as to convince Lucilius both that they can be considered Stoic as well, and that the Stoic doctrine is generally preferable, as it is more structured and complete. *Ep.* 34, explicitly recalling the intentions stated in *QNat.* 4a *praef.*, draws up a provisional balance sheet of Lucilius' significant improvement. Accordingly, the Epicurean presence in the following letters is much less considerable.

As implicitly emerges from this scenario, the first addressee whom Seneca had in mind must have been Lucilius, the sole addressee of both the *Epistulae Morales* and the *Naturales Quaestiones*, works which do not contain any explicit cross-references that urge readers of the one to become readers of the other as well. Of course, Seneca must have thought that, given the content of his letters to Lucilius, they—or most of them<sup>3</sup>—might also be of use to a wider audience, perhaps after some changes or even taken one by one.

In support of my claim, I will first demonstrate the tight relationship between *QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20 and *Ep.* 34.2 (I). Further evidence will emerge from the comparison between *QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20 and other passages of the *Epistulae Morales* (II) and between *QNat.* 4a *praef.* as a whole and the *Epistulae Morales* (III). In a fourth section, I will then adduce several pointers to Lucilius' Epicureanism (IV). Finally, by resorting to this sort of cross-reading of the *Epistulae Morales* with the *Naturales Quaestiones*—in the wake of Italo Lana and Gareth Williams<sup>4</sup>—I shall also propose the following chronology for the *Epistulae Morales* and some books of the *Naturales Quaestiones* (V):

<i>QNat.</i> 4a	before <i>Ep.</i> 34, or, more probably, before the first 34 letters (A.D. 61)
<i>Ep.</i> 18	December A.D. 61
<i>Epp.</i> 23–67	spring A.D. 62

corroborated by T. Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces. Studies in Literary Conventions* (Stockholm, 1964), who does not take *QNat.* 4a *praef.* into account when discussing epistolary prefaces.

<sup>3</sup> It may be recalled that in *Ep.* 121.18 Seneca alludes to previous letters on the *concordatio sui* in the animal kingdom, but such letters are not in the preserved collection, probably because Seneca himself decided to exclude them: cf. E. Albertini, *La composition dans les ouvrages philosophiques de Sénèque* (Paris, 1923), 167 and P. Grimal, *Sénèque, ou la conscience de l'Empire* (Paris, 1979<sup>2</sup>), 456. Those who maintain that Seneca's *Letters* are fictional should perhaps give a reasonable explanation of this supposed fake reference to fake non-preserved letters. Reynolds's study of the textual tradition of Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* gives credit to the existence of a third—now lost—volume of letters on the grounds of Gellius' testimony (*NA* 12.2.2–3), but implicitly rules out the hypothesis of lost letters in the middle of the extant collection: see L.D. Reynolds, *The Medieval Tradition of Seneca's Letters* (Oxford, 1965), 17 and *passim*. B. Inwood, *Seneca. Selected Philosophical Letters* (Oxford, 2007), 343 comments: 'We don't seem to have these letters, though roughly similar material is mentioned at 82.15 and 116.3.' M. Graver and A.A. Long, *Seneca. Letters on Ethics to Lucilius* (Chicago, 2015), 577 refer to those same letters, though without further discussion. Yet, there is no reference whatsoever to animals at *Epp.* 82.15 and 116.3, while Seneca clearly says: *ut in prioribus epistulis dixi, tenera quoque animalia et materno utero uel ouo modo effusa quid sit infestum ipsa protinus norunt et mortifera deuitant*. Even ignoring Reynolds's authoritative statement and admitting that 'some letters are missing within the collection rather than just at the end of it' (Inwood), it would be a little too speculative to claim that at least two—the only two!—letters touching upon the *concordatio sui* in the animal kingdom got lost. Conversely, it is far easier to suppose that Seneca was a little careless in editing *Ep.* 121, where he accidentally forgot the reference to letters which he did not include in the collection that he decided to publish.

<sup>4</sup> Lana (n. 1) and G.D. Williams, 'Double vision and cross-reading in Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* and *Naturales Quaestiones*', in J. Wildberger and M.L. Colish (edd.), *Seneca Philosophus* (Berlin, 2014), 135–65.

<i>Epp.</i> 68–70	before 5 February 63
<i>QNat.</i> 6	after 5 February 63
<i>Epp.</i> 86–91	summer A.D. 64
<i>Ep.</i> 122	autumn A.D. 64

From the point of view of the *Naturales Quaestiones* then, this reasoning appears to bring new clues in favour of the order of the books fixed by the latest scholarship, that is to say, 3, 4a, 4b, 5, 6, 7, 1, 2.<sup>5</sup>

#### I. *QNat.* 4A *PRAEF.* 20 AND *EP.* 34.2: THE BEGINNING OF THE CORRESPONDENCE AND A FIRST BALANCE SHEET

That the preface to *QNat.* 4a is similar to any one of the *Epistulae ad Lucilium* has already been noticed by several scholars.<sup>6</sup> Delatte and Codoñer have also claimed that it could mark the beginning of the correspondence, but neither of them has furnished clear evidence of this, thus allowing other scholars to reject their thesis.<sup>7</sup>

Yet, I think that a strong connection between *QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20 and at least one passage in the *Epistulae Morales* does exist. Evidence is brought by the comparison of these two passages:

hoc tibi, etsi diuidimur mari, praestare temptabo ut **subinde te iniecta manu** ad meliora perducam, et, ne solitudinem sentias, hinc tecum miscebo sermones. erimus una, qua parte optimi sumus. dabimus **inuicem** consilia non ex uultu audientis pendentia (*QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20).

<sup>5</sup> C. Codoñer, *L. Annaei Senecae Naturales Quaestiones* (Madrid, 1979), 1.xii–xxi; H.M. Hine, *L. Annaei Senecae Naturalium Quaestionum Libri* (Stuttgart, 1996), xxii–xxv; P. Parroni, *Seneca. Ricerche sulla natura* (Milan, 2008<sup>3</sup>), xlix; B.M. Gauly, *Senecas Naturales Quaestiones: Naturphilosophie für die römische Kaiserzeit* (Munich, 2004), 66–7; F.J.G. Limburg, 'Aliquid ad mores: the prefaces and epilogues of Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones*' (Diss., Leiden, 2007), 11–12; G.D. Williams, *The Cosmic Viewpoint. A Study of Seneca's Natural Questions* (New York, 2012), 3 agree on this order.

<sup>6</sup> C. Codoñer, 'La physique de Sénèque: ordonnance et structure des *Naturales Quaestiones*', *ANRW* 2.36.3 (1989), 1779–822, at 1812; N. Gross, *Senecas Naturales Quaestiones: Komposition, naturphilosophische Aussagen und ihre Quellen* (Stuttgart, 1989), 150. Some hints can already be found in H. Peter, *Der Brief in der römischen Litteratur. Litterargeschichtliche Untersuchungen und Zusammenfassungen* (Leipzig, 1901), 228 and L. Delatte, 'Lucilius, l'ami de Sénèque', *LEC* 4 (1935), 367–85 and 546–90. Cf. also Gauly (n. 5), 210 n. 84 and Limburg (n. 5), 187–8. However, we owe the most explicit formulation to Lana (n. 1), 279.

