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Timescapes of Seneca's *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium*

Accounts of Seneca's views of time and of his epistolary style have traditionally been kept separate. But the form of Seneca's Letters is itself the product of an ideal use of time, and it is intended to reproduce this experience in the reader.

I use the programmatic first two letters on time and reading as a starting point for looking at the temporally marked features (the "timescapes") of books 1-3. Here, I examine the tension between the Letters' day-to-day sequence and their daily closure, and in particular their up-front "payments" of wisdom. This series of payments may be described as an economy of *repraesentatio*. This term, I illustrate, refers to a variety of economic and mimetic acts whose characteristic function is the transmission of the past into the present, and into future tradition. Indeed Seneca's use of present time may be grouped together with the wide range of practices centering on economics, spectacle, exemplarity, and social reproduction that have formed the focus of much recent scholarship on Roman literature. These practices take on greater coherence as a group if they are considered as instances of *repraesentatio*. And the concept of *repraesentatio* may be used to explain other diverse instances in Seneca's *Epistulae* in which time is a marked dimension of the text.

These considerations also allow us to be specific about the place of Seneca's epistolary form within the range of literary and nonliterary day-to-day genres. He distances the *Epistulae* from such genres as the *acta diurna* with their ephemeral public news—a genre with which he associates Cicero's letters to Atticus. He also contrasts his text with the *kalendarium*, the money-lender's list of debtors. As a positive model he invokes the *ratio sibi vitae suae*, a genre of account-book which he applies to the moral narrative constituted by his frugal use of time on each present day. This genre lacks the ephemerality of the *acta diurna*, since it aspires to making the life of the *paterfamilias* into a lasting exemplum; and it is distinguished from the futurism of the *kalendarium* by its concern with present accountability—an important aspect of *repraesentatio*.

This is simply one exploration of the Roman temporal practices from which Seneca constructs what was to be a new and influential form within the epistolary genre. I offer this paper as a contribution to the broader scholarly exploration of Roman social and cultural practices, and to the study of Seneca and Roman literature.