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# Reading Roman Declamation



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*Seneca the Elder*

*Edited by*

MARTIN T. DINTER  
CHARLES GUÉRIN  
MARCOS MARTINHO

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summary, we may affirm that Seneca himself indicates, through the intertextual network woven into the prefaces and the commentaries, that his project is articulated around the concept of *prodesse*. However, the association of declamation with Lucretius' honey, which suggests that matter treated in the collection is entertaining, may also signal that Seneca seeks to create a work that should please the reader. Indeed, one can also detect a poetics of *delectare* in other references. By adorning his discourse with characteristic elements of the 'I' that emanates from the *Ars amatoria* and the *Remedia amoris*, the memorialist reminds us of Ovid's badinage, particularly when he mixes poetry and declamation. The attacks against Albucius, which are sharpened through references to Horace's satirical *persona*, may be meant as comic material. Finally, with the allusion to Cicero's *Orator*, or rather, with an imitation close to plagiarism, one detects a challenge set for the audience, who are expected to recognize the model from which the memorialist borrows his *sententia*. Indeed, it is possible that Seneca implicitly invites the reader to play such a game, when he deplores in *Suasoria* 2 that in his time a declaimer might use as if it were his own a quote from *In Verrem* without the audience even noticing.<sup>75</sup> Thus, intertextuality appears with a pleasing or entertaining dimension, which strengthens the didactic efficiency of Seneca's *persona*.

## 2. Marcus Porcius Latro: an Anti-Greek Model for Latin Eloquence

Alessandra Rolle

The first part of this chapter analyzed how Seneca the Elder builds his own authorial ethos as based on various Roman authors. In this section, I will examine the role of Greek oratory in the construction of the character presented by Seneca the Elder as the model of 'post-Ciceronian' eloquence in Latin: the rhetor Marcus Porcius Latro.<sup>76</sup>

In the preface to the first book of *Controversiae*, Seneca paints a portrait of Latro and his rhetorical art by underlining their long friendship *a prima pueritia usque ad ultimum eius diem* ('from early childhood to his last day

<sup>75</sup> Sen. *Suas.* 2.19. On the concept of seeking intertextuality as a game for the reader, see van Mal-Maeder (2007) 84.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Sen. *Contr.* 1.praef.21: *in illo cum omnes oratoriae virtutes essent* ('since all the virtues of oratory were within him') and 9.praef.3: *declamatoriae virtutis unicum exemplum* ('the sole example of declamatory virtue').

alive').<sup>77</sup> The vigorousness of Latro's body is presented as the necessary complement of his proud and virile temperament:

Nesciebat dispensare vires suas, sed inmoderati adversus se imperii fuit, ideoque studium eius prohiberi debebat quia regi non poterat. Itaque solebat et ipse, cum se assidua et numquam intermissa contentione fregerat, sentire ingenii lassitudinem, quae non minor est quam corporis sed occultior. Corpus illi erat et natura solidum et multa exercitatione duratum, ideoque numquam impetus ardentis animi deseruit. Vox robusta, sed surda, lucubrationibus et neglegentia, non natura infuscata; beneficio tamen laterum extollebatur, et, quamvis inter initia parum attulisse virium videretur, ipsa actione adcrecebat. Nulla umquam illi cura vocis exercendae fuit; illum fortem et agrestem et Hispanae consuetudinis morem non poterat dediscere: utcumque res tulerat, ita vivere, nihil vocis causa facere, non illam per gradus paulatim ab imo ad summum perducere, non rursus a summa contentione paribus intervallis descendere, non sudorem unctione discutere, non latus ambulatione reparare.

