

Seneca's Edible *Exempla*

The *exemplum*, as a crucial component of Seneca's Stoic pedagogy, is one of the most pervasive features of his philosophical prose. This paper reads Senecan *exempla* through the lens of consumption, a theme that has enjoyed scholarly popularity in Senecan drama but has mostly been neglected in his prose texts (with the notable exception of Richardson-Hay 2009, who insists on the seriousness of Seneca's treatment of consumption). Seneca often writes his *exempla* as either hungry or full: frugal Roman luminaries as Tubero (*Ep.* 95.72-3), Manius Curius (*ad Hel.* 10.8), and Gaius Fabricius Luscinus (*de Prov.* 3.6), all praised for their willingness to dine on simple foods in a simple fashion, come up against the likes of Mark Antony (*Ep.* 83, himself in the shadow of the great glutton Hercules), Alexander the Great (*Ep.* 83 as well as *Ep.* 94, where his cruelty rivals beasts that gorge themselves), Cambyses, who forced his army to cannibalize (*de Ira* 3.20.2-4), the *insatiabile* Hostius Quadra, obsessed with the sexual potential of his own mouth (*NQ* 1.16.3), and Vedius Pollio, who fed his slaves to his pet lampreys (*de Clem.* 18.2; *de Ira* 3.40.2ff). I argue that Seneca consciously constructs a dichotomy of hungry/(over)full in these *exempla*, among which hungriness is the closest approximation of moderation.

My analysis of these *exempla* builds on the insights of recent scholarship on Roman *exempla*, namely Langlands 2018, who explores Seneca's perception of the *exempla* he uses as simultaneously effective and unsatisfactory for the Stoic *proficiens*, and Roller 2018, who identifies in Seneca critiques of the Roman institution of *exempla* and argues for a specifically Stoic mode of exemplarity. I apply these Senecan critiques of his own *exempla* as I bring specific hungry (and full) Romans into relief with the greater Senecan discourse on consumption.

Bibliography

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