We should note that Propertius does not distinguish between the *fides* of married women and the straightforward interchange of affection all lovers ought to cultivate. Married love is brought level to unmarried passion.[3] Elegy 3. 13 joins both interests. We have noted before that *felix* appears in verse 15 of 3. 12 where Galla is praised, and that it again occurs in verse 15 of 3. 13 when Propertius writes of the devotion of the Indian wives. *Felix* also begins the long passage, 3. 13. 25–46, on the direct and uncomplicated fulfilment of desire. Augustus would have approved of Galla's behavior; he might not have understood what Propertius meant by the Spartan paradigm. For Propertius there is, within love, complete continuity between physical need and its mutual gratification *and* matrimonial harmony. In his writings *fides* is used of lovers and married couples alike; and if Penelope and the dedicated Indian wives of 3. 13 are *piae* (vss. 18 and 24), Propertius has written of his own relationship with Cynthia, "si forte pios eduximus annos" (2. 9. 47). For their part, the honorable matrons of India are literally on fire, *ardent uictrices* (3. 13. 21).

The cliché that love is warfare was long familiar from Roman Comedy. *Militat omnis amans;* so Ovid. In this set of elegies Propertius has redirected the equation to focus on the female. He does not write of women only as objects of love, as Catullus had done and as Tibullus was doing, nor do they appear as the evident weakness in the Roman state, as they do in the sixth Roman Ode. Instead, women are cast more sturdily, as props of domestic integrity, as warriors in a full sense.[4] But, as Propertius recognized with a smile, it is delightful that this metaphor has, no less than woman herself, more than one dimension.

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3. Cf. the article of M. Fontana, "Properzio e il Matrimonio," *Giornale italiano di filologia*, III (1950), 73–76, who argues that it would be erroneous to assume that Propertius never thought seriously about marriage, or that he made a distinction between casual love for a mistress and the deep loyalty traditionally assigned to formal unions.

4. We shall not be wrong to see, in the elegies at hand, the foreshadowing of Book 4, where Rome and her destiny are given meaning and life through the different women Propertius shows us inhabiting the city; cf. P. Grimal's view that, without its women, the state would remain lifeless, if imposing in its conception ("Les Intentions de Properce et la composition du livre IV," *Latomus*, XI [1952], 450).

## *EPISTLE* 56: SENECA'S IRONIC ART*

"It is from a very common but a very false opinion that we constantly mix the idea of levity with those of wit and humour. The gravest of men have often possessed these qualities in a very eminent degree, and have exerted them on the most solemn subjects with very eminent success. These are to be found in many places in the most serious works of Plato and Aristotle, of Cicero and Seneca."[1]

A considerable body of criticism praises Seneca the Philosopher's psychological insights in his prose writings, extolls his nervous, clipped, "modern" style, and stresses his rhetorical skill. But too often this minimizes, by implication, Senecan art. Indeed, it is sometimes urged that Seneca's psychological flaws place him outside the pale of serious art. By this view, Seneca's prose reveals inconsistencies and contradictions so considerable that it is concluded, happily, that he is neurotic or even quite insane.[2] The purpose of this paper is to reaffirm the deliberate artistry of Senecan prose. In exploring the philos-

* A considerably different version of this paper, entitled "Senecan Irony," was presented by Dr. Motto at the *APA* meeting in Toronto, 29 December, 1968.

1. H. Fielding, "The Covent-Garden Journal," No. 18 (March 3, 1752), *The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq.*, ed. W. E. Henley (New York, 1967), XIV, 131.

2. Exemplary of the clinical approach is E. P. Barker on *Seneca* (2) in *OCD*, pp. 827–28. It is there asserted that "Seneca's life and works present a fairly clear-cut picture of neurosis . . . Everywhere are traceable . . . stigmata of paranoiac abnormality. Abnormal his character is; not devoid of a disfigured greatness in its mutilation . . ." Seneca's philosophy

opher's shocking, ironic side, we wish to emphasize the craft of his wit. In several recent papers, we have examined select passages and local instances of Seneca's humorous paradoxicality and wit;[3] here we shall investigate Senecan wit as it operates within the confines of an extended, single work. We have chosen *Epistle* 56 for such examination, this epistle's complex tone—of eloquence tempered with comic agility—prompting our choice.