(He had no idea how to husband his strength, but ruled himself ruthlessly—his zest had to be stopped altogether just because it could not be regulated. And so he himself, broken by constant and unremitting effort, used to feel a lassitude of mind that is as debilitating as bodily tiredness, though less obvious. He had a body that nature had made strong and exercise hard, so that it never failed the impulses of his passionate spirit. His voice was strong but dull, thickened not by nature but by overwork and lack of care. But it was capable of being raised, thanks to the strength of his lungs, and though at the start of a speech it might be thought to have too little power in reserve it grew with the impetus of the speech itself. He never took any trouble to exercise his voice; he could not put off his steadfast, rustic, Spanish character: his motto was to live as circumstances suggested, without doing anything for the sake of his voice (such as gradually taking it up from low to high, and then going down again from the highest pitch by equal intervals), and without inhibiting sweat by means of oil or renewing his lungs by walking.) (Sen. *Contr.* 1.praef.15–16)

In this passage, Seneca highlights the fact that Latro did not take care of his own voice, naturally robust as it was, but relied only on the vigorousness of his athletic body and on the surge of his overflowing enthusiasm, without

<sup>77</sup> Sen. *Contr.* 1.praef. 13.

following the good precepts of rhetorical education. We can observe precise parallels on the linguistic level with regard to recommendations about the voice found in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (3.12.21), in the *Institutio oratoria* by Quintilian (11.3.19 and 11.3.22) and in the *Ars rhetorica* by Fortunatianus (3.16–17 = Halm 130–1).<sup>78</sup>

However, it is also possible to draw another parallel which, as far as I know, has not been observed so far. Latro's description may be read in relation to—or rather in opposition to—the renowned passage in Cicero's *De oratore* where we find a description of Demosthenes' effort to build up a strong voice, in spite of his naturally weak body:

Imiteturque illum, cui sine dubio summa vis dicendi conceditur, Atheniensem Demosthenem, in quo tantum studium fuisse, tantisque labor dicitur, ut primum impedimenta naturae diligentia industriaque superaret cumque ita balbus esset, ut eius ipsius artis, cui studeret, primam litteram non posset dicere, perfecit meditando, ut nemo planius esse locutus putaretur; deinde cum spiritus eius esset angustior, tantum continenda anima in dicendo est adsecutus, ut una continuatione verborum—id quod eius scripta declarant—binae ei contentiones vocis et remissiones continerentur; qui etiam—ut memoriae proditum est—coniectis in os calculis, summa voce versus multos uno spiritu pronuntiare consuescebat; neque is consistens in loco, sed inambulans, atque ascensu ingrediens arduo.

(Let us do as the famous Athenian Demosthenes, whose pre-eminence in oratory is unhesitatingly admitted, did, and whose zeal and exertions are said to have been such that at the very beginning he surmounted natural drawbacks by diligent perseverance: and though at first stuttering so badly as to be unable to pronounce the initial 'r' of the name of the art of his devotion, by practice he made himself accounted as distinct a speaker as anyone; later on, though his breath was rather short, he succeeded so far in making his breath hold during a speech to such an extent that a single oratorical period—as his writings prove—covered two risings and two fallings of tone; moreover—as the tale goes—it was his habit to slip pebbles into his mouth, and then declaim a number of verses at the top of his voice and without drawing breath, not only as he stood still, but while walking about, or going up a steep slope.)<sup>79</sup> (Cic. *De Or.* 1.260–1)

The first element opposing Latro to Demosthenes is their relation to *studium*. Latro 'needs to restrain his zeal because he is not capable of

<sup>78</sup> See Bornecque (1932) 2.296, n. 16. <sup>79</sup> Trans. adapted from Sutton (1942).

controlling it, *studium eius prohibere debebat, quia regi non poterat*. Instead, Demosthenes makes full use of his energy: it is precisely *studium* and *labor* which motivate him in his struggle against the natural weakness of his body, *in quo tantum studium fuisse tantusque labor dicitur*.

Seneca's *Latro* has a voice which is 'strong but dull, thickened not by nature but by overwork and lack of care' (*vox robusta sed surda, lucubrationibus et negligentia, non natura infuscata*). On the other hand, Demosthenes seems to have vanquished his stammering thanks to scrupulous care and exercise (*ut primum impedimenta naturae diligentia industriaque superaret*). More specifically, it has to be noted the opposition between the terms *neglegentia* and *diligentia*; the former is present in Seneca's excerpt, and the latter in that of Cicero.

