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SENECA
THE ELDER
DECLAMATIONS
VOLUME II



Translated by
M. WINTERBOTTOM

SENECA THE ELDER

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VOLUME II

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WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY
WILMER CAVE WRIGHT



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CONTROVERSIAE

7-10

SUASORIAE

CONTROVERSIARUM

266M

LIBER SEPTIMUS

SENECA NOVATO, SENECAE, MELAE FILIIS SALUTEM.

- 1 Instatis mihi cotidie de Albucio: non ultra vos differam, quamvis non audierim frequenter, cum per totum annum quinquies sexiensve populo diceret <et>¹ ad secretas exercitationes non multi inrump-
erent; quos tamen gratiae suae paenitebat: alius erat cum turbae se committebat, alius cum paucitate contentus erat. Incipiebat enim sedens, et si quando illum produxerat calor exsurgere audebat. Illa in-
tempestiva in declamationibus eius philosophia sine modo tunc et sine fine evagabatur; raro totam controversiam implebat: non posses dicere divisionem esse, non posses declamationem; tamquam decla- 267M
mationi multum deerat, tamquam divisioni multum supererat. Cum populo diceret, omnes vires suas advocabat et ideo non desinebat. Saepe decla-

¹ *Supplied by Kiessling*

BOOK 7

PREFACE

SENECA TO HIS SONS NOVATUS, SENECA AND MELA GREETINGS

You keep on at me every day about Albucius. I shall not put you off any longer, though I didn't hear him very often; in a whole year he would speak five or six times in public, and on his private exercises few intruded. But those who did regretted showing him this attention; he was one man when he entrusted himself to a crowd, another when he contented himself with a small audience. He used to start off sitting down, and if his passion carried him on he would venture to get up.¹ His celebrated philosophical observations,² which were quite out of place in declamation, then wandered on without restraint and without end. He rarely completed a whole *controversia*; you couldn't call it a division—or a declamation: for a declamation, it lacked much, for a division it had much that was superfluous. But whenever he spoke in public he used to summon up all his powers,

¹ We learn the same from Suet. *Gr. Rhet.* 30.3.

² Cf. *C.* 1.3.8; 1.7.17; 7.6.18.

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mante illo ter bucinavit, dum cupit in omni controversia dicere non quidquid debet dici sed quidquid potest. Argumentabatur moleste magis quam subtiliter: argumenta enim argumentis colligebat, et, quasi nihil esset satis firmum, omnes probationes probationibus aliis confirmabat.

2 Erat et illud in argumentatione vitium, quod quaestionem non tamquam partem controversiae sed tamquam controversiam implebat. Omnis quaestio suam propositionem habebat, suam executionem, suos excessus, suas indignationes, epilogum quoque suum. Ita unam controversiam exponebat, plures dicebat. Quid ergo? non omnis quaestio per numeros suos implenda est? Quidni? sed tamquam accessio, non tamquam summa. Nullum habile membrum est si corpori par est.

Splendor orationis quantus nescio an in ullo alio fuerit. Non hexis magna, sed phrasis. Dicebat enim citato et effuso cursu, sed praeparatus. Extemporalis illi facultas, ut adfirmabant qui propius 268M norant, non deerat, sed putabat ipse sibi deesse. Sententiae, quas optime Pollio Asinius albas vocabat, simplices, apertae, nihil occultum, nihil insperatum
3 adferentes, sed vocales et splendidae. Adfectus efficaciter movit, figurabat egregie, praeparabat

¹ The phrase is puzzling. The trumpet blew at the end of each watch of the night (*vigilia*), and each watch consisted of three hours. It is difficult, however, to imagine that Albucius spoke so long, and at night.

and so he didn't stop. Often while he was speaking the trumpet would blow three times,¹ for in every *controversia* it was his wish to say not what ought to be said but what is capable of being said. He argued laboriously rather than subtly; he used argument to prove argument,² and as though there were no firm ground anywhere confirmed all his proofs with further proofs.

His argumentation had the further fault that he ² would develop a question not as part of a *controversia* but as a *controversia*. Every question had its own statement, its treatment, its digressions, its appeals to anger, even its epilogue. Thus it was that he set himself a single theme, but actually spoke a number of themes. You may ask: shouldn't every question be developed in all its detail? Of course, but as an adjunct, not as the whole. No limb is manageable if it is as large as the body.

