

The use of *is* and *ille* in Seneca Rhetor

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Iosepho illi

The *Controversiae* of Seneca Rhetor are an interesting linguistic document, among other things because the work contains several stretches of biographic description of contemporary orators in Seneca's own language. The very first preface, for example, has a long description of the personality and oratorical practice of his dear friend of his youth, the orator Marcus Porcius Latro, no less than six pages in Winterbottom's Loeb edition. Biographic sketches of this type (which is entirely different from the Lives of Nepos, for example) to such a length are very rare, maybe non-existent, in other authors. Because of its length the description of Latro is a remarkable piece of Topic continuity and therefore an excellent text to study the use of continuity (and discontinuity) devices. In this article I will pay special attention to Seneca's use of the pronouns *is* and *ille* and "Zero"-anaphora¹. I will concentrate on the description of Latro, but will illustrate certain uses with examples drawn from elsewhere in the *Controversiae*.

The following devices are used to refer to Latro after his first mention in Sen. *Contr.*1. *praef.* 13 (*Latronis ... Porcii*):

proper name (<i>Latro [meus]</i>)	4
common noun (<i>vir</i>)	2
<i>is</i>	9
<i>ille</i>	16
<i>hic</i>	-
"Zero" anaphora (*)	60
total	91

Proper names can be expected at those places in the discourse where the degree of discontinuity is the highest. In fact, the three instances of *Latro meus* are found at places where the author (Seneca) has finished his description of a certain aspect of Latro's personality and takes the floor himself (writing in first person singular) (§20 – *plura fortasse de Latrone meo videor ... exposuisse*; § 22 – *Interponam*; and § 24 – *Ab ea controversia incipiam*). In these instances the Given Topic Latro is "resumed" and "a strong form of anaphoric reference" required (Dik 1997: 325). The fourth occurrence of *Latro*, also in § 22, must be explained along other lines, *viz.* as due to contrast.

¹ Another interesting feature is the sustained use of imperfect forms. Note also the sequence of historic infinitives in § 16.

- (1) Cum condiscipuli essemus apud **Marullum** rhetorem, hominem satis aridum, paucissima belle sed non vulgato genere dicentem, cum **ille** exilitatem orationis suae imputaret controversiae et diceret: ‘necesse me est per spinosum locum ambulantem suspensos pedes ponere’, aiebat **Latro**: ‘non mehercules tui pedes spinas calcant sed habent’, et statim ipse dicebat ... (Sen. *Contr.1. praef.* 22)

The opposite ideas of Marullus and Latro require the use of *ille* somewhere and given the fact that Marullus has been explicitly mentioned just before, he can best be referred to with *ille*, which leaves *Latro* as the only other possibility for the second person to be mentioned².

Vir, not unlike *homo* (‘human being’)³, can be used for backward reference to already mentioned participants in the discourse, both in its generic meaning “male person” and in its relational meaning “husband”. Seneca uses it twice in the former meaning in the beginning of the passage under discussion.

- (2) Nihil **illo viro** gravius ... (Sen. *Contr.1. praef.* 13)
(3) In utramque partem **vehementi viro** modus deerat: nec intermittere studium sciebat* nec repetere. (Sen. *Contr.1. praef.* 13)

However, the reason for using *vir* in these cases is not only, or not essentially, to refer back to *Latronis* (already continued by *eius* in the preceding clause), but to act as a Head in support of *illo*, which in this way becomes an unambiguous (male) form, and of *vehementi*, which could not easily be used as a headless Attribute (substantivised adjective). One may ask why in (2) *illo viro* is used instead of *eo viro*⁴. That is part of the general question concerning the replacement of *is* by *ille* that will be discussed shortly. Note that in this passage this is the only instance of *ille* used attributively to refer backwards (out of sixteen). This may reinforce the idea that *viro* is there to support *illo* rather than that *illo* is there to determine *viro*. (For other uses as a determiner see below.)

In Classical Latin the normal way to indicate continuity of an argument constituent that is a Given Topic is the absence of any form of explicit marking, especially if that constituent is the Subject of its clause. The same holds for Seneca Rhetor. *Sciebat* in (3) is a simple instance of this well-known phenomenon (the asterisk * marks zero-anaphora). In this passage, § 14 has thirteen instances of zero-anaphora of *Latro* on *ai*⁵. Overt pronominal Subjects referring to *Latro*

² I do not think that *is* could be used instead of *ille*. The nominative form is rare in Seneca anyhow and also the rather long apposition makes *ille* more likely. *Imputaret* and *diceret* without an explicit Subject constituent (Zero-anaphora) is unlikely for the same reason (see Bolkestein-Van de Grift (1994) on the use of *ille* in Caesar). A good example of repeated contrastive *ille* is: <Et> per partes comparando utrumque officium, **ille**, inquit, peregre est, tu domi; **ille** captus, tu libera; **ille** inter piratas, tu inter civis; **ille** alligatus, tu soluta es. At tu caeca es: **ille** hoc infelicior, quod videt. Quid enim? Videt catenas suas et caedes et volnera et cruces eorum, qui non redimuntur. (Sen. *Contr.* 7.4.5)

³ Kühner-Stegmann (I: 618, A.1); Pinkster (1990: 247 = 1995: 320); OLD s.v. 6.