Moreover, Seneca says about *Latro* that he could count on the strength of his lungs to raise his voice, reinforcing it as the declamation went on: *beneficio tamen laterum extollebatur et quamvis inter initia parum attulisse virium videretur, ipsa actione adcrecebat*. By way of contrast, Cicero says that Demosthenes had patiently corrected his breathing—which was naturally too short-spaced—through a rigorous discipline: *cum spiritus eius esset angustior, tantum continenda anima in dicendo est adsecutus*.

Furthermore, *Latro* is described as gifted with a strong ability to adapt (*utcumque res tulerat, ita vivere*), while Demosthenes is celebrated for his will to overcome his natural feebleness and for his capacity to completely overthrow it (*cumque ita balbus esset [...] perfecit meditando, ut nemo planius esse locutus putaretur*).

Finally, Seneca notes that *Latro* never devoted himself to vocal training to strengthen his voice by making it ascend and descend 'from the highest pitch by equal intervals': *non illam [sc. vocem] per gradus paulatim ab imo ad summum perducere, non rursus a summa contentione paribus intervallis descendere*. However, Demosthenes' victory over his naturally short breathing is illustrated by his capacity to gradually elevate and reduce the tone of his voice, in one breath, during his speeches: *una continuatione verborum... binae ei contentiones vocis et remissiones continerentur*.

When considered separately, these textual correspondences may seem weak, but when combined together they become significant. In this passage from Seneca, the contrast with Demosthenes should have been easily recognizable for readers since the latter was famous for his ferocious resolve to become an excellent orator despite his precarious physical condition and his stammering, as attested by both Greek and Latin authors.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Plut. *Dem.* 11; Dion. Hal. *Dem.* 53; Q. Cic. *Comment. Pet.* 2; Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.54; and in particular Cic. *Fin.* 5.5. In *Div.* 2.96, Cicero indicates his Greek source, Demetrius of

In this first parallel, *Latro*, presented by Seneca as a model for eloquence in Latin, seems to be constructed antithetically to Demosthenes, the *au-toritas* of Greek oratory, in terms primarily of corporality and partly of personality. But in his portrait, Seneca also talks of *Latro*'s declamatory style and emphasizes that he subordinated the use of rhetorical figures to real requirements of expression, condemning their purely ornamental use:

Iudicium autem fuit strictius: non placebat illi orationem inflectere nec umquam recta via decedere nisi cum hoc aut necessitas coegisset aut magna suasisset utilitas. Schema negabat decoris causa inventum, sed subsidii, ut quod [palam] aures offensurum esset si palam diceretur, id oblique et furtim subreperet. Summam quidem esse dementiae detorquere orationem cui esse rectam liceret.

(His taste was pretty restrained—he didn't like to twist language, to leave the straight and narrow path, unless he had to, or unless there was some great advantage to sway him. He said figures were not discovered to beautify but to aid, enabling something that, said openly, would offend the ear, to creep in from the flank, furtively. But he thought it the height of madness to distort language if it could be straightforward.)

(Sen. *Contr.* 1.praef.23–4)

In this passage, I would suggest the presence of a second intertextual link with Cicero: an excerpt of *Brutus* related to another important Greek orator, Demetrius of Phalerum. In the brief history of Greek eloquence established by Cicero in this work, Demetrius is considered as the first to have, so to speak, 'softened' the art of oratory by renouncing *gravitas* in favour of *suavitas*:<sup>81</sup>

Hic primus inflexit orationem et eam mollem teneramque reddidit et sua-vis, sicut fuit, videri maluit quam gravis, sed suavitate ea, qua perfun-deret animos, non qua perfringeret.

Phalerum, who is also used by Plutarch (*Dem.* 11) and by many of the authors who recount to this story; see Pease (1963) 512–13 n. 5.