He had distinction of style perhaps unequalled by anyone else. He had no great facility,³ but consummate diction. For he spoke in a swift onrush, yet with premeditation. He wasn't without the ability to extemporise, according to his more familiar friends, but *he* thought he was. His epigrams, which Asinius Pollio excellently called "white,"⁴ were simple, open, bringing no hidden or unexpected point with them, merely resonant and brilliant. He was effective ³

² Or: "amassed argument upon argument."

³ For *hexis* see Quintilian 10.1.1: it is the assured ability to compose that arises from constant reading and study.

⁴ Perhaps with a pun on the declaimer's name, as a variant on the usual *candidus* (cf. e.g. Quintilian 10.1.73 on the unaffected Herodotus).

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suspiciose. Nihil est autem tam inimicum quam manifesta praeparatio; apparet enim subesse nescio quid mali. Itaque moderatio¹ est adhibenda, ut sit illa praeparatio, non confessio. Locum beate implebat. Non posses de inopia sermonis Latini queri cum illum audires: tantum orationis cultae fluebat. Numquam se torsit quomodo diceret, sed quid diceret. Sufficiebat illi in quantum voluerat explicandi vis; itaque ipse dicere solebat, cum vellet ostendere non haesitare se in electione verborum: cum rem animus occupavit, verba ambiunt.

Inaequalitatem in illo mirari² licebat. Splendidissimus erat; idem res dicebat omnium sordidissimas—acetum et puleium et †dammam et philerotem†³ lanternas et spongias: nihil putabat esse quod 269M
4 dici in declamatione non posset. Erat autem illa causa: timebat ne scholasticus videretur. Dum alterum vitium devitat, incidebat in alterum, nec videbat nimium illum orationis suae splendorem his admixtis sordibus non defendi sed inquinari; et hoc aequale omnium est, ut vitia sua excusare malint quam effugere. Albucius enim non quomodo non

¹ Warmington suggests malitiae. Moderatio . . .

² inequalitatem—mirari *M*: (i)ndequalitate(m)—mirari non *ABV*.

³ These words appear only in the excerpta MSS, and should probably be deleted.

¹ Bornecque compares *C.* 1.2.16 and other places where Albucius gave a "figure" to the whole plan of his declamation.

² Cf. *C.* 1 pr. 21: "magis nocent insidiae quae latent."

³ Cf. *Lucr.* 1.832: challenged by Cicero, e.g. *Nat. Deor.* 1.8.

⁴ Cf. *Hor. Ars Poet.* 311: "verbaque provisam rem non

at rousing emotion, excellent at figures,¹ skilled at allusiveness in his preparation. Now nothing is more prejudicial than obvious preparation:² for it makes it clear that something bad lurks beneath. So you must be restrained, so that it remains preparation without lapsing into explicit statement. He could fill out topics lavishly. No-one could complain of the poverty of Latin³ if he heard Albucius—such was the flow of his polished language. He never agonised over how to say things, merely over what to say. He had the gift of developing a topic to the extent he desired; and so he himself used to say, in order to illustrate his lack of hesitation in the choice of words: “When my mind has taken hold of something, the words come eagerly flocking round.”⁴

It was legitimate to be surprised by his unevenness of quality. He was full of polish—yet he could name the most sordid possible things, vinegar and flea-mint and lanterns and sponges: there was nothing, he thought, that one could not mention in a declamation. The reason was this: he was afraid of being thought a schoolman.⁵ While avoiding one fault he fell into another, and failed to see that his exceedingly brilliant style was not safeguarded but polluted by the admixture of these vulgarities. And indeed it is equally true of all men that they prefer thinking of excuses for their vices to keeping clear of them.⁶ Actually Albucius wasn't seeking to avoid being a

invita sequentur,” itself a variant on Cato's “*rem tene, verba sequentur*.”

⁵ Both fact and motive are given by Suet. *Gr. Rhet.* 30.3.

⁶ Cf. Sen. *Ep.* 116.8: “We prefer excusing our vices to excising them.”