<sup>7</sup> Delatte (n. 6), 562 and 568; Codoñer (n. 6), 1812. Although he does not specify that *QNat.* 4a *praef.* seems to be an epistle, K. Abel, 'Das Problem der Faktizität der Senecanischen Korrespondenz', *Hermes* 109 (1981), 472–99, at 492 n. 86 too maintains that § 20 probably announces the epistolary correspondence. For the (ostensible) lack of decisive connections between the *Epistulae Morales* and the *Naturales Quaestiones*, cf. Abel (this note), 492. In particular, Williams (n. 4), 140–1 and n. 26 objects that Delatte locates *QNat.* 4a in A.D. 62, an early and too convenient date according to him. But see below, § V. Moreover, at 143–5, he interprets the presence of this sort of prefatory letter as a literary device designed by Seneca to show the differences between a confining perspective at the beginning of his work (Sicily and everyday life of *QNat.* 4a, the second book of the *Naturales Quaestiones* according to Williams) and a universalist viewpoint in the following books of the *Naturales Quaestiones*. Even though this could be a valid reason for inserting this letter in the *QNat.*, I think that the tight connections between *QNat.* 4a *praef.* and other letters (*Ep.* 34.2, in particular) will show that this letter has also a remarkable importance beyond the context of the *Naturales Quaestiones*.

adsero te mihi; meum opus es. ego cum uidissem indolem tuam, **iniec**i manum, exhortatus sum, addidi stimulos nec lente ire passus sum sed **subinde** incitau; et nunc idem facio, sed iam currentem hortor et **inuicem** hortantem (*Ep.* 34.2).

The nature of the content and the emphasized words in particular make the similarities appear clear, but they merit further examination.

First, in order to help Lucilius escape from everyday life, in *QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20 Seneca promises that he will not leave his friend to his own destiny, but will try to draw his attention, from time to time (*subinde*), to nobler themes, namely philosophical themes in their broadest sense. In *Ep.* 34.2, Seneca declares that he has kept his word: *subinde incitau*. After all, if we consider the singular structure of *QNat.* 4a *praef.*, the phrase *ad meliora perducam* is hardly restricted to the subject of the *Naturales Quaestiones*.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, when he resorts to words such as *meliora*, *maiora*, *ampliora*, Seneca generally refers to those activities typical of contemplative life<sup>9</sup>—of which scientific investigation is obviously a considerable part, but not the only one—as opposed to those of active life, which inevitably not only characterized Lucilius' everyday life but—to his great regret—also used to characterize Seneca's.<sup>10</sup>

Second, the expression *iniecta manu* seems to be more emphatic and more meaningful if connected to *iniec*i manum of *Ep.* 34.2. As we can see from several examples enumerated in *TLL* 7.1.1613.67–1614.15 and from at least one other occurrence in Seneca (*Ben.* 4.14.4), the ablative absolute *iniecta manu* may at times be regarded as a sort of crystallized phrase, whose link to the legal proceeding of the *manus iniectio* is not necessarily manifest or perceived.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, it is not surprising that the passage of *QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20 is not listed by Armisen-Marchetti among those which designate 'l'entrée en possession légitime d'un bien' s.v. *manum inicere*, unlike that of *Ep.* 34.2, where this principle 's'applique [...] au disciple, dont le maître "prend possession"'.<sup>12</sup> Yet, in both cases we should understand the hint to the legal proceeding of the *manus iniectio*, which is to say that *iniecta manu* also refers to the taking possession of Lucilius, although it represents a previous step to that of *Ep.* 34.2, a previous step when this *manus iniectio* has not yet happened.<sup>13</sup>

Third, these two passages contain the only two occurrences in Seneca of the adverb *inuicem* with reference to Seneca himself and his interlocutor, Lucilius. However, if in *QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20 it is used in a context in which Seneca seems to propose the

<sup>8</sup> For an opposite point of view, cf. P.L. Donini, 'L'ecllettismo impossibile. Seneca e il platonismo medio', in P.L. Donini and G.F. Gianotti, *Modelli filosofici e letterari. Lucrezio, Orazio, Seneca* (Bologna, 1979), 149–300, at 226.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Epp.* 8.6 and 68.2. On the tight relationship between *maiora* and *meliora* in Seneca, cf. *Dial.* 3.13.1 and 1.6.5.

<sup>10</sup> On scientific investigation as part of the *uita contemplatiua*, cf. Gauly (n. 5), 214. On Seneca's regret for his previous attention to *uita actiua*, cf. *Epp.* 8.3, 68.12 and *QNat.* 3 *praef.* 2.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Ben.* 4.14.4, where *iniecta manu* is the act of an inanimate subject: *quid magnifici est se amare, sibi parcere, sibi adquirere? ab omnibus istis uera beneficii dandi cupido auocat, ad detrimentum iniecta manu trahit et utilitates relinquit ipso bene faciendi opere laetissima*. In the two other Senecan instances of *iniecta manu* (*Ben.* 6.16.7 and *Dial.* 9.7.2), the hint to the proceeding of the *manus iniectio* might more easily be deducible. For the occurrences of *manus iniectio* and *manum inicere* in Seneca and other authors, cf. E. Malaspina, *L. Annaei Senecae De clementia libri duo* (Alessandria, 2001), 255 and 273.

<sup>12</sup> M. Armisen-Marchetti, *Sapientiae facies. Étude sur les images de Sénèque* (Paris, 1989), 107.

<sup>13</sup> H.M. Hine, *Seneca. Natural Questions* (Chicago, 2010), 56 rightly translates *iniecta manu* of *QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20 by 'I shall grasp hold of you', and explicitly links this instance to the *manus iniectio*.

beginning of a double-sided correspondence, in *Ep.* 34.2 the situation is quite different, because it looks as if this correspondence is already going on.<sup>14</sup>

In general, the contrasting use of tenses in *QNat.* 4a *prae*f. 20 and *Ep.* 34.2 gives the impression that the latter represents a provisional balance sheet of the intentions stated in the former: the perfect tenses *inieci*, *exhortatus sum*, *addidi*, *passus sum*, *incitavi* and the present tenses *adsero*, *es*, *facio*, *hortor* replace futures like *temptabo*, *miscēbimus*, *erimus*, *dabimus*.

## II. *QNat.* 4A *PRAEF.* 20 AND OTHER *EPISTVLAE AD LVCILIVM*

The tight relationship between *QNat.* 4a *prae*f. 20 and the *Epistulae Morales* is also corroborated by other passages.

When in this paragraph of the *Naturales Quaestiones* Seneca says *erimus una, qua parte optimi sumus*, we note that the adverb *una* is used for the only time in the *Naturales Quaestiones* with reference to a ‘get together’ with friends, as often happens in the *Epistulae Morales*.<sup>15</sup> Obviously, this long-distance meeting can only be realized by means of a letter, whose aim is expressly to establish a colloquium with absentees, at least according to one of the most characteristic *topoi* of ancient epistolography (Latin, in particular).<sup>16</sup> There is more: judging from this passage, we can even state that a letter favours a conversation with the best part of an absent person, namely their inner part (*pars interior*).