<sup>81</sup> On this issue, see Heldmann (1979) 317–25 and Marchese (2011) 264, who underlines that an eloquence that is *mollis* and *tenera* is destined to entertain (*delectare*) the public, but is not able to move it (*movere animos*). In Cicero's work, the figure of Demetrius of Phalerum, who also appears in the *De oratore* (2.95) and the *Orator* (92), seems to occupy an ambiguous status between decadence and individuation of a different model. In general, concerning Demetrius of Phalerum, see Heldmann (1982) 98–122.



(He was the first to modulate oratory and to give it softness and pliability. He chose to use charm, as was his nature, rather than force, a charm which diffused itself through the minds of his listeners without overwhelming them.)<sup>82</sup> (Cic. *Brut.* 38)

In Seneca the Elder's passage, the collocation *orationem inflectere* may be considered to echo the sequence *primus inflexit orationem* present in Cicero's excerpt: this link is all the more significant as there is no other use of this expression in Latin literature.<sup>83</sup> Once again, Latro's image appears to be constructed in opposition to a Greek oratorical authority through an intertextual play. The only derogations to the choice of a simple and sober eloquence allowed by Latro are determined by *necessitas* and *utilitas*, and correspond to a clearly ethical motivation (to avoid offending the audience's ears). Instead, the 'softening' of oratory introduced by Demetrius merely seeks to achieve an effect of *suavitas* in discourse: he aims to charm the audience and is impelled by purely aesthetic considerations.

Accepting this second Ciceronian parallel, we encounter a new element in the (re)construction of Latro's character: he would not only be described for his natural vigorousness as an anti-Demosthenes, but also be represented, for the rigorousness of his stylistic choices, as an anti-Demetrius of Phalerum.

Seneca emphasizes how Latro only admitted the use of rhetorical figures in relation to a certain number of themes which, had they been expressed too directly, would have upset the ears (and the sensibility) of the audience. However, he was able to do it without removing any strength from his speeches. In Sen. *Contr.* 1.1.25, speaking of a figure used by the Greek declaimer Hermagoras, Seneca states that it was 'a figure that wounds, rather than tickles' (*schema quod vulnerat, non quod titillat*), and this statement is followed by the remark: *ut Latroni placebat*. Once more, Latro's character appears as (implicitly) opposed to Demetrius, who, as noted, is said by Cicero to have sought to produce an effect of pleasure *qua perfunderet animos, non qua perfringeret*.

Latro is offered as a model for vigorous expression, in opposition to a type of eloquence associated more closely to the pursuit of *suavitas*, also in *Contr.* 1.8:

<sup>82</sup> Cicero himself speaks here; trans. by Hendrickson (1939).

<sup>83</sup> In the tenth book of the *Institutio oratoria*, Quintilian alludes to this famous remark by Cicero concerning Demetrius of Phalerum with the use of a synonymous expression: Quint. *Inst.* 10. 1.80, *quin etiam Phalerea illum Demetrium, quamquam is primus inclinasse eloquentiam dicitur, multum ingenii habuisse et facundiae fateor*.

Latro vehementer egit a parte patris et adiecit: abdicato quoque non permittam exire, iniciam manus, tenebo, novissime ante limen exeuntis cadaver hoc sternam: ut ad hostem pervenias, patrem calca. Putabat Plancus, summus amator Latronis, hunc sensum a Latrone fortius dictum, a Lesbo cle Graeco tenerius, qui dixit sic: κείσομαι ὡς τεῖχος, ὡς τάρφρον ὑπέρβηθι καὶ πατέρα.

(Latro pleaded forcefully on the father's side, adding: 'Even when I have disinherited him, I shall not let him go out to fight, I shall lay my hands on him, hold him, and at the last let my dead body fall on the threshold as he goes. To get to the enemy you must trample over your father.' Plancus, a great admirer of Latro, thought that Latro put this idea too strongly, but that Lesbo cles the Greek put it too feebly, thus: 'I shall lie in your path: pass over your father too—as over a wall or a ditch.')