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esset scholasticus quaerebat, sed quomodo non videretur. Nihil detrahebat ex supervacuo strepitu; haec sordida verba ad patrocinium aliorum adferebat. Hoc illi accedebat inconstantia iudicii: quem proxime dicentem commode audierat imitari volebat. Memini omnibus illum omissis rebus apud Fabianum philosophum, tanto iuveniolem quam ipse erat, cum
5 codicibus sedere; memini admiratione Hermagorae stupentem ad imitationem eius ardescere. Nulla erat fiducia ingenii sui, et ideo adsidua mutatio; itaque dum genera dicendi transfert et modo exilis esse volt nudisque rebus haerere, modo horridus et valens potius quam cultus, modo brevis et concinnus, modo nimis se attollit, modo nimis se deprimit, ingenio suo inlusit et longe deterius senex dixit quam iuvenis dixerat; nihil enim ad profectum aetas ei proderat, cum semper studium eius esset novum. Idiotismos est inter oratorias virtutes res quae raro procedit; magno enim temperamento opus est et occasione quadam. Hac virtute varie usus est: saepe illi bene cessit, saepe decedit. Nec tamen mirum est si difficulter adprehenditur vitio tam vicina virtus. Hoc nemo praestitit umquam Gallione nostro
6 decentius. Iam adulescentulus cum declamaret, apte et convenienter et decenter hoc genere utebatur; quod eo magis mirabar quia tenera aetas refugit

¹ That is, he used the vulgar words to get him off the charge of being a schoolman that might have resulted from highfalutin' words; cf. *defendi* above.

schoolman—merely being thought one. He wouldn't cut out any of his superfluous noise; these sordid words he brought in to back up others.¹ He was also afflicted by vacillation of taste; he wanted to imitate the last attractive speaker he had heard. I recall him sitting with his notebook at the feet of Fabianus the philosopher, who was so much younger than he, all other business neglected. I recall him breathless 5 with admiration for Hermagoras, burning to imitate him. He had no confidence in his own talents, and so kept chopping and changing. He would swop styles of speech, sometimes wanting to be lean and stick to the bare facts, sometimes bristling and strong rather than pretty, sometimes brief and balanced: sometimes he went too high, sometimes too low. Thus he made a mock of his abilities, and spoke far worse as an old man than he had as a youth. His age made no contribution to his progress, for his enthusiasms were always new. The pursuit of vulgarism ² is one of the virtues of style that rarely succeeds; one needs great restraint and the right moment. His record in the employment of this quality was variable; he was often successful, often a flop. And it is not surprising that a virtue so close to a fault ³ should not be easy to master. But no-one employed this trick more appropriately than my friend Gallio. Already in his 6 youthful declamations he could use this manner fittingly and suitably and with propriety: I used to be the more surprised because a tender age normally

² For its proper use see Quintilian 8.3.21-3.

³ For the doctrine of neighbouring faults in general, see Adamietz on Quintilian 3.7.25. For its application to style cf. esp. Demetr. *Eloc.* 114.

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omne non tantum quod sordidum sed quod sordido simile est.

Raro Albucio respondebat fortuna, semper opinio: quamvis paenituisset audisse, libebat audire. Tristis, sollicitus declamator et qui de dictione sua timeret etiam cum dixisset: usque eo nullum tempus securum illi erat. Haec illum sollicitudo fugavit a foro, et tantum unius figurae crudelis eventus. Nam in quodam iudicio centumvirali, cum diceretur iurisiurandi condicio aliquando delata ab adversario, induxit eiusmodi figuram qua illi omnia crimina
7 regereret. Placet, inquit, tibi rem iureiurando tran- 271M
sigi? Iura, sed ego iusiurandum mandabo: ¹ iura per patris cineres, qui inconditi sunt, iura per patris memoriam; et executus est locum. Quo perfecto surrexit L. Arruntius ex diverso et ait: accipimus condicionem; iurabit. Clamabat Albucius: non detuli condicionem; schema dixi. Arruntius instabat. Centumviri rebus iam ultimis properabant. Albucius clamabat: ista ratione schemata de rerum natura tolluntur. Arruntius aiebat: tollantur; poterimus sine illis vivere. Summa rei haec fuit: centumviri dixerunt dare ipsos secundum adversarium Albucii si iuraret; ille iuravit. Albucius

¹ mandabo *Gertz*: dabo.

shuns everything that resembles vulgarity, let alone vulgarity itself.