The same idea is expressed in *Ep.* 55.9:

conuersari cum amicis absentibus licet, et quidem quotiens uelis, quamdiu uelis. magis hac uoluptate, quae maxima est, fruimur dum absumus; praesentia enim nos delicatos facit, et quia aliquando una loquimur, ambulamus, consedimus, cum diducti sumus nihil de iis quos modo uidimus cogitamus.<sup>17</sup>

However, for the two friends to be *una* (‘together’), there must be a double-sided correspondence, the only way to effect a relationship between tutor (*magister*) and pupil (*discipulus*) that can benefit both.<sup>18</sup> It is evidently taken for granted that Seneca, when saying *tecum miscebo sermones*, alludes to the exchange of letters.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> I am well aware that the presence of such an item in the *Epistulae Morales* can be explained as a fictional device—cf. Peter (n. 6), 230 n. 1; A. Bourgery, ‘Les Lettres à Lucilius sont-elles de vraies lettres?’, *RPh* 35 (1911), 40–55, at 46; M. Griffin, *Seneca. A Philosopher in Politics* (Oxford, 1976), 417; and E. Hachmann, *Die Führung des Lesers in Senecas Epistulae Morales* (Münster, 1995), 17—but I have some doubts whether the same explanation can be valid for the presence of a similar item in the *Naturales Quaestiones* as well. Cf. p. 7 below.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. F.R. Berno, *L. Anneo Seneca. Lettere a Lucilio, libro VI: le lettere 53–57* (Bologna, 2006), 227. Cf. also *Epp.* 40.1, 55.9, 66.4, 67.2, 75.1.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Cugusi (n. 1), 73. Compare the classic definitions of *epistula* in Demetr. *Eloc.* 223 (εἶναι γὰρ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν οἷον τὸ ἕτερον μέρος τοῦ διαλόγου) and in Cic. *Phil.* 2.7 (*amicorum colloquia absentium*). Cf. S. Corbinelli, ‘*Amicorum colloquia absentium*’. *La scrittura epistolare a Roma tra comunicazione quotidiana e genere letterario* (Naples, 2008), 23–4; M. von Albrecht, *Wort und Wandlung. Senecas Lebenskunst* (Leiden, 2004), 165; and Williams (n. 4), 155.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. G. Rosati, ‘Seneca sulla lettera filosofica: un genere letterario nel cammino verso la saggezza’, *Maia* 33 (1981), 3–15, at 10–11; Corbinelli (n. 16), 148–9; and Setaioli (n. 1), 195.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. P. Rabbow, *Seelenführung. Methodik der Exerzitien in der Antike* (München, 1954), 213; H. Cancik, *Untersuchungen zu Senecas Epistulae morales* (Hildesheim, 1967), 76–7 and Limburg (n. 5), 189.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Codoñer (n. 6), 1812.

Nevertheless, what Seneca claims at the beginning of *Ep.* 38 and *Ep.* 75 not only is the confirmation of this meaning of *sermo*, but also allows further important reflection for the purpose of this paper.<sup>20</sup>

merito exigit ut hoc inter nos **epistularum commercium** frequentemus. plurimum proficit **sermo**, quia minutatim inrepat animo: disputationes praeparatae et effusae audiente populo plus habent strepitus, minus familiaritatis. philosophia bonum consilium est: consilium nemo clare dat. (*Ep.* 38.1)

**qualis sermo** meus esset si una desideremus aut ambularem, inlaboratus et facilis, **tales esse epistulas meas** uolo, quae nihil habent accersitum nec fictum. (*Ep.* 75.1)

While Seneca seems in the second quotation to be expressing the desire for his letters to have a style as *inlaboratus et facilis* as the style of *sermo*, in the first quotation ‘letters are the literary equivalent of conversation’.<sup>21</sup> The benefits deriving from this kind of communication are to be found in the continuation of *Ep.* 38 (38.2):

[sc. *submitiora uerba*] *facilius* intrant et haerent; nec enim multis opus est sed *efficacibus*. *seminis modo spargenda sunt*, quod quamuis sit *exiguum*, cum occupauit idoneum locum, *uires suas explicat et ex minimo in maximos auctus diffunditur*.

This last passage clarifies why Seneca wants to use letters as a communication medium: the choice of the epistolary correspondence is due not only to the long distance between the two friends but also to the benefits deriving from a more informal, immediate style.<sup>22</sup> This enables Seneca both to give his friend a few suggestions and teachings at a time, and to do it regularly, so as to achieve the *optimum* represented by daily spiritual exercises, on which a considerable part of ancient philosophical thinking (Stoic, in particular) is based.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The relationship between these two loci and *QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20 has already been indicated by Gauly (n. 5), 211 n. 87.

<sup>21</sup> M. Davies, ‘A commentary on Seneca’s *Epistulae Morales* Book IV (*Epistles* 30–41)’ (Diss., Auckland, 2010), 315. The same idea is already in Peter (n. 6), 230 and Albertini (n. 3), 291 and n. 1. On the other hand, A. Setaioli, *Facundus Seneca. Aspetti della lingua e dell’ideologia senecana* (Bologna, 2000), 119 claims that the assimilation between *epistula* and *sermo* is more evident in *Ep.* 75.1. Cf. also Corbinelli (n. 16), 23 and 166. As far as style is concerned, even though I would agree with U. Dietsche, *Strategie und Philosophie bei Seneca* (Berlin and Boston, 2014), 100, that very often ‘Senecas Schreibweise ist [...] trotz gegenteiliger Beteuerungen alles andere als *inlaboratus et facilis*’, I do not think that Seneca’s style can be used as evidence of the fictional character of his *Letters*—unlike von Albrecht (n. 16), 11. Since Seneca wanted to play the role of a moral guide for his friend Lucilius so as to ‘lead him to something better’ (*ad meliora perducam* of *QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20), it is quite evident that he could not but resort to an adequate style, the only way to put into effect one of his most important tenets: *concordet sermo cum uita* (*Ep.* 75.4).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. I. Hadot, *Seneca und die griechisch-römische Tradition der Seelenleitung* (Berlin, 1969), 170 and Setaioli (n. 21), 118–19. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that, according to Demetrius (*Eloc.* 224), a letter requires a more formal style than a dialogue.

<sup>23</sup> J. Henderson, ‘Journey of a lifetime: Seneca, *Epistle 57* in Book VI in *EM*’, in G. Garbarino and I. Lana (edd.), *Incontri con Seneca. Atti della giornata di studio. Torino, 26 ottobre 1999* (Bologna, 2001), 123–46, at 131 specifies: ‘The method required is “step-by-step”, that “daily work-out” regimen (*pedetemptim procedere; exercitatio cotidiana*, 40.7, 13)’. I accept the customary definition of ‘spiritual exercises’ suggested by Rabbow (n. 18), aware that it should not be confused with the same definition adopted to designate the practices of St. Ignatius of Loyola, whose goals were very different—cf. R.J. Newman, ‘*Cotidie meditare*. Theory and practice of the *meditatio* in imperial Stoicism’, *ANRW* 2.36.3 (1989), 1473–517, at 1476 n. 6 and A. Setaioli, ‘Ethics I: philosophy as therapy, self-transformation, and *Lebensform*’, in G. Damschen and A. Heil (edd.), *Brill’s Companion to Seneca. Philosopher and Dramatist* (Boston and Leiden, 2014), 239–56, at 247. On

III. OTHER PASSAGES OF *QNat.* 4A *PRAEF.* AND THE *EPISTVLAE MORALES*

The connections between the *Letters* and *QNat.* 4a *praeef.* are not limited to section 20 of the latter. Modern scholarship has already pointed out some of them, but either they merit further examination or should be reconsidered.<sup>24</sup>

While reading the preface from its beginning, we immediately run into *quemadmodum scribis* (§ 1), whose importance Codoñer stresses, because this expression—she believes—together with *tecum miscebo sermones* of § 20 suggests the idea of an epistolary exchange.<sup>25</sup> Even so, this is the only occurrence of *scribis* in the *Naturales Quaestiones* against thirteen instances in the *Epistulae Morales*. Accordingly, Codoñer's reasoning can perhaps be pushed one step further, allowing the conclusion that in Seneca's *Epistulae Morales* there is the same opposition between *inquis* and *scribis* that can be found in Cicero's letters, where the first verb alludes to possible objections raised by his interlocutors, whereas the second refers to the content of letters actually received from them.<sup>26</sup> To this end, this fact could also be interpreted as a pointer to the non-fictional character of the *Letters*. If in the *Epistulae Morales* it could be seen as a device intended to give the impression of a real correspondence—like *inuicem* in *Ep.* 34.2—in the *Naturales Quaestiones* such use does not seem to make sense, since Seneca would not have any literary necessity of pretending an epistolary correspondence in this work.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, I do not see any reasons to doubt that it refers to a real letter written by Lucilius.