(Sen. *Contr.* 1.8.15)

This passage originates from a controversy in which a *vir fortis* is summoned by his father because he desires to go to war for the fourth time, despite being exempted from military service as he has already accomplished three heroic acts. Seneca quotes a part of Latro's plea in the father's defence, and after doing so, notices that a certain Plancus, who was 'a great admirer of Latro', had compared Latro's words to a similar expression by the Greek rhetor Lesbo cles. In this way, Plancus wanted to show that the same idea had been rendered *fortius*, 'too strongly', by the first and *tenerius*, 'too feebly', by the latter. Yet again, we may see an implicit opposition between the figure of Latro and that of Demetrius of Phalerum, as well as the 'softening' of eloquence the latter had introduced. In fact, Latro's vigorous eloquence is opposed to that of the Greek Lesbo cles, which is qualified with the same adjective, *tener*, used by Cicero to describe Demetrius' oratory in the *Brutus*.

Strength appears to be a specific feature of Latro's figure. It is present in his body,<sup>84</sup> as well as in his temperament,<sup>85</sup> and in his eloquence.<sup>86</sup> His force of expression had to be considered as a typically Roman attribute. Indeed,

<sup>84</sup> Sen. *Contr.* 1.praef.16: *corpus illi erat et natura solidum et multa exercitatione duratum* ('his body was not only robust by nature but also hardened with much exercise').

<sup>85</sup> Sen. *Contr.* 1.praef.13: *in utramque partem vehementi viro modus deerat: nec intermittere studium sciebat nec repetere* ('this passionate man lacked moderation in two respects: he could not stop work—and could not start it again').

<sup>86</sup> Sen. *Contr.* 1.praef.20: *putant enim fortiter quidem, sed parum subtiliter eum dixisse* ('men think that he spoke strongly but not acutely enough'). On the topic of physical virility in relation to rhetoric, see Lucian. *Rhet. Pr.* 9–13; Apul. *Apol.* 4 (with the commentary of Hunink (1997) 20–8) and Gunderson (2003) 36–41. More generally, see also Gunderson (2000).

Indeed in Sen. *Contr.* 2.6.12, it is said of the Greek rhetor Agroitas that his eloquence, deprived of stylistic refinements (*arte inculta*), betrayed his non-Greek formation and that his use of vigorous expressions (*sententiae fortes*) revealed his Roman acquaintances (rather than Greek ones):<sup>87</sup>

Agroitas Massiliensis longe vividiolem sententiam dixit quam ceteri Graeci declamatores, qui in hac controversia tamquam rivalet rixati sunt. Dicebat autem Agroitas arte inculta, ut scires illum inter Graecos non fuisse, sententiis fortibus, ut scires illum inter Romanos fuisse.

(Agroitas of Marseille produced a much more forceful epigram than the other Greek declaimers, who brawled in this *controversia* as though they were rivals in love. Now Agroitas had an unpolished technique—which showed he had not frequented the Greeks—and employed vigorous epigrams—which showed he had frequented the Romans.)

(Sen. *Contr.* 2.6.12)

Latro's rhetorical force would thus be especially linked to his Roman spirit, which in his case was bolstered by his Hispanic roots as described in Sen. *Contr.* 1.praef.16: *illum fortem et agrestem et Hispanae consuetudinis morem non poterat dediscere* ('he had not been able to un-learn that strong, rustic, Spanish character').

However, Latro's expressive strength also gave his detractors a pretext to criticize him. In his initial portrait by Seneca, we can observe that he was accused for having more strength than sobriety (*subtilitas*) in his style:

Putant enim fortiter quidem sed parum subtiliter eum dixisse, cum in illo, si qua alia virtus fuit, et subtilitas fuerit. [...] Nihil est iniquius his, qui nusquam putant esse subtilitatem nisi ubi nihil est praeter subtilitatem; et in illo cum omnes oratoriae virtutes essent, hoc fundamentum superstructis tot et tantis molibus obruebatur, nec deerat in illo sed non eminebat. Et nescio an maximum vitium subtilitatis sit nimis se ostendere. Magis nocent insidiae quae latent: utilissima est dissimulata subtilitas, quae effectu apparet, habitu latet.