⁴ Obviously *eo* alone would be more problematic than *illo* in its position next to *gravius*.

⁵ For zero-anaphora of an inanimate Subject see § 16 with *vox* continued three times.

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are extremely rare. Only one of the fifteen independently used forms of *ille* is a nominative (§ 17, example 4 below) and nominative *is* is lacking altogether. This picture is confirmed in the rest of Seneca's work: the anaphoric use of the nominative forms of independent *is* and *ille* is rare, *ille* being definitely more common than *is*. The higher frequency of *ille* with respect to *is* in itself is not surprising. This is also the case in Cicero's orations, as becomes clear from Table 2:

Table 2: Distribution of nominative and oblique forms of the pronouns⁶ *is* and *ille* in Cicero's orations (measured in columns in Merguet's Lexikon)

	used as a determiner	independent nominative	independent oblique
<i>is</i>	6.5 col.	3.3 col.	20 col.
NB		Subject AcI 3 columns	
<i>ille</i>	15.5 col.	16.5 col.	9.5 col.

What is, however, strikingly different is the proportion between the nominative and oblique forms of *ille*: whereas in Cicero the nominative forms are more frequent than the oblique forms by a factor 1.7, they are far in the minority in Seneca. The explanation for this difference in frequency is complex: In the first place there is a difference in text type: it may be the case that there is less use for nominative forms of *ille*. In Classical Latin nominative forms of *ille* are typically used in the case of contrast (as in example 1 above) or Topic shift (Pinkster 1996), or else, if the distance between the earlier mention and the present occurrence is long (Bolkestein-van de Grift 1994). These three configurations of use are especially relevant in narrative and argumentative texts. Seneca's work, with its many quotations, may not be comparable. Secondly, the use of *ille* in general may have widened, as is suggested by Seneca's overall increased use of forms of *ille* in comparison with forms of *is*, cf. – in all its simplicity - Table 3:

⁶ All nominative and oblique forms of the paradigms of *is* and *ille* (singular, plural; all three genders).

Table 3: Frequency of a number of forms of *is* and *ille* in Seneca Rhetor, Plautus and Cicero (use as a determiner and independent use **not** distinguished) (source: BTL-cdrom⁷)

is	Seneca Rh	Plautus	Cicero	ille
is	20 125	274 263	1392 1875	<i>ille</i>
eum	45 195	191 236	1628 916	<i>illum</i>
eam	25 128	249 208	1088 558	<i>illam</i>
id	60 105	614 89	4037 1670	<i>illud</i>
eius	139 30	133 46	2100 504	<i>illius</i>
eos	12 45	40 23	1053 211	<i>illos</i>
eis (iis)	16 50	48 53	1195 529	<i>illis</i>
eorum	15 7	26 12	989 207	<i>illorum</i>
Total	332 685	1575 930	138826470	
Ratio	1 : 2.1	1.7 : 1	2 : 1	

Returning to the *Latro* passage, the only instance of *ille* as Subject in its clause is in (4):

- (4) Memoria **ei** natura quidem felix, plurimum tamen arte adiuta. Numquam **ille** quae dicturus erat* ediscendi causa relegebat: Edidicerat* illa cum scripserat*. Quod eo magis in **illo** mirabile videri potest, quod non lente et anxie sed eodem paene quo dicebat* impetu scribebat*. (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 17)

The text in (4) follows a lengthy description of *Latro*'s physical constitution and of the way *Latro* treated his body, with *Latro* as the unexpressed Subject for fifteen times. When in this context his memory capacities are introduced, there is – given the way Latin expresses the possession of physical properties - hardly an alternative for shifting the Subject to *memoria* and, as a consequence express *Latro* as the Experiencer (“dativus possessivus”) (*ei*).

⁷ The forms *is* and *eis* (*iis*) have been checked with the help of Lodge's *Lexicon Plautinum*. The number of instances of *is* in Cicero is too high to allow checking. It may include an occasional second singular form of *eo*.