A few words later Seneca addresses Lucilius in this manner: *scio quam sis ambitioni alienus, quam familiaris otio et litteris* (§ 1). Gercke is probably the first to compare this phrase to the *Briefkreis* 19–22 and to declare that this comparison shows 'eine auffällige Übereinstimmung in den Worten dagegen ein völliger Widerspruch im Inhalte'.<sup>28</sup> The contradiction to which the scholar alludes mainly consists in the fact that 'in *NQ* 4, pref. I [...] Lucilius is "ambitioni alienus", but in *Ep.* 19–22 he has to be cured of ambition'.<sup>29</sup> Taking this assumption for granted, it would not be difficult to agree with Abel that 'Man gewinnt den starken Eindruck, daß die Briefe als Instrument

the importance of spiritual exercises in ancient and Stoic philosophy, cf. Rabbow (n. 18); Newman (this note); P. Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris, 2002<sup>2</sup>), 19–74; and Dietsche (n. 21), 74–86.

<sup>24</sup> Simple thematic analogies will not be my concern in this paper. They are already highlighted not only in typical commentaries but also in studies such as F. Schultess, *De L. Annaei Senecae Quaestionibus Naturalibus et Epistulis commentatio* (Bonn, 1872) and A. Gercke, *Seneca-Studien* (Leipzig, 1895), 324–6, which contain lists of *loci paralleli* between the *Epistulae Morales* and the *Naturales Quaestiones*.

<sup>25</sup> Codoñer (n. 6), 1812.

<sup>26</sup> The singularity of this occurrence is much more significant, if we consider that the verb *scribo* is generally infrequent in the *Naturales Quaestiones*: both in this work and in the *Epistulae Morales*, there is no occurrence of *scribit*; in 3 *praeef.* 6 *scribunt* refers to unknown historians who wrote Hannibal's *gesta*, in 7.20.2 *scripta* to Posidonius' work; the occurrences of 2.32.1 (*scriberentur*), 4b.5.1 (*scribere*) and 5.18.8 (*scribimus*) are worthless to this end. On this sense of *inquis* in the *Epistulae Morales*, cf. Bourgery (n. 14), 46 and G. Scarpat, *Lucio Anneo Seneca. Lettere a Lucilio. Libro primo* (Brescia, 1975), 52; for a similar use in the *Naturales Quaestiones*, cf. D. Vottero, *Questioni Naturali di Lucio Anneo Seneca* (Torino, 1989), 23 n. 5; Limburg (n. 5), 192–3 (in *QNat.* 4b, for example). Gauly (n. 5), 80–5 shows that *inquis* has also other attitudes within the *Naturales Quaestiones*.

<sup>27</sup> On *inuicem* see above, pp. 4–5.

<sup>28</sup> Gercke (n. 24), 326.

<sup>29</sup> Griffin (n. 14), 350 n. 3 and cf. 347. Abel (n. 7), 492 and Williams (n. 4), 142–3 seem to agree with Gercke and Griffin.

sittlicher Selbstvervollkommnung für den Lucilius der *Naturales quaestiones* eigentlich überflüssig sind’, because it would really look as if *QNat. 4a praef.* displayed a situation subsequent to that of letters 19–22.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, I think that this interpretation does not hit the mark, because it does not sufficiently take the context into account (§ 1):

delectat te, quemadmodum scribis, Lucili uirorum optime, Sicilia et officium procurationis otiosae, delectabitque, si continere id intra fines suos uolueris nec efficere imperium quod est procuratio. facturum hoc te non dubito; scio quam sis ambitioni alienus, quam familiaris otio et litteris.

When Seneca says *scio quam sis ambitioni alienus, quam familiaris otio et litteris*, he is not (I propose) asserting a fact; rather, he is trying to persuade Lucilius that he must be *ambitioni alienus* and *familiaris otio et litteris* in order to *continere id* [*sc. officium procurationis otiosae*] *intra fines suos* [...] *nec efficere imperium quod est procuratio*.<sup>31</sup> An expression such as *scio quam* somehow compels Lucilius not to disappoint his moral guide, not to reveal that he is not as uninterested in ambition (*ambitioni alienus*) as Seneca thinks he now is.<sup>32</sup> In this sense, *facturum hoc te non dubito* clarifies and confirms the projection into the future of the whole context. After all, if we accepted Gercke’s explanation, we would find contradictions within the preface itself, with §§ 20–1 in particular. Both of these paragraphs reveal in fact that a great deal of work has yet to be done for Lucilius to remain unambitious. No doubt, this is implied in *immo etiam a se recedendum* of § 20, but becomes even more explicit in the paragraph that follows, when Seneca says (§ 21):

longe te ab ista prouincia abducam, ne forte magnam esse historiis fidem credas et placere tibi incipias quotiens cogitaueris: ‘hanc ego habeo sub meo iure prouinciam quae maximarum urbium exercitus et sustinuit et fregit, cum inter Carthaginem et Romam ingentis belli praemium iacuit; eqs.’

Were Lucilius really *ambitioni alienus*, all this section would seem rather superfluous.

Another significant item concerns the different aims of the *Epistulae Morales* and the *Naturales Quaestiones*. *QNat. 4a praef. 3* begins thus: *fac ergo, mi Lucili, quod facere consuesti*. In addition to the fact that the *exordium* of *Ep. 1 (ita fac, mi Lucili)* cannot but occur to anyone who reads this passage, what is remarkable is that this is the only occurrence of *fac* in the *Naturales Quaestiones*: the use of an imperative—of *fac*, in particular—well fits the paraenetic aim, one of the cornerstones of Seneca’s argumentation in the *Epistulae Morales* according to Cancik, but it would not fit the *inquisitio causarum* so well, a Senecan tag (*Ep. 96.65*) by which I. Hadot legitimately designates the *Naturales Quaestiones*.<sup>33</sup> By saying so, I by no means want to deny the

<sup>30</sup> Abel (n. 7), 492.

<sup>31</sup> This seems to be an example of what Dietsche (n. 21), 124 n. 2 calls ‘Überzeugen durch Komplimente’; cf. also Dietsche (n. 21), 238.

<sup>32</sup> I would not go as far as to conclude that *scio quam* is absolutely ironic, even though it might be in a certain way.

<sup>33</sup> Cancik (n. 18), 16; Hadot (n. 22), 8 n. 14. *fac* belongs to that ‘Terminologie der Direktion’, which is typical of the epistolary genre, not only of Seneca’s—cf. Hadot (n. 22), 168–9 and n. 33. I do not understand why she considers the *causarum inquisitio* as part of the paraenesis, since she herself quotes (at 8 n. 13) the passage of *Ep. 95.65*, where Seneca clearly says that Posidonius considers it necessary in addition to *praeceptio* and *suasio*, but not as their subcategory.



moral as well as the scientific nature of this work.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, I want to stress that, according to the difference in aims outlined by Donini, the preface to *QNat.* 4a is inclined much more toward the inferior aim represented by a moral life—typical of most *Epistulae Morales*—than toward the higher goal of theoretical knowledge, which instead plays a central role in the *Naturales Quaestiones*.<sup>35</sup> After all, what Seneca claims immediately afterwards (*a turba te quantum potes separa*) seems to support this statement. Apart from another use of the imperative (*separa*), central is the presence of the topic of the separation from the crowd (*turba, uulgius, populus*), a recurring Epicurean theme in Seneca's work, in particular in the *Epistulae Morales*.<sup>36</sup> As Scarpat puts it: 'La turba, quindi, rappresenta il polo opposto all'interiorità della persona; la *turba* è di ostacolo a quella vita di virtù che sola rende uomini; [...] sono, insomma gli *insipientes*, gli stolti.'<sup>37</sup> As well as *fugiendum ergo et in se recedendum est* of § 20, it is quite evident that this expression first fits the paraenetic aim of the *Epistulae Morales* and only secondarily the scientific investigation of the *Naturales Quaestiones*.