Albucius was rarely lucky—but always well thought of. However sorry one was to have been to hear him, one was glad to go again. He was a gloomy, anxious declaimer, one who worried about his performance even at the end of a speech—in fact no moment was free of care for him. And it was this anxiety that drove him away from the forum—and in particular the cruel outcome of one single figure.¹ Once, at a trial in the centumviral court,² because he was told that the terms of an oath had on one occasion been prescribed by his adversary, he brought in a figure involving an oath which enabled him to make all the charges recoil on him. “You want,” he asked, “to settle the point 7 by means of an oath? Swear—but *I* will dictate the oath. Swear by the unburied ashes of your father. Swear by your father’s memory.” And he finished the topic. When he had finished, Lucius Arruntius got up on the other side, and said: “We accept the terms, he will swear.” Albucius screamed: “I wasn’t putting forward terms—I was using a figure.” Arruntius insisted. The centumviri were at the end of their business, and in a hurry. Albucius cried: “At this rate figures are banished from the world.” Arruntius said: “Let them go: we shall be able to survive without them.” The outcome of the matter was this: the centumviri said they would decide for Albucius’ opponent if he would swear; he did swear.

¹ This story is told by Suet. *Gr. Rhet.* 30.5 and Quintilian 9.2.95.

² Which dealt largely with property cases and became very important under the empire.

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non tulit hanc contumeliam, sed iratus calumniam sibi imposuit: numquam amplius in foro dixit; erat enim homo summae probitatis, qui nec facere iniuriam nec pati sciret.

- 8 Et solebat dicere: Quid habeo quare in foro dicam, cum plures me domi audiant quam quemquam in foro? Cum volo dico, dico quamdiu volo, adsum utri volo. Et quamvis non fateretur, delecta- 272M
bat illum in declamationibus quod schemata sine periculo dicebantur. Nec in scholasticis tamen effugere contumelias poterat Cestii, mordacissimi hominis. Cum in quadam controversia dixisset Albucius: quare calix si cecidit frangitur, spongia si cecidit non frangitur? aiebat Cestius: ite ad illum cras; declamabit vobis quare turdi volent, cucurbitae
9 non volent. Cum dixisset Albucius in illa <de>¹ fratre qui fratrem parricidii damnatum in exarmata nave dimisit: "inposuit fratrem in culleum ligneum," Cestius eandem dicturus sic exposuit controversiam: quidam fratrem domi a patre damnatum noverca accusante, cum accepisset ad supplicium, imposuit in culleum ligneum. Ingens risus omnium secutus est. Sed nec ipsi bene cessit declamatio; paucas enim res bonas dixit. Et cum a scholasticis non laudaretur, nemo, inquit, imponit hos in culleum

¹ illa de *Schultingh*: illo.

¹ Literally, "inflicted on himself the penalty for *calumnia*," i.e. having brought a malicious charge (cf. *C.* 2.1.34 n.). The self-imposed penalty was not to appear in court—as it would have been in fact (cf. *Dig.* 3.2.1; A. H. J. Greenidge, *The Legal Procedure of Cicero's Time* [Oxford, 1901], 468 seq.).

Albucius couldn't take this insult; in his anger he condemned himself,¹ and never again spoke in court. For he was a man of the highest integrity, who was incapable of doing an injury—or putting up with one.

In fact, he used to say: “What reason have I to 8 speak in court?—more listen to me at home than listen to anyone else in court. I speak when I like; I speak as long as I like;² I appear for whichever party I like.” And though he wouldn't admit it, he enjoyed declaiming just because he could use figures without danger. But not even in scholastic exercises could he escape insult from the biting tongue of Cestius. Albucius had said in one *controversia*: “Why is a cup broken if it falls—but not a sponge?” Cestius said: “Go to him tomorrow. He'll give you a declamation on why thrushes fly, but not pumpkins.” In the 9 *controversia* on the man who set his parricide brother adrift in a disabled boat, Albucius had said: “He put his brother in a wooden sack.”³ Cestius, about to declaim the same *controversia*, put the theme thus: A man put his brother, who had been convicted privately by his father on a charge made by his step-mother, and whom he had received for punishment, into a wooden sack. Universal shouts of laughter followed; but Cestius too didn't fare well in the declamation—he said few good things. When he got no compliments from the schoolmen, he said: “Why does nobody put these people in a wooden sack and send

² In court there were restrictions on the time of speeches (cf. Tac. *Dial.* 19.5). Compare Montanus' remarks on the freedom of declaimers in *C.* 9 pr. 2.

³ For the sack as part of the equipment for punishing a parricide, see n. on *C.* 3.2.