(Men think that he spoke strongly but not acutely enough. In fact, if he had any quality, it was acuteness. [...] Nothing is more unfair than to think that acuteness is only present when there is nothing present but

<sup>87</sup> On Agroitas and his Greek identity, see also Guérin in this volume.

acuteness. Latio possessed every oratorical quality, so that this foundation was obscured by the vast superstructure, and so, though present, was not obvious: indeed, perhaps the greatest fault of acuteness is to flaunt itself unduly. Plots that are hidden are more dangerous; the most useful sort of acuteness is the sort you hide—its effect is plain to see, its presence obscure.) (Sen. *Contr.* 1.praef.20–1)

Yet again, I would suggest here a correspondence with an excerpt from Cicero's *Brutus*. This reference to a lack of sobriety in Latio's style may be compared with a passage concerned with the polemic engaged by Cicero against the Atticists, and which also focuses on *subtilitas*:<sup>88</sup>

Sed ea in nostris inscitia est, quod hi ipsi, qui in Graecis antiquitate delectantur eaque subtilitate, quam Atticam appellant, hanc in Catone ne noverunt quidem. Hyperidae volunt esse et Lysiae. laudo: sed cur nolunt Catones? Attico genere dicendi se gaudere dicunt. sapienter id quidem; atque utinam imitentur nec ossa solum, sed etiam sanguinem!

(But observe the ignorance of our Romans! The very men who find such pleasure in the early period of Greek letters, and in that simplicity which they call Attic, have no knowledge of the same quality in Cato. Their aim is to be like Hyperides and Lysias; laudable certainly, but why not like Cato? They profess to have delight in the Attic style, and in that they show sound sense; but I wish they might imitate not its bones only, but its flesh and blood as well.)<sup>89</sup> (Cic. *Brut.* 67–8)

In addition to *antiquitas*, it seems that what the Atticists preferred in their Greek models was *subtilitas*: a stylistic sobriety that must have been considered as typically Greek, for it is qualified as 'Attic'. In general, Roman orators were certainly not appreciated for that quality, which Cicero, however, reclaims for Cato. He affirms that Cato is 'archaic' and sober in his style, just as the great Attic oratorical authorities were. Seneca's expression *nihil est iniquius his, qui nusquam putant esse subtilitatem nisi ubi nihil est praeter subtilitatem* may remind us of Cicero's exclamation *utinam imitentur nec ossa solum, sed etiam sanguinem!* Both passages exhort readers not to go too far in the search for sobriety, which may lead to aridity. If we read the polemic concerning the *subtilitas* of Latio's style in the light of this passage

<sup>88</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this excerpt, see Desmouliéz (1982) 70–89.

<sup>89</sup> Cicero is speaking; trans. by Hendrickson (1939) modified.

from *Brutus*, we notice that, for the rhetor presented as a model of Latin eloquence, Seneca claims the specific virtue of stylistic sobriety, which was generally associated with Greek eloquence, and with the Attic style in particular.

This game of allusions to the two most important treatises on rhetoric by Cicero allows Seneca to construct a portrait of *Latro* by mixing elements of opposition and continuity in relation to Greek eloquence and its models. In terms of his body and character, *Latro* is opposed to Demosthenes, who was the major orator in the Greek language, and the main authority for Greek as well as Roman declaimers. In terms of style, he is opposed to the last of the great Greek orators in the history of eloquence traced by Cicero: Demetrius of Phalerum. Indeed, the latter was held responsible for the first ‘softening’ of oratorical style, which would only minimally concern *Latro*. Nevertheless, Seneca also underlines an element of continuity between Greek oratorical tradition and *Latro*’s eloquence through *subtilitas*, which was a quality overall attributed to Attic orators only, but which *Latro* did not lack. Besides, in his portrait of Cato, Cicero had already reclaimed *subtilitas* for one of the oldest Latin oratorical authorities.