#### IV. LUCILIUS AS EPICUREAN SYMPATHIZER

Having shown the connections between the *Epistulae Morales* and *QNat.* 4a *praeef.*, it is now time to turn to Lucilius' initial attitude towards philosophy. Several scholars have already suggested that Lucilius was an Epicurean sympathizer.<sup>38</sup> In this section, I not only recall what in my view is the best evidence in favour of this theory, but also seek to make it stronger. Leaving aside more subjective and thus tenuous arguments,<sup>39</sup>

<sup>34</sup> The scientific nature of the *Naturales Quaestiones*, made explicit right from the title and inevitably touched upon in almost every contribution dealing with this work, has been stressed, among others, by I. Lana, *Lucio Anneo Seneca* (Turin, 1955), 12; Hadot (n. 22), 116; Donini (n. 8), 229; and F.R. Berno, *Lo specchio, il vizio e la virtù. Studio sulle Naturales Quaestiones di Seneca* (Bologna, 2003), 23. The moral nature cannot instead be taken for granted from the title, but is immediately evident to any reader of this work and has been highlighted by Berno (this note), *passim*; Gauly (n. 5), 87–90 and *passim*; Williams (n. 5), 54–92.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Donini (n. 8), 262.

<sup>36</sup> According to C. Codoñer, 'La expresión del poder en Seneca', in A. De Vivo and E. Lo Cascio (edd.), *Seneca uomo politico e l'età di Claudio e di Nerone. Atti del Convegno internazionale (Capri 25–27 marzo 1999)* (Bari, 2003), 55–88, at 85–6, *populus* has mostly a pejorative meaning in Seneca, very close to *turba*. On the separation from the crowd in Seneca's work, cf. C. Marchesi, *Seneca* (Milan, 1944<sup>3</sup>), 282–5; M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa. Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung* (Göttingen, 1992<sup>7</sup>), 315; A.L. Motto and J.R. Clark, 'Seneca on the *profanum uulgius*', *CB* 69 (1993), 35–9; A. Grilli, *Vita contemplativa. Il problema della vita contemplativa nel mondo greco-romano* (Brescia, 2002), 59 and 260; G. Laudizi, *Lucio Anneo Seneca. Lettere a Lucilio. Libro terzo (ep. XXII–XXIX)* (Naples, 2003), 230 and 248; von Albrecht (n. 16), 148; in the *Epistulae Morales* in particular, cf. Lana (n. 1), 279.

<sup>37</sup> Scarpat (n. 26), 136.

<sup>38</sup> Above all, cf. R. Schottlaender, 'Epikureisches bei Seneca: ein Ringen um den Sinn von Freude und Freundschaft', *Philologus* 99 (1954), 133–48 and G. Mazzoli, *Seneca e la poesia* (Milan, 1970), 259–60. Against the theory of Lucilius' Epicurean tendency, cf. recently Dietsche (n. 21), 42–3, whose only argument is that there would be no point in urging an Epicurean to avoid Cynic extremism in *Ep.* 5.1–2. However, Seneca is not explicitly referring to or condemning Cynicism; rather, he is generally reminding his reader that philosophers should avoid excesses in the way they behave—and this fits any strand of philosophical thought.

<sup>39</sup> I consider tenuous, for example, the argument put forward by Schottlaender (n. 38), 136 that *inuideas licet* of *Ep.* 20.9 implies Lucilius' Epicureanism, because—to borrow the words of Griffin (n. 14), 351 n. 2—'Lucilius is playfully expected to resent Seneca's use of his own Epicurus against

proof of Lucilius' Epicureanism can be split into two parts: on the one hand we can infer an important clue from one passage of the *Epistulae Morales*, on the other from Lucilius' own poetical fragments.

In *Ep.* 23.9, while addressing Lucilius, Seneca resorts to the expression *Epicuri tui*, thus explicitly admitting Lucilius' Epicurean tendency.<sup>40</sup> Of course, given the extensive use of Epicurean citations in the first *Epistulae Morales*, Seneca too could be ironically defined as an Epicurean. However, there is no irony at all in Seneca's use of possessive adjectives or pronouns, let alone when it comes to discerning one philosophical tendency from another. On the contrary, a possessive adjective is what makes it always clear in the *Epistulae Morales* that Seneca is a Stoic. In fact, *noster / nostri* is exclusively used with reference to Stoic philosophers, with the exception of Virgil, whom every Roman could call *noster*, and Demetrius the Cynic, whom Seneca admired enough to consider him to be a real sage (*sapiens*).<sup>41</sup>

Unfortunately, Lucilius' poetical fragments are only three and are all to be found in Seneca's work, particularly in the *Naturales Quaestiones* and the *Epistulae Morales*.<sup>42</sup> However, one of these fragments may cast light on his philosophical attitude. In *Ep.* 24.21 Seneca, addressing Lucilius as usual, says:

haec cum descripsisses quo soles ore, semper quidem magnus, numquam tamen acrior quam ubi  
ueritati commodas uerba, dixisti,  
mors non una uenit, sed quae rapit ultima mors est.

Mazzoli compared this verse to Horace's *mors ultima linea rerum est* (*Epist.* 1.16.79), but this example does not fit in this context, because in the case of Lucilius *ultima* refers to *mors*, while in Horace *ultima* refers to *linea*.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, he was right in considering the expression *ultima mors* crucial. In *Sat.* 1.7.11–13 Horace writes: *inter | Hectorsa Priamiden, animosum atque inter Achillem | ira fuit capitalis, ut ultima diuideret mors*. Granted, it would be incautious to claim that *ultima mors* sounds typically Epicurean, but it is undeniable that this expression only met with Epicurean sympathizers' approval, since it is found exclusively in Horace, who even called himself *Epicuri de grege porcum*. And if we do not restrict our research to *ultima*, the same concept is expressed by *suprema mors*, again in Horace, and *extrema mors*, used by another poet who in antiquity was usually regarded as an Epicurean sympathizer, Virgil.<sup>44</sup>

him'. Despite agreeing with this reading, it is my contention that the reasoning only works as long as we assume that Lucilius was an Epicurean sympathizer, but is no evidence for it.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Schottlaender (n. 38), 136–7.

<sup>41</sup> For a list of the instances of *noster / nostri* in Seneca, cf. Berno (n. 15), 264. On the different use of *noster* when referring to Virgil, cf. Berno (n. 15), 308 and, above all, A. Setaioli, 'Esegesi virgiliana in Seneca', *SIFC* 37 (1965), 133–56, at 155–6. On *noster* with reference to Demetrius, cf. J.F. Kindstrand, 'Demetrius the Cynic', *Philologus* 124 (1980), 83–98, at 90. On Demetrius as model of the perfect sage, cf. in particular Ben. 7.8.2–3 with S. Costa, «*Quod olim fuerat*». *La rappresentazione del passato in Seneca prosatore* (Hildesheim, 2013), 300–5.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. G. Garbarino, *Philosophorum Romanorum fragmenta usque ad L. Annaei Senecae aetatem* (Bologna, 2003), 138–9. The passages in question are in *Epp.* 8.10 and 24.21 and *QNat.* 3.1.1.