The reason for expressing the Given Topic by some anaphoric device is therefore a syntactic one: zero-anaphora of non-Subjects is much less common than zero-anaphora of Subjects, definitely so when ambiguity could arise (as in this case)⁸. With continuity thus preserved *ille* in the immediately following clause seems surprising: Why an overt expression (instead of zero-anaphora) and why *ille* at that? The explanation might be that it was quite exceptional for an orator not to read his text over again, a case of counterpresuppositional contrast. The following text reinforces this idea of exceptional behaviour. Similarly, *(in) illo* might be explained as some form of implied contrast, explained in the *quod*-clause that follows, which would make *in eo* less attractive (of course the option of zero-anaphora does not exist in the case of satellites). The same argument might be used to explain *illi* in (5):

- (5) Nulla umquam **illi** cura vocis exercendae fuit. (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 16)

Note also in (4) and (5) the presence of comparative elements (negation: *numquam*, *nulla*; *magis*).

Simple, explicit contrast, as discussed above with respect to example (1), easily explains both *illi qui* and *in illo* in (6)

- (6) **Illi qui** scripta sua torquent, **qui** de singulis verbis in consilium eunt, necesse est quae totiens animo suo admovent novissime adfigant. At quorumcumque stilus velox est tardior memoria est. In **illo** non tantum naturalis memoriae felicitas erat sed ars summa ... (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 18)

However, such a “classical” explanation does not seem to be at hand in the eleven remaining cases where *Latro* is referred to by means of forms of *ille*. Why, for example, is it *illi* in (7), as opposed to *ei* in (4), and why is it *in illo* in (8) after *eius* immediately preceding, and, likewise, *in illo* in (9) after preceding *eum*?

⁸ See Kühner-Stegmann (I: 618, A.1); Mulder (1991).

- (7) Corpus **illi** erat et natura solidum et multa exercitatione duratum, ideoque numquam impetus ardentis animi deseruit*. (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 16)
- (8) Video vos, iuvenes mei, plus iusto ad hanc **eius** virtutem obstupescere. Alia vos mirari in **illo** volo. (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 19)
- (9) Putant enim fortiter quidem sed parum subtiliter **eum** dixisse, cum in **illo**, si qua alia virtus fuit, et subtilitas fuerit. (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 20)

Whereas the cases of *ille* in the examples (5) and (6) might be seen as “pragmatically marked” this is much less likely in (7) – (9). *Ille* seems here, and elsewhere when referring to *Latro*, to be a “neutral” anaphoric pronoun and its use instead of *is* is difficult to explain. There are other occurrences of *ille* in the same passage on *Latro*, not referring to him, that confirm this picture⁹. For example, *illa* in example (4) above and *illam* in (10), both referring to non-human entities, can hardly be regarded as “pragmatically marked”:

- (10) Utcumque res tulerat, ita vivere*, nihil **vocis** causa facere*, non **illam** per gradus paulatim ab imo ad summum perducere* ... (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 16)

In most cases of independent *ille* referring to *Latro* it is therefore difficult to find a pragmatic motivation for its use. It is also interesting to note that forms of *ille* and *is* are not evenly distributed. Prepositions seem to prefer forms of *ille* (nine instances in this passage referring to *Latro*). In the whole *Controversiae* there are 34 instances of {*de*, *ab*, *in*} + *illo* and only four of the same prepositions with *eo*. Conversely, in this passage there are six instances of the genitive singular form *eius* referring to *Latro* and no *illius* at all. The strong position of the genitive has already become apparent from Table 3 above (the plural *eorum* is also relatively strong). On the basis of these observations the provisional conclusion may be that *ille* has expanded its anaphoric potential into the territory that belonged to *is*, with the exception of the genitive. The question may be raised whether it is still worthwhile to search for pragmatic explanations, with its risk of subjectivity, when there are many instances of neutral anaphoric use. I believe it is, because there are situations in which the choice between *ille* and *is* is open and situations where only *ille* can be used. It is also likely that marked and neutral *ille* were different in pronunciation. The same may well be true for the rare instances of what appears to be neutral anaphorical use of *ille*, which are found from Early Latin onwards, as in (11).

- (11) Omitte vero tristitiam tuam. # Ego **illam** hercle vero omitto, ... (Ter. *Ad.* 267-8)

⁹ A striking example of the neutral anaphoric use of *ille* is in Seneca’s sketch of the orator Cassius Severus: Ex tempore coactus dicere infinito se antecedeat. Numquam non utilius erat **illi** deprehendi quam praeparari, sed magis **illum** suspiceres, quod diligentiam non relinquebat, cum **illi** tam bene temeritas cederet. Omnia ergo habebat, quae **illum**, ut bene declamaret, instruerent: ... (Sen. *Rhet. Contr.* 3. *praef.* 6)

I will now turn to other uses of *ille* and *is*. *Ille* is used cataphorically¹⁰ from Early Latin onwards¹¹. *Is* is also used cataphorically, be it in a restricted way¹². Seneca Rhetor uses *ille* (and *hic*) cataphorically, both independently and as a determiner to prepare independent sentences:

- (12) Latro **illud** vehementer pressit: Non feci ratione, adfectu victus sum. (Sen. *Contr.* 1.1.15)
(13) Novi declamatores Graecis auctoribus adiecerunt primam **illam** quaestionem: an adoptatus abdicari possit. (Sen. *Contr.* 1.1.14)

Is is used in that way as well, but is occasionally also used (in its neutral singular form *id*) to introduce an *ut*-clause or an accusative and infinitive construction.

