## SENECA, *EPISTULAE MORALES* 12.5: RULERS AND ROOFS

Recent editors have Seneca saying of old age, *illam (aetatem) quoque in extrema tegula stantem iudico habere suas voluptates*, that is, old age is like standing at the edge of a roof. This seems fine. But Erasmus had an exemplar (or exemplars) that read *regula* and so he printed in his edition of 1515.[1] Indeed, in Gruter's note at 12.5 in Muretus' 1593 edition (p. 583), he observed that all his manuscripts read *regula*. Lipsius in the fourth edition of his Seneca (1652) commented, *sed ego veterem lectionem praeferam, quae est regula* (p. 405).[2] But in his edition of 1529 [1541], Erasmus marked *regula* with a crux and added a marginal comment *al. tegula*. But *regula* gives little obvious sense and scholars have debated what this might mean. The prevalent defence of *regula* has been to take the word as referring to the bar that marked the end of a race. There is however no evidence for such a use of *regula*; it is used of the starting bar (Stat. *Theb*. 6.593; Seneca uses *linea* as the finish-line: *Ep.* 49.4). If then *tegula* is to be considered correct, how did *regula* come to be in its place in some early manuscripts? To be sure, paleographically the error is easy to understand. But I suspect that there is more to it. The Christian scribe who first miscopied the word as *regula* had in his mind Monnica's famous and strange dream in Augustine's *Confessions* (3.11), where she sees herself (and her son) *in regula stantem*.[3]

*University of Illinois, Urbana* HOWARD JACOBSON

[1] The 1503 Venice edition of Seneca (*Omnia Opera*) also reads *regula*.

[2] I am unsure whether any extant manuscripts read *regula*. Hense's apparatus (1898) indicates that Parisinus 8540 does and Reynold's apparatus may imply the same. But Beltrami says it has *tegula.* Lipsius also writes that Cassiodorus quoted the verse with *regula*. I find no evidence that he did so.

[3] Scholars debate exactly what Augustine means here. We should of course remember that this is a dream and stranger things than 'standing on a ruler' occur in dreams.

## A NOTE ON SENECA, *QUAESTIONES NATURALES* 6.1.5

Seneca discusses the peculiar terror of earthquakes: what hiding place can we hope for, if the earth itself is not secure?

quam latebram prospicimus, quod auxilium, si orbis ipse rimas agitat, si hoc, quod nos tuetur ac sustinet . . ., quod fundamentum quidam mundi esse dixerunt, discedit ac titubat?

rimas Z: ruinas $\Psi$ agitat $\rho$: agitet Z$\delta\theta\upsilon$ si$^2$ $\Psi$: om. Z

This is the text and apparatus of Hine's edition.[1] The manuscript tradition has two branches; at this point in the text Z is the only representative of one, while the families $\delta$, $\theta$, and $\pi$ (of which $\rho$ and $\upsilon$ are descendants) make up the other ($\Psi$). Previous editors had preferred *ruinas agitat,* which Hine rejects;[2] he compares the well-attested phrase *rimas agere* ('to crack, to form cracks'), which Seneca himself

[1] H. M. Hine (ed.), *L. Annaeus Seneca, Naturalium Quaestionum libros*, (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1996).

[2] H. M. Hine, *Studies in the Text of Seneca's Naturales Quaestiones* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1996), 91–2. To Hine's doubts about the latinity of the phrase, one might add that *ruina* occurs a few lines earlier in the text, so that it would be in the mind of the copyist.

https://doi.org/10.1093/cq/54.1.311-a Published online by Cambridge University Press

uses at *Ben.* 6.15.7 *agentem ex imo rimas insulam*.[3] But *agitat* is now a puzzle. An indicative is certainly necessary; but this one has to be fished up from the depths of the stemma. Clearly the archetype had *agitet*. Secondly, although *rimas agitare* might be a legitimate variation on *rimas agere* (it does not in fact seem to occur elsewhere), why should Seneca have preferred it? It cannot be a dislike for *rimas agere* (see above); and a frequentative verb does not seem to improve the sense. As to rhythm, writing *agitat* here costs him the double cretic clausula *ipse rimas agit.* Perhaps we should give Z even more credit: *si orbis ipse rimas agit, et hoc . . .*

*Munich* NIGEL HOLMES
nigel.holmes@thesaurus.badw.de

[3] The *insula* in this case is a block of flats; but the phrase occurs several times of cracks in the earth, Ov. *Met.* 2.211 *tellus fissa . . . agit rimas* (from heat, as at Priap. 63.2 *agente terra per caniculam rimas*) and Lucan 6.725–9 *Erictho . . . per . . . cavas terrae, quas egit carmine, rimas manibus illatrat*. The subject of *egit* in the last example is not certain; but it seems more likely that it is the earth (see e.g. Oudendorp and Housman *ad loc.*), than that it is Erichtho (so *TLL* I.1376, 67–8, the only example of a person causing cracks in something else that it has to offer).

## THE STAR SIGNS AT BRUNDISIUM: ASTRAL SYMBOLISM IN LUCAN 2.691–2[1]

The narrator of the *Bellum Civile* sets the season of Pompey's escape from Brundisium by the rising of two zodiacal signs:

> Iam coeperat ultima Virgo
> Phoebum laturas ortu praecedere Chelas,
> cum tacitas solvere rates. (2.691–3)

The position of the sun in Chelae (now known as Libra) marks the date as the beginning of autumn: the sun enters the sign on September 19. Some of Lucan's commentators are suspicious of this chronology, knowing as they do from other sources the *true* historical date of the event: 17 March 49 B.C. in the pre-Julian calendar. On that day the sun would have been in Pisces, a few days away from the spring equinox. The pre-Julian calendar in 49 B.C., however, was almost two months out of step with the solar year. But the conversion of the date to the astronomical calendar does not resolve the inconsistency: 17 March 49 B.C. is equivalent to 26 January. The sun is then in Aquarius, the season mid-winter. These dates clearly do not match the season as indicated by the signs that rise in the poem.[2] The commentators have duly identified this chronological inconsistency as a mistake on the part of the poet.

[1] I would like to thank Katharina Volk, Gareth Williams, and the anonymous reader for their commentaries and suggestions that have much improved this article.

[2] P. Grimal ('L'heure et le jour ou Pompée s'embarqua', *De Virgile à Jacob Balde: Hommage à Mme Andrée Thill* [Mulhouse, 1987], 125–7) offers an alternative interpretation of the episode's astronomical data in an attempt to bring them in line with the historical date and with Caesar's own account that the departure occurred *sub noctem* (*BCiv.* 1.28, 3). Grimal, observing—correctly, in my opinion—that Lucan 'ne s'est pas soucié de transposer les dates pré-juliennes en dates réelles' (125), notes that Virgo rises at dusk and Libra sets at sunrise on 17 March. He interprets *Phoebum laturas* as meaning that Libra in setting '"élève" (*effert*) le soleil dans l'Orient' (127). However, two passages in the *Bellum Civile* run counter to his interpretation: in 4.56–7 (*Titana recepit / . . . portitor Helles*) and 4.526–7 (*Sol Ledaea tenebat / sidera*), the sun directly occupies or passes into the sign to mark the season.

https://doi.org/10.1093/cq/54.1.311-a Published online by Cambridge University Press