<sup>43</sup> Mazzoli (n. 38), 260.

<sup>44</sup> Hor. *Epist.* 2.2.173 *nunc prece, nunc pretio, nunc ui, nunc morte suprema*; Verg. *Aen.* 2.445 *extrema iam in morte parant defendere telis* and 11.846 *extrema iam in morte, neque hoc sine nomine letum*. The testimony of (Ps.-)Probus' *Vita Vergilii* is sufficient to show that the Romans considered Virgil an Epicurean sympathizer: *uixit pluribus annis liberali in otio secutus Epicuri sectam, insigni concordia et familiaritate usus Quintilii Tuccae et Vari*.

These Lucilian verses quoted by Seneca are located in the first section of the *Epistulae Morales*, letters characterized by many citations taken from Epicurus. Wildberger has recently shown that in his earlier letters Seneca misrepresents and reinterprets some Epicurean ideas. In her view, this would prove that what she calls the ‘Letter Writer’ is not Seneca himself, because this sort of manipulation requires the kind of knowledge displayed by the ‘Letter Writer’ only in later letters.<sup>45</sup> However, another explanation seems by now to be possible: Seneca would have manipulated Epicurean quotations to convert Lucilius to Stoicism and would also have used Lucilius’ own verses to show him that (and how) they could go with Stoic doctrines.<sup>46</sup> This interpretation is more similar to Schottlaender’s, who had already alluded to a sort of manipulation of Epicurean tenets made by Seneca, but he had also claimed that ‘Seneca will ihn [that is, Lucilius] zu dem besten Kern der von ihm selber anerkannten Lehre [that is, epicureischen Lehre] [...] zurückführen, um ihn als hierdurch williger gewordenen Adepten in die umfassendere Wahrheit der stoischen Philosophie einzuweißen’.<sup>47</sup> After all, in the light of what was said above on the tight relationship between *QNat. 4a praef.* and the *Epistulae Morales*, Wildberger’s theory of the *Epistulae Morales* as an epistolary *Bildungsroman* would seem difficult to accept, because it would somehow imply that the first chapter of this novel, that is to say, *QNat. 4a praef.*, should be located in another work. On the contrary, if Lucilius was the real and first addressee of the letters, he could have received and read both the future *QNat. 4a praef.* and the other future *Epistulae Morales*.

## V. CHRONOLOGY

In *QNat. 6.1.1* we read:

Pompeios, celebrem Campaniae urbem, in quam ab altera parte Surrentinum Stabianumque litus, ab altera Herculansense conueniunt et mare ex aperto reductum amoeno sinu cingunt, consedissee terrae motu, uexatis quaecumque adiacebant regionibus, Lucili uirorum optime, audiuimus, eqs.

This very objective description, which precisely explains the geographical location of the city of Pompeii, is perfect for a general audience, which does not necessarily know where this city is, but it would be completely superfluous for Lucilius. In fact, as emerges from the *Epistulae Morales*, he knows Pompeii perfectly well, for it is probably his hometown: *ecce Campania et maxime Neapolis ac Pompeiorum tuorum conspectus incredibile est quam recens desiderium tui fecerint: totus mihi in oculis es* (*Ep. 49.1*) and *post longum interuallum Pompeios tuos uidi* (*Ep. 70.1*).<sup>48</sup> The preface

<sup>45</sup> Cf. J. Wildberger, ‘The Epicurus trope and the construction of a “Letter Writer” in Seneca’s *Epistulae Morales*’, in J. Wildberger and M.L. Colish (edd.), *Seneca Philosophus* (Berlin, 2014), 431–65.

<sup>46</sup> Despite the fact that neither does he believe that the *Letters* are genuine nor does he take into account the manipulation of Epicurean tenets made by Seneca, Dietsche (n. 21), 140 points in the same direction of an integration of principles belonging to different philosophical schools.

<sup>47</sup> Schottlaender (n. 38), 139. On his allusion to a sort of manipulation of Epicurean tenets, cf. Schottlaender (n. 38), 176.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. P. Oltramare, *Sénèque. Questions Naturelles* (Paris, 1929), 247 n. 1: ‘Ce n’est donc pas pour lui [i.e. Lucilius], mais pour les lecteurs que Sénèque décrit cette contrée.’ With regard to Pompeii as Lucilius’ homeland, cf. Delatte (n. 6), 368–9 and Berno (n. 15), 46.

to *QNat.* 4a and the very intimate relationship between Seneca and Lucilius, which emerges there, stresses even more the difference between what was originally thought to be read by Lucilius (the *Epistulae Morales*, including *QNat.* 4a *praeft.*) and what was directly intended for a wider audience (*QNat.* 6).

Most of all, the comparison between the beginning of *QNat.* 6 and *Epp.* 49.1 and 70.1 is important for the chronology of the *Epistulae Morales* and the *Naturales Quaestiones*; therefore, before addressing the well-known issue concerning the dating of the Pompeian earthquake of *QNat.* 6, I should like to speculate further about it.

The different attitude toward the addressee in this book of the *Naturales Quaestiones* as opposed to the addressee of the *Epistulae Morales* is shown not only by the objectivity of the description of Pompeii but also by Seneca's dispassion in speaking about an earthquake which has destroyed his friend's city. Bearing in mind the tragic destiny of Pompeii, is it plausible that the earthquake had already taken place when Seneca wrote to Lucilius in both *Letter* 49 and *Letter* 70 that the view of this Campanian city reminded him of the happy moments spent together by the two friends? I believe that the absence of even the slightest hint of this catastrophe in these letters proves that they had been written before the Pompeian earthquake and, consequently, before *QNat.* 6.<sup>49</sup> This would also mean, since in *QNat.* 6.1.2 we read that *Nonis Februariis hic fuit motus Regulo et Verginio consulibus*, that they were written before 5 February A.D. 63.<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, this explicit date—the only one in the *Naturales Quaestiones*—has raised several doubts for modern scholars, although—I agree with Wallace-Hadrill—this issue 'scarcely merits the length of its bibliography'.<sup>51</sup> This *uexatissima quaestio* is due to a comparison with a passage of Tacitus (*Ann.* 15.22) in which the earthquake that devastated Pompeii and the Campanian region dates to A.D. 62. Without recalling the different opinions of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship with regard to it, I should like to focus mainly on a textual aspect.<sup>52</sup> Those

<sup>49</sup> I want to specify that I said 'written' and not 'set' not only because I do not think that the *Epistulae Morales* are fictional—as it should be now be clear—but also because I cannot imagine that, knowing what had happened to Pompeii, Seneca would have been able to ignore this fact even in a literary work. Moreover, it would also imply that the circumstances which led Seneca to write these letters (i.e. his visit to Pompeii and Naples) are fake themselves, but this would signify the loss of a fundamental reason to choose the epistolary form—cf. Albertini (n. 3), 236; Rabbow (n. 18), 104; Rosati (n. 17), 9; Setaioli (n. 1), 194; and, above all, G. Mazzoli, 'Effetti di cornice nell'epistolario di Seneca a Lucilio', in A. Setaioli (ed.), *Seneca e la cultura* (Perugia, 1991), 67–87. On the other hand, we could not even think that Pompeii had already been rebuilt when Seneca saw it at the time of *Epp.* 49 and 70, since archaeological evidence proves that it was a construction site for many years and that some works were still in progress when Mount Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79—cf. F. La Greca, 'I terremoti in Campania in età romana e medioevale. Sismologia e sismografia storica', *Annali Storici di Principato Citra* 5 (2007), 5–34, at 21.

