

ZENO IN THE MANNING SCRIPTS

by PAMELA HUBY

In *Proc SPR 58 (218)* (1994), "The Signatures on the Walls of Queen's House, Linton, Cambridgeshire", by Vernon Harrison, there is a script by Matthew Manning about Zeno (in fact Zeno of Citium, the Stoic), illustrated in Plate 10 and discussed on pp.16–17. It is the only one referring to an ancient author, and runs:—

Zeano hearing a young man speake two frely says for this reson we have two ears one toungue because we should hear much and speke little.

This saying is found (in Greek) in at least four versions in ancient writers, listed by J. von Arnim, *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, vol.1, no.310. It occurs twice in Plutarch, at *On garrulity* 1 and *The correct way of listening to lectures* 3, p.39b, but without mention of Zeno, once in Diogenes Laertius, who names Zeno but has 'mouth', not 'tongue', and once in the late anthologist Stobaeus, who is the closest with "Zeno said to (a young man) who wanted to chatter more than to listen 'Young man, nature has provided us with one tongue, but two ears, so that we may hear twice as much as we say.'" (my translation). Manning's version, however, does not refer to nature, so that we may prefer Diogenes Laertius as the source. He has, at *Lives of the Philosophers* VII 23:—

To a stripling who was talking nonsense his words were: 'The reason why we have two ears and only one mouth is that we may listen the more and talk the less'.

[Hicks' translation]

The language Manning uses is surely artificial. Harrison says that the script is signed "R. Webbe 1733", but it is not in the handwriting of the major communicator Robert Webbe Junior, discussed on pp.12–13. The spelling is also worse than that of Webbe. A complication is that the same 'Zeano' message was found, on the day after the writing appeared on the wall, on a piece of paper with "Thomas Coas wrote this on the last day of 31 July 1791", on the back; and the signature of John (not Thomas) Coas and the date 1791 appears on the wall below the script and lower than that of Webbe. No signature of Thomas Coas is catalogued.

A question worth asking is whether the knowledge of Zeno came direct to Matthew Manning in the twentieth century, or via someone in the eighteenth century or earlier. The sayings of philosophers were popular in antiquity, and had some vogue after the rediscovery of ancient learning in the Renaissance, but as far as I know are little studied nowadays. Plutarch was translated by Philemon Holland early in the seventeenth century, and Diogenes Laertius was also known. Stobaeus is more of a problem, for his works were not published even in Greek until the middle of the sixteenth century, and he has never been popular. We are in the realms of speculation in trying to find an early English origin for this saying. It is possible that Manning had access to some version of this material in a library. Possibly a student of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries might discover more.

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