- (14) Facinus indignum! felicissime licet cedat actio, **id** solum proficiemus, **ut** qui Ciceronem occidit tantum erubescat. (Sen. *Contr.* 7.2.1)¹³

There is one other use in which *ille* and *is* are in competition, *viz.* the correlative pattern with a following relative clause: *ille/is qui* and *ille/is N(oun) qui*, with or without intervening constituents. This correlative use is one of the most frequent ones of *is*. Ten of the twenty instances of the nominative singular masculine form *is* (see Table 3) are used in that way (nine of these without a noun), with a *qui*-clause either following immediately or after some intervening words. More than half of the instances of *id* are used in that way. The other order, with the relative clause preceding, occurs as well, but much less frequently so (an example in the Latro passage can be found in § 24). The correlative pattern with a following relative clause is one of the niches in which *is* continues to be used (e.g. in the late fourth century *Peregrinatio Egeriae*). Strangely enough, this use is entirely different from the original central anaphoric use of *is*.

The use in a correlative pattern is much less dominant among the uses of *ille*. Whereas *ille N qui* is rare, *ille qui* is quite normal. However, in many instances, certainly those in the Latro passage, *ille* marks the content of the relative clause as something Seneca supposes his sons will be familiar with (“the well-known”) and is therefore different from *is*. Examples are (15) and (16):

- (15) Intra exiguum paucissimorum dierum tempus poterit quilibet facere **illud quod** Cineas fecit, qui missus a Pyrrho legatus ad Romanos postero die novus homo et senatum et omnem urbanam circumfusam senatui plebem nominibus suis persalutavit. (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 19)

¹⁰ I make a distinction between “anaphoric” and “correlative” use of *ille* and *is*.

¹¹ Quamquam **illud** est dulce, esse et bibere, / amor amara dat tamen / + satis quod aegre sit. (Pl. *Trin.* 259-61).

¹² (da mihi) viginti minas atque **ea** lege: si alius ad me prius ... (Pl. *As.* 231); In ipsis vero moenibus **ea** erunt principia (Vitr. 1.4.1).

¹³ With following accusative and infinitive: Fabianus **eam** quaestionem fecit et in **ea** multum moratus est: dementiae non posse agi nisi cum eo, qui morbo fureret. (Sen. *Contr.* 2.3.12)

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- (16) <Aut> quod **ille** fecit **qui** recitatum a poeta novum carmen dixit suum esse et protinus <e> memoria recitavit, cum hoc ille¹⁴ cuius carmen erat facere non posset. (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 19)

This exophoric use of *ille* (which is unknown for *is*) is well-known from Early Latin onwards (see exx. (17) and (18)) and is well represented in the *Controversiae*:

- (17) Nam istos reges ceteros / memorare nolo, hominum mendicabula: / ego sum **ille** rex Philippus (Pl. *Aul.* 702-4)
(18) Tuus autem **ille** amicus (scin quem dicam? de quo tu ad me scripsisti ...) ... (Cic. *Att.* 1.13.4)
(19) **Illum** fortem et agrestem et Hispanae consuetudinis morem non poterat* dediscere: ... (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 16)
(20) Ciceronem eloquentia sua in carminibus destituit. Vergilium **illa** felicitas ingenii <in> oratione soluta reliquit. (Sen. *Contr.* 3. *praef.* 8)

The last type of use where *ille* and *is* never compete is the use of *ille* as a deictic - local and temporal¹⁵ – determiner, as in (21):

- (21) Cum vero se silvis montibusque tradiderat* in silvis ac montibus natos homines **illos** agrestis laboris patientia et venandi sollertia provocabat* ... (Sen. *Contr.* 1. *praef.* 14)

The *Controversiae* testify to the widening range of uses of *ille*, which made it a successful candidate for the Romance definite article and reinforced its position as the third personal pronoun¹⁶.

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¹⁴ *Ille* is in this case motivated by contrast.

¹⁵ For the temporal use of *ille* cf. In hac controversia Latio contrariam rem <non> controversiae dixit sed sibi. Declamabat illam Caesare Augusto audiente et M. Agrippa, cuius filios, nepotes suos, Caesar [Lucium et Gaium] adoptaturus diebus **illis** videbatur. (Sen. *Contr.* 2.4.12)

¹⁶ Parts of the content of this article were read in circles of colleagues in Amsterdam, Paris and Oxford. I thank all those who participated in the discussion and Helma Dik for her comments on this version.

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