<sup>50</sup> According to Peter (n. 6), 237, the expression *secundo naumachiae spectaculo* of *Ep.* 70.26 refers to the second *naumachia* organized by Nero (the first was organized by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C.), an event which he sets in A.D. 64. Hence, *Ep.* 70 could not have been written before A.D. 64. However, as G. Scarpat, *Lucio Anneo Seneca. Anticipare la morte o attenderla. La lettera 70 a Lucilio* (Brescia, 2007), 93 highlights, *secundo* may also refer to the second day of the first *naumachia*. Moreover, the description of the Neronian *naumachia* that we find in Dio Cassius (62.15) has no hints which permit its date to be fixed and it is actually positioned between events of A.D. 62 and 64.

<sup>51</sup> A. Wallace-Hadrill, 'Seneca and the Pompeian earthquake', in A. De Vivo and E. Lo Cascio (edd.), *Seneca uomo politico e l'età di Claudio e di Nerone. Atti del Convegno internazionale (Capri 25–27 marzo 1999)* (Bari, 2003), 177–91, at 177.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Vottero (n. 26), 178–9 and Wallace-Hadrill (n. 51), 179–80 and 183 for a concise *status quaestionis*. Cf. also Gauly (n. 5), 23. Resorting to both archaeological and literary sources (cf. Suet. *Tib.* 74 and *Ner.* 20; Tac. *Ann.* 15.33–4; Plin. *Ep.* 6.20.3), although he accepts A.D. 62 for the Pompeian earthquake, La Greca (n. 49), 19 shows that many earthquakes hit the Campanian region

who are inclined to think that *Regulo et Verginio consulibus* is a gloss run up against a serious methodological problem: a possible textual error, in order to be proved that it actually is an error, should show the reason of its existence.<sup>53</sup> In this case, what could justify the presence of this gloss? We would be forced to postulate the existence of a scribe who simultaneously was brilliant enough to know that he could find the consular date of this earthquake in Tacitus' *Annales* and so careless that he mixed up the consuls and the years (or could he resort to another source?).<sup>54</sup> Granted, supporters of the gloss-theory may invoke the different position of the phrase *Regulo et Verginio consulibus* in the two branches of the textual tradition of the *Naturales Quaestiones* as well as the addition of the cognomen *Rufo* in **Z**, which alone represents one of the two branches.<sup>55</sup> Yet, Hine himself admits that this change in position can also be explained in other ways, for example as a case of reinsertion in different places of original Senecan words which had been omitted by parablepsy.<sup>56</sup> But it is also the case that names of consuls and consular dates are easily subjected to interventions and corruptions, without this making glosses of them. In trying to counter the hypothesis that we face a case of parablepsy (which he himself puts forward), Hine involuntarily gives another very reasonable explanation for the word order in **Z**. He writes: 'the word order given by **Z** is more natural, since it puts the consular date adjacent to the calendar date.'<sup>57</sup> This is true, but any scribe who was a little versed in Latin, having Hine's same feeling, could have decided to restore the more natural order. In other words, the word order of **Z** can easily be explained as a case of hypercorrection, that is, as a voluntary intervention of the scribe. As for the addition *Rufo*, compare, for example, Sall. *Iug. 27: consules declarati P. Scipio Nasica, L. Bestia Calpurnius; Calpurnio Numidia, Scipioni Italia obuinit*. Reynolds's OCT apparatus criticus immediately shows how *praenomina*, *nomina* and *cognomina* can equally be present or absent in manuscripts: *L. bestia calpurnius C<sup>2</sup>HF* : *L. bestia C. B* : *L. bestia calpurnius L. bestiae A<sup>1</sup>C<sup>1</sup>* : *L. bestia calpurnius L. bestia C. A<sup>2</sup>* : *L. calpurnius bestia ND<sup>2</sup>* : *L. bestia PD<sup>1</sup>*. In the light of this, the standard criteria of textual criticism alone do not give enough evidence to invoke the presence of a gloss, and, were it not for Tacitus' testimony, no one would question Seneca's reliability. The only possibility left is therefore to decide who merits more credit: Tacitus or Seneca? Personally, I would find absurd to ascribe such a confusion to a person who is talking about a contemporary event.

If there was a confusion or imprecision on the part of Seneca, it concerns the expression *anno priore* that we read in *QNat.* 6.1.13 with regard to the Achaean and Macedonian earthquake and its relationship with the comet of A.D. 60.<sup>58</sup> If this

before A.D. 79. This fact may corroborate the thesis of M. Henry, 'L'apparition d'une île: Sénèque et Philostrate, un même témoignage', *AC* 51 (1982), 174–92, at 177, according to which Tacitus and Seneca refer to two different earthquakes.

<sup>53</sup> Among those who believe that *Regulo et Verginio consulibus* is a gloss are F. Jonas, *De Ordine Librorum L. Annaei Senecae Philosophi* (Berlin, 1870), 53–4; Lana (n. 34), 17; Codoñer (n. 5); H.M. Hine, 'The date of the Campanian earthquake A.D. 62 or A.D. 63, or both?', *AC* 53 (1984), 266–9, at 268 (more cautious is H.M. Hine, 'Rome, the cosmos, and the emperor in Seneca's *Natural Questions*', *JRS* 96 [2006], 42–72, at 72); Vottero (n. 26), 178–9; Gaulty (n. 5), 23; and Williams (n. 4), 139.

<sup>54</sup> Against the hypothesis of a gloss, see Wallace-Hadrill (n. 51), 190–1 and Parroni (n. 5), 573.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. e.g. Hine (n. 53 [2006]), 72. *hic fuit motus Regulo et Verginio consulibus Ψ: Regulo et Verginio Rufo consulibus hic fuit motus Z*.

<sup>56</sup> Hine (n. 53 [2006]), 72.

<sup>57</sup> Hine (n. 53 [2006]), 72 n. 125.

<sup>58</sup> *Tyros aliquando infamis ruinis fuit; Asia duodecim urbes simul perdidit; anno priore*

earthquake took place one year before the Campanian earthquake and immediately after the comet of A.D. 60, it is much more convenient to date the destruction of Pompeii to early A.D. 62. Despite the objections raised by Hine, if we did not approve of Wallace-Hadrill's reasoning (*anno priore* can also refer to the beginning of A.D. 62) or we did not think of Seneca's vagueness in making calculations, we would be compelled to more drastic interventions in the chronology of both the *Naturales Quaestiones* and the *Epistulae Morales*.<sup>59</sup> As an alternative, we should think that the letters, as we read them, are not in chronological order, but no one until now has called this fact into question thanks to the (albeit sporadic) chronological references that we find among them and the development of the figures of Lucilius and Seneca that we can perceive throughout the course of the correspondence.<sup>60</sup>

On the contrary, if we accept for the books of the *Naturales Quaestiones* the order which is nowadays considered to be the most probable, if we consider genuine and correct the ablative absolute *Regulo et Verginio consulibus* of the manuscripts, and if we combine this clue with the comparisons between *Ep.* 34.2 and *QNat.* 4a *praef.* 20, and between *Ep.* 49.1–70.1 and *QNat.* 6.1.1–2, and with the only absolute date of the *Epistulae Morales*, namely the date of the destruction of Lugdunum, which plays a central role in *Ep.* 91 and dates to late summer or early autumn of A.D. 64, then we will obtain this cross-chronology:<sup>61</sup>

<i>QNat.</i> 4a	before <i>Ep.</i> 34, or, more probably, before the first 34 letters
<i>Ep.</i> 18	December
<i>Ep.</i> 23	spring
<i>Ep.</i> 49	before 5 February 63
<i>Ep.</i> 67	late spring
<i>Ep.</i> 70	before 5 February 63
<i>QNat.</i> 6	after 5 February 63
<i>Ep.</i> 86	late June
<i>Ep.</i> 91	late summer / early autumn 64
<i>Ep.</i> 122	autumn

*Achai<am> et Macedoni<am>, quaecumque est ista uis mali quae incurrit nunc Campaniam, laesit.* Cf. Parroni (n. 5), 573: 'Più semplice pensare a un'incongruenza di Seneca'.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Hine (n. 53 [2006]), 68–72 and Wallace-Hadrill (n. 51), 180–3. After all, it would not be the first case of Seneca's vagueness in making calculations: see n. 61 below.