In *Epistle* 56, as in the other *Epistulae morales*, Seneca seeks to "instruct" his younger friend in his withdrawal from public life and in his cultivation of contemplative activities. "Quod pertinaciter studes et omnibus omissis hoc unum agis, ut te meliorem cotidie facias, et probo et gaudeo . . ."[4] Seneca, himself recently retired from political offices under Nero, pursues this selfsame course. The ideal, both of Seneca and Lucilius, is study to become the *sapiens*, and Seneca serves as physician, cheerleader, and friend to the younger man. Seen as one of the epistles ostensibly offering Lucilius encouragement and *consilium*, *EM* 56 is, comically, a fiasco. The letter is a tissue of Senecan contradiction, confession, and reversal. As an exemplary piece demonstrating how Seneca himself progresses toward the meaningful employment of *otium* and achievement of Stoic *tranquillitas*, it is masterfully inept.

First we learn that the sage philosopher has retired, not to any Sabine Farm or Arcadian grove but to densest urban Rome. He lives, in fact, above a bathhouse; and this privacy and peace are as insecure as they might have been at Trimalchio's *cena* or upon Troy's plain. His enumeration of the scuffle, grunt, and shout of weightlifters, bathers, masseurs, hawkers, vendors, thieves, and lavatory minstrels is an almost unique study in Blatant City Noise.[5] What is more, Seneca describes this cacophony with painful alertness to the quantity and quality of every sound.

Therefore it is a humorous and unexpected "reversal" when this philosopher suddenly, with a Herculean oath, vows that this furor disturbs him not in the least: "At mehercules ego istum fremitum non magis curo quam fluctum aut deiectum aquae . . ." (*ibid.* 3). Astonishingly, he has, he tells Lucilius, accustomed himself to such noise ("sed iam me sic ad omnia ista duravi . . . ," *ibid.* 5). Then, growing philosophical, he explains that the man at peace with himself cannot be violated by mere "externals," "omnia licet foris resonent, dum intus nihil tumultus sit . . ." After all, the rational and pensive mind is capable, is it not, of achieving *vera tranquillitas*? Especially is this so when the mind in solitude is occupied with intellectual labor.

Well and good, we concede; the philosopher is displaying his control. But yet, even now a ripple of disturbance is admitted to this calm; for paradoxically, although Seneca in passing notes that his retirement has been marked by an absolute renunciation of his civic and political inclinations, it is not so; for he confesses that, "in illa latebra in quam nos timor ac lassitudo coniecit interdum recrudescit ambitio" (*ibid.* 9). A public zeal and aspiration still haunt the philosopher's breast! Where, then, is that *vera tranquillitas* that had but lately abolished all that metropolitan clamor? However, Seneca continues so smoothly and quietly to analyze the recurrence—in others—of *mala mentis humanae* that one is induced to believe that his fleeting admission of fault in himself had been but a *lapsus calami*, and nothing more. But this is not the case: again Seneca admits that he has not accomplished a Stoic retirement: "otiosi videmur, et non sumus" (*ibid.* 11). Patently, Seneca is not akin to the Stoic *sapiens*; but this does not prevent

is called a "ready-made escape-system" marked by "flight from reality." His prose is not "consistent," or "architectonic," but rather "spasmodic." The *EM* convey to Barker the author's "innocuous assumption of the superiority so necessary to his egoism." Barker need not take such a Seneca seriously at all, and views this "case" with a lofty and placid detachment.

3. See the present writers' "*Paradoxum Senecae*: The Epicurean Stoic," *CW*, LXII (1968) 37–42; and "Senecan Irony," *CB*, XLV (1968), 6–11.

4. *EM* 5. 1. All references to the *EM* are to the OCT, ed. L. D. Reynolds (1965).