Through this composite intertextual framework, *Latro* appears as the ideal declaimer in Seneca’s prologue because of his ability to recreate the clear and organized skeleton of Attic oratory beneath the complex articulation of his speeches, which were characterized by a typically Roman vigour and morality. In this respect, *Latro* seems to perfectly fit with Seneca’s argument on the relationship between Greek and Latin eloquence.<sup>90</sup> Actually, in *Contr.* 10.4.23 Seneca affirms that he combined Greek and Latin examples to point out that the Latin language has no less expressive ability, but less *licentia*, less expressive freedom due to more ethic and stylistic constraints.<sup>91</sup>

To conclude this study of the ‘intertextual construction’ of *Latro*’s figure in relation to Greek oratorical authorities, I would like to focus on an excerpt of *Sen. Contr.* 10.4. In this passage, Seneca compares one of *Latro*’s sentences to a sentence by the Greek rhetor Artemon in order to

<sup>90</sup> The existence of a Senecan prejudice against the Greeks was maintained by Buschmann (1878) 1–3; Edward (1928) xxix; Bonner (1949) 147. In more recent studies, this opinion appears increasingly nuanced: see in particular Sochatoff (1939), 350–1; Fairweather (1981) 23–6; Berti (2007) 255–6; Citti (2007) 82; Citti (2018), and Guérin in this volume.

<sup>91</sup> Concerning this well-known and debated passage, see Fairweather (1981) 25; Berti (2007) 261–3; Citti (2007) 83–4; Rolle (2018).

demonstrate, yet again, the greater virility of Latro's *sententia*, but also to defend him against an accusation of *furtum*, of which he was probably suspected:<sup>92</sup>

Artemon dixit: τὰ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων εὐρωστα· πλεῖ, γεωργεῖ. τὰ δ' ἡμέτερα ἀνάπηρα· τρέφει ἄρα τὸν δόκληρον. Hanc sententiam Latro Porcius virilius dixit, qui non potest <de> furto suspectus esse; Graecos enim et contemnebat et ignorabat. Cum descripsisset debiles artus omnium et alios incurvatos, alios reptantes, adiecit: pro di boni! ab his aliquis alitur integer?<sup>93</sup>  
 (Artemon said: 'The slaves of others are vigorous: they sail, they cultivate the soil; ours are crippled: they feed a healthy man.' Porcius Latro, who cannot be suspected of theft, since he despised the Greeks and ignored their works, has expressed this idea with more virility. After describing the crippled limbs of all the children, some bent, some crawling on the floor, he added: 'Great gods! Is a man of good health fed by these?')<sup>94</sup>  
 (Sen. *Contr.* 10.4.20–1)

Many critics have interpreted the expression *Graecos enim et contemnebat et ignorabat* literally as an affirmation of Latro's lack of knowledge and interest concerning Greek declaimers and Greek culture. But a parallel with an excerpt, once again, from *De oratore* may suggest a different interpretation:

Sed fuit hoc in utroque eorum, ut Crassus non tam existimari vellet non didicisse, quam illa despiciere, et nostrorum hominum in omni genere prudentiam Graecis anteferre; Antonius autem probabiliorem hoc populo orationem fore censebat suam, si omnino didicisse numquam putaretur. Atque ita se uterque graviorem fore, si alter contemnere, alter ne nosse quidem Graecos videretur.

<sup>92</sup> On Latin plagiarism of Greek declaimers in general, see Guérin in this volume.

<sup>93</sup> For this excerpt, I have decided to follow the edition by Håkanson (1989) 314. His text seems preferable to me as he accepts the corrections *incurvatos* and *reptantes* from Schulting and Kiessling respectively instead of *incursantes* and *repentes*, which are present in the manuscripts but do not give a satisfactory meaning to the sentence. *Contra* Winterbottom (1974) 2.442–3, who adopts the *lectio tradita* and translates: 'Artemon said: "The slaves of others are strong—they sail, they till the ground. Ours are cripples—therefore they support a man who is sound of limb." Porcius Latro, who cannot be suspected of plagiarism, for he both despised the Greeks and was ignorant of them, put this epigram more strongly. After describing the crippled limbs of all the children, how some ran up, some crawled, he added: "Good God! Is a whole man fed by these?"'