<sup>60</sup> On the chronological order of the letters and their internal references, cf. Peter (n. 6), 236; Albertini (n. 3), 45 and 198; Lana (n. 34), 300; D.A.F.M. Russell, 'Letters to Lucilius', in C.D.N. Costa (ed.), *Seneca* (Boston, 1974), 70–95, at 72; Griffin (n. 14), 400; Cugusi (n. 1), 197–8; Grimal (n. 3), 220–4; Mazzoli (n. 1), 1851; Laudizi (n. 36), 74–5; Setaioli (n. 1), 192; and Dietsche (n. 21), 32. On the evolution of Lucilius' and Seneca's personalities within the *Epistulae Morales*, cf. H. Mutschmann, 'Seneca und Epikur', *Hermes* 50 (1915), 321–56, at 322–3 and Wildberger (n. 45).

<sup>61</sup> I recall that the order of the books of the *QNat.* which is considered to be the most probable is 3, 4a, 4b, 5, 6, 7, 1, 2: cf. above. On the destruction of Lugdunum as an absolute date, cf. Mazzoli (n. 1), 1851. We owe to Jonas (n. 53), 62 the merit of recognizing that in Tac. *Ann.* 16.13.3 the words *urbis casibus* allude to the fire of Rome of July A.D. 64. For a summary of further options of dating—in any case by now oscillating between August and the autumn of A.D. 64—cf. A. Viti, 'Seneca, *Ep.* 91: Liberale e l'incendio di Lione', *Paideia* 52 (1997), 397–406, at 401 and É. Gavoille, 'L'incendie de Lyon dans la lettre 91 de Sénèque', in F. Guillaumont and P. Laurence (edd.), *La présence de l'histoire dans l'épistolaire* (Tours, 2012), 347–64, at 348. For the sake of honesty, we have to specify that, in the past, *Ep.* 91 was also dated to A.D. 58, because Seneca says in 91.14 that Lugdunum was one hundred years old when it was destroyed and it is common knowledge that it was founded by Lucius Munatius Plancus in 43 B.C. (cf. Dio Cass. 46.50). Anyway, even if we neglected Jonas's breakthrough, we could agree with Bourgerly (n. 14), 41 that 100 is a symbolic round number and that Seneca 'est un moraliste, non un historien'—cf. also Viti (this note), 401 n. 20.

According to these data, we cannot but infringe a sort of taboo, the *terminus post quem* for the *Epistulae Morales* represented by the spring of A.D. 62, when, according to Tacitus (*Ann.* 14.52–6), Seneca, so to speak, retreated from political life. Nevertheless, as Hine puts it:

we should not be too fixated on Tacitus' account of the interview between Seneca and Nero in A.D. 62 as a turning point, for the change in Seneca's influence and standing in the court, and in the balance he struck between court duties and philosophy, may have been more gradual.<sup>62</sup>

After all, even in a passage usually considered decisive for dating the *Epistulae Morales* to this time, we do not read a clear hint of political life but rather of private business: *secessi non tantum ab hominibus sed a rebus, et in primis a meis rebus: posterorum negotium ago* (*Ep.* 8.2).

Based on these assumptions, we may date *QNat.* 4a to an undetermined period of A.D. 61 (in any case before December), *Ep.* 18 to December A.D. 61, *Epp.* 23–67 to the spring of A.D. 62, *Epp.* 68–70 to a period previous to 5 February A.D. 63 and *QNat.* 6—as already said—to a period subsequent to 5 February A.D. 63.<sup>63</sup> Assuming that *Ep.* 86 dates to the same summer of *Ep.* 91 (that is to say, the summer of A.D. 64), at most fifteen of the letters we have were written between 5 February A.D. 63 and the summer of A.D. 64.<sup>64</sup> If the dating of the earlier letters to some time of A.D. 61 even crosses the boundaries of the so-called long chronology (A.D. 62–4), to date *Epp.* 23 and 67 to the same spring is rather typical of the supporters of the short chronology (A.D. 63–4). Yet, the established opposition between long and short chronology, as well as resting on tenuous arguments, either takes for granted or ignores too many variables.<sup>65</sup> Some clarifications are in order. First, what I claim here is that the *Epistulae ad Lucilium* that we read are true letters which Seneca wrote to his friend between A.D. 61 and 64: nothing more and nothing less. Second, as my previous discussion of *Ep.* 121.18 should show, presumably Seneca did not include in the collection he decided to publish all the letters he wrote to Lucilius, and even taken alone this fact could give reason for the apparent unevenness in the rate of writing.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Hine (n. 53 [2006]), 71.

<sup>63</sup> Such dates agree with the hypothesis of Delatte (n. 6), 376, according to which Lucilius was sent to Sicily in A.D. 61.

<sup>64</sup> Apparently, the comparison between *Ep.* 49 and *Ep.* 70 could raise another problem: Schultess (n. 24), 39–40 maintains that the expression *post longum interuallum Pompeios tuos uidi* of *Ep.* 70 does not make much sense if we think that Seneca had visited Pompeii just a little time before, when he wrote *Ep.* 49. Thus, he believes that *Ep.* 70 was written before *Ep.* 49 and before the other epistles concerning Seneca's Campanian tour (51–7). However, Peter (n. 6), 235 and Albertini (n. 3), 199 n. 2 give an acceptable explanation of this supposed incongruity, arguing that *Ep.* 70 refers to Seneca's visit of the city, while in *Ep.* 49 Seneca is only looking at Pompeii from far. This reasoning is particularly persuasive if we interpret *Neapolis* in the sentence *ecce Campania et maxime Neapolis ac Pompeiorum tuorum conspectus incredibile est* (*Ep.* 49.1) as a nominative (and not as a genitive): in fact, it would stress the difference between what Seneca saw from far (Pompeii) and where he actually was, namely Naples, as the following epistles confirm. But, after all, we must not forget that this passage is affected by relevant textual problems: according to the manuscripts, we should read *ecce Campania et maxime Neapolis ad [a p] Pompeiorum tuorum conspectum incredibile est eqs.* Therefore, any hypothesis is advanced with some degree of tentativeness. Dietsche (n. 21), 34 instead thinks that the expression *post longum interuallum* of *Ep.* 70 is due to a lapse in concentration and that it is therefore a trace of the fictional character of the *Epistulae Morales*.

<sup>65</sup> On the opposition between long and short chronology as well as their weaknesses, cf. the clear *status quaestionis* in Mazzoli (n. 1), 1850–3.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. n. 3 above.

Third, even admitting that there are no missing letters within Books 1–20, we cannot know whether Seneca actually sent all the letters, whether he always waited for Lucilius' reply before writing a new letter, whether the two met in person when there is no epistolary correspondence, and so on. Regardless of these speculations, the dating I propose—I hope—only rests on what we can read in the *Epistulae Morales* and in the *Naturales Quaestiones*.

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