5. One thinks of the noisy, crowded cities in Theocritus' *Idyl* 15, in Juvenal 3, and in Swift's *Description of a Morning*. On the subject is Schopenhauer's excellent little essay, "Über Lärm und Geräusch," in *Parerga und Paralipomena* (1851).

him from continuing in a strain of moral exhortation, his rhetoric rising steadily to a climax, praising to Lucilius the virtues of the Stoic wise man—tranquillity, constancy, duty, control.

Approaching now the apex of his *theme*, the orator above the bathhouse, disquieted himself and yet extolling quiescence, enunciates sacred lines from Virgil: "et me, quem dudum non ulla iniecta movebant / tela neque adverso glomerati ex agmine Grai, / nunc omnes terrent aurae, sonus excitat omnis / suspensum et pariter comitique onerique timentem" (*Aen.* 2. 726–29). This is the Virgilian text he intones, partitions, and expounds. Yet somehow, it strikes the reader as a curiously inappropriate selection for a peroration celebrating serenity and calm. It is strangely backward; for, from the Stoic point of view, the fearless Aeneas of the first two lines is the pattern of the *sapiens* ("prior ille sapiens est," Seneca tells Lucilius), fearless and staunch, deaf even to the noise of battle. But in the pair of succeeding lines, as if by some garish falling-off, the *sapiens* disappears, and there the suddenly human and fearful Aeneas stands upon the field, *multa portans*, bearing the responsibilities of family and state, leading Ascanius by the hand and sustaining Anchises upon his back. Placidly, Seneca compares this dutiful Aeneas with luxurious men, incapable of achieving Stoic wisdom or of ever transcending the lowly pleasures of the materialistic world. Surely we are ill at ease with the analogy: the legendary Founding Father's moral stance with relation to his family seems right,[6] but Seneca's associating Aeneas with worldly vanity appears to us perverse. Yet Seneca evades this issue, proceeding to deliver his final point: Lucilius will know that he has obtained the status of *sapiens* when no clamor ruffles him or chases him away. On that note, Seneca concludes his epideictic declamation.

The reader, however, is far from feeling a sense of fulfilment. The contradictions we have noted between Seneca's practice and his preachment, between the loopholes in his argument and the suave assurance of his tone are too disturbing. And Lucilius is disturbed; immediately, as *adversarius*, he interjects: "But why live in the midst of such noise? Why not escape from it?" And, in a trice, in what is the most striking reversal of the whole epistle, Seneca totally capitulates: "You're right. I'll move away." He had, he owns to Lucilius, merely sought to "test" himself; but now, like Odysseus, who had stopped his companions' ears with wax, he will sail past the Sirens in safety! With such an assertion, comparing his own capitulation to Odysseus' epical triumph,[7] the letter ends.

The "test" that Seneca had administered to himself he has failed; the noises he has sought to suppress, the ambition he would stifle, the argument he has constructed, all collapse together. What are we to make of this Seneca, whose lecture to Lucilius upon privacy and endurance concludes with agitation and Sirens, whose epic analogies emanate from the bathhouse, whose "testing" of himself he flunks?

There can be no mistake about it; in this epistle, as elsewhere, Seneca's paradoxical artistry is clearly in evidence: the succession of witty reversals, the turns of the argument, the dramatic agitations concluding in *eversiones* are the witnesses to form, mastered by the *artifex* and craftsman. And they are witnesses to the depth of human perception in their author, as well. Duff lauds this self-awareness in Seneca and his clear perception of the contradictions and foibles that are man's lot: "His very faults made him in a sense a better man, and so acquired a spiritual value; for a recognition of his own backsliding and cowardice showed the force of temptation and taught indulgence towards human frailty."[8] It is certainly true that Seneca is not completely the Fool. He lucidly perceives that, in man, reason dictates the aspiration to wisdom, just

6. This would have seemed right to Romans; indeed, the figure of a heroic Aeneas dedicated to his family, carrying his father, and leading his son, was doubtless popular in the Empire. See the wall painting of just this group recovered at Pompeii and now at the Museo della Civiltà Romana.

7. Seneca intimates comparison of himself with Odysseus and the heroic throughout the Epistle. Vapors and bathhouse are equated with waves and ocean voyage by comic analogy. (Cf. the unheroic Seneca of *EM* 53, who, even while flopping fearfully into the ocean, compares himself to Odysseus.)