<sup>94</sup> Translation is mine.

(There was nevertheless this point of difference between the two men, that Crassus did not so much wish to be thought to have learned nothing, as to have the reputation of looking down upon learning, and of placing the wisdom of our own fellow-countrymen above that of the Greeks in all departments; while Antony held that his speeches would be the more acceptable to a nation like ours, if it were thought that he had never engaged in study at all.)<sup>95</sup> (Cic. *De Or.* 2.4)

Seneca's argument in Latro's defence seems to recall Cicero's remark concerning the attitudes adopted by Antony and Crassus, who, to please their fellow citizens, avoided showing that they were deeply imbued with Greek culture: *ita se uterque graviorem fore, si alter contemnere alter ne nosse quidem Graecos videretur*. In Seneca's passage we find an allusion with *variatio* as the syntagm *ne nosse quidem* is replaced by the verb *ignorare*, and the two actions are attributed to the same person. However, the echo had to be easily recognizable given the fame of the Ciceronian passage, as demonstrated by the fact that this excerpt is also evoked in another work concerned with rhetoric, the *Dialogus de oratoribus* by Tacitus. Of the orator Aper it is said: *Aper omni eruditione imbutus contemnebat potius litteras quam nesciebat* ('Aper, who was grounded in all learning, scorned letters more than he was ignorant of them'; Tac. *Dial.* 2.1).

In my opinion, the parallel with Cicero's passage suggests that the emphatic affirmation of Latro's ignorance and scorn towards the Greeks must not be taken at face value. In defending his friend against the accusation of plagiarism of a Greek rhetor, Seneca seeks to move him closer to two important Latin oratorical authorities and to their self-distancing from Greek eloquence (rather than their real ignorance of Attic models). We may admire here the elegance of Seneca's didactic approach, as his own allusion implicitly illustrates the *imitatio* by Latro. Moreover, he emphasizes that the audience ought to be attentive and experienced: they should be capable of noticing Latro's allusion to Artemon's words, but also of appreciating his originality, which arises both from his distancing of Greek models and from his typically Roman virility.

Ultimately, we could interpret this reference to *De oratore* as suggesting a reconsideration of the relationship between Greek and Latin rhetoric. In order to defend Latro against an accusation of *furtum*, Seneca resorts to arguments used nearly a century before by Antony and Crassus, who sought

<sup>95</sup> Cic. *De Or.* 2.4; trans. by Sutton (1942).

to be accepted by fellow citizens hostile towards Greek eloquence. In this way, he seems to implicitly denounce the lack of culture, and so to say ‘modernity’, of the audience of his time: an audience that was not capable of recognizing and appreciating the practices of allusion and rewriting through which the Roman declaimers held dialogue with their Greek models. Seneca’s explicit remarks of literary criticism coupled with the intertextual references that he scatters throughout his work would then be aimed to instruct and refine the rhetorical taste of his readers, by simultaneously offering them a theoretical basis and a practical guidance for the art of allusion.

To conclude, the intertextual construction of *Latro*’s figure appears emblematic of Seneca’s attitude towards Greek eloquence. On the one hand, his character is built as the opposite, concerning the vigour of his body and the rigour in his stylistic choices, to two famous Greek models, respectively Demosthenes and Demetrius of Phalerum. On the other, as he is continuing the Roman tradition of oratory established by Cato, Crassus, and Antony, he is certainly neither unaware of Greek eloquence (and Attic *subtilitas*), nor does he reject it as a whole. Indeed, he knows how to play a subtle and allusive game with it, in order to showcase the superiority of Latin eloquence.