8. J. W. Duff, *A Literary History of Rome in the Silver Age*[2] (New York, 1960), p. 166.

as human folly undermines that quest: "quid mirum, si non escendunt in altum ardua adgressi? sed si vir es, suspice, etiam si decidunt, magna conantis" (*Vit. beat.* 20. 2). Moreover, the large measure of his success in dramatizing this perception of human frailty in himself is surely owed to the wit, craft, and irony, with which he composed his philosophic song.

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## SOPHOCLES *ANTIGONE* 1108–12

In *Antigone* 1066–71, Tiresias prophesies that "one born of Creon's loins" will die because Creon has wrongfully lodged a living soul in a grave and has prevented the corpse of Polynices from being buried. The Chorus advises Creon to free Antigone and bury Polynices (1100–1101). The order of events expressed by Tiresias and the Chorus places the freeing of Antigone before the burial of Polynices. In the exode of the play the Messenger reports that Creon and his attendants first buried Polynices and then went to the cave where Antigone had been immured (1192–1205).

Many prominent scholars have recently followed Jebb in believing that the order in which Creon performs his two tasks reverses the sequence which he had indicated earlier, when he told the Chorus of his intentions (1108–12).[1] Only a few critics, such as Jebb and Waldock, regard this assumed inconsistency as a flaw in the dramaturgy of the play,[2] and even they do not consider it a serious mistake. The others point out, as Jebb himself notes, that it would be anticlimactic if the Messenger reported the burial after the momentous events at the cave.[3] Though Jebb can explain to his own satisfaction the reason for the dramaturgical blemish, he cannot expunge it except to say that Greek drama, because of its interest in rhetorical effect, is not so consistent nor clear as modern drama in matters which, though part of the play, occur off stage.[4] But surely a play, ancient or modern, that has an important dramatic effect arbitrarily motivated, is blemished more seriously than Jebb is willing to admit. Before, however, we accept this dramaturgical flaw, whether it be serious or not, we ought to re-examine Creon's expression of his intentions (1108–12) and the implications in the story incidents; for it seems that an anxiety for Antigone's safety, born of a knowledge of later events in the play, has misled Jebb and those critics who agree with him.

When the Chorus advises Creon "to free the maiden and bury the dead" (1100–1101),

1. See R. Jebb, *Sophocles: The Plays and Fragments*, "*Antigone*," III[3] (Amsterdam, 1962), pp. xviii–xx; A. J. A. Waldock, *Sophocles the Dramatist* (Cambridge, 1951), pp. 129–32; G. M. Kirkwood, *A Study in Sophoclean Drama* (Ithaca, 1958), p. 258, n. 17; H. D. F. Kitto, *Form and Meaning in Drama* (New York, 1960), pp. 174–75; S. M. Adams, *Sophocles the Playwright* (Toronto, 1957), pp. 56–57.

2. Jebb, pp. xix–xx; Waldock, pp. 129–32.

3. Jebb, pp. xix–xx. Waldock, pp. 129–32, agrees with Jebb that the reason for the sequence of Creon's performance of the events is "a matter of structural convenience" rather than good dramaturgy. Kirkwood, p. 258, n. 17, admitting that if Creon had not reversed the order of events, the Messenger's speech would be "wretchedly anti-climactic," considers the reversal not a flaw but "a good dramatic reason." Kitto, pp. 174 f., does not regard the reversal as a flaw nor only as a means to make the Messenger's speech more effective, for he believes that Sophocles could easily have removed the inconsistency if he had so wished. Kitto views the reversal only as a discrepancy from Creon's original intentions which, he believes, has some additional, though slight significance: Creon, going to the cave of Antigone, as he had originally intended, passes the body of Polynices and, since Antigone is in no immediate danger, he changes his mind, deciding to bury the corpse first and efface the offense against the gods. Adams, pp. 56–57, also attributes more significance to Creon's reversal of events than just the advantage it gives to the Messenger's speech. He believes that Creon in a moment of sanity intended to rescue Antigone first, but he changed his purpose, overcome by "a final seizure of *ate*, mental blindness."

4. Jebb, p. xix.