Too many critics argue that Seneca wrote his tragedies to expound his philosophic doctrines. They postulate - what has ever been in some quarters suspected - that the plays by the Stoic Philosopher are fundamentally Stoical. One critic\(^1\) has gone so far as to propose that these "philosophical propaganda-plays" constitute in fact a single "set" of tragedies which should be studied in the sequence and order they occupy in the Codex Etruscus, beginning and concluding with a Hercules play.\(^2\) Thus the plays must be read altogether, *en masse*, as a single "Stoic treatise" which may be designated "as a sort of glorified Essay on Man."\(^3\) There are, she believes, unrelieved horrors and gloom, uncontrolled passions, and an evil fate operative throughout the series - until the reader comes at last to the final play, the Oetaeus, where Stoic virtue is finally rewarded.

This critic's overall hypothesis has been largely discounted for a number of very good reasons. We have absolutely no evidence nor inkling that Seneca himself "arranged" the ordering of his plays; indeed, we have no information about their original "publication" whatsoever. Again, we have not one iota of evidence that would lend credence to the suggestion that the ordering of the Codex Etruscus is to be preferred to the ordering

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\(^{1}\) Seneca, *Ep.* 120.22

\(^{2}\) Praeter sapientem autem nemo unum agit, ceteri multiformes sumus. Modo frugi tibi videbimur et graves, modo prodigi et vani. Mutamus subinde personam et contrarium ei sumimus, quam exuimus.

(Except for the wise man, however, no one plays one role; the rest of us have many faces. Now we will seem to you thrifty and serious, now extravagant and idle. We continually change our persona and put one on contrary to that which we have taken off.)
of A or any other recensions. In addition, the Phoenissae is admittedly an incomplete fragment, and many critics question the authorship of the Hercules Oetaeus. 4) Finally, until the era of Proust, no one had encountered the ennealogical structure; a Greek audience had enough to do to sustain its attention-span when faced with the performance of a trilogy (together with a satyr-play); a nine-headed monster would have overwhelmed it. Whatever one might say to the contrary, it was never Seneca's practice to keep his readers suspended for some five hundred pages before granting them respite - and enlightenment. As Jonathan Swift once remarked, "Going too long is a Cause of Abortion as effectual, tho' not so frequent, as Going too short..." 5) If Seneca were as eager to inculcate philosophical doctrine as this critic appears to believe, his astonishingly outstretched sequence of plays would contribute mightily to the loss of instruction entirely. No; such a critic's conjectures simply have not been able to pass muster because they are so free-wheeling and insubstantial. 6) C. D. N. Costa, for example, finds such a theory "most unlikely;" "it needs a good deal of special pleading to infer Stoic teaching from all the plays..." 7)

Although such a conjectural thesis has been, in large measure, shunted aside, it is important to come to terms with a beguiling and rather widely-held opinion concerning the presence of overt Stoicism in the Philosopher's drama and with the popularly received notion that there is or ought to be explicit didacticism and moral teaching in works of literature, particularly the drama. We are told, for example, that Seneca's plays constitute "a piece of neo-Stoic propaganda," and are primarily dedicated to "the teaching of philosophy;" 8) hence, this critic believes that the Senecan plays are "pseudotragedies," utilizing dramatic form as deceptive "sugar-coating." Accordingly, "from a purely aesthetic point of view much in [these plays] deserves the most severe strictures." 9) Needless to say, the very term "pseudotragedy" is pejorative, suggesting the synthetic, the counterfeit, and the second rate. Such a critic's emphasis upon Stoicism stems from the "effort to determine Seneca's object in writing the plays...;" 10) we might suggest that such criticism is guilty of "The Intentional Fallacy." 11) For we can never predicate an author's intentions with certainty, and when we then proceed to locate the effects of that postulated intention in his writings, our argument becomes hopelessly circular; such criticism, as Wimsatt observes, "... begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological causes of the poem and ends in biography and relativism." 12)
It is also interesting to note that so many modern critics endorse a kind of unwritten "law of literary specialization:" a philosopher cannot write plays, etc. Rigidly applied, this criterion would prevent a Caesar from writing memoirs or plays, a Plato from writing poetry, any poet from writing criticism, any doctor, lawyer, or priest from writing fiction.

Indeed, for many a critic, it is the philosophical content in Senecan drama that counts and that saves his plays from total condemnation. Hopefully, the reader at this point will be seriously dismayed to observe how congenially such criticism sacrifices "mere aesthetic" in works of art in favor of solid moral teaching. Certainly, as in all great literature, Seneca's plays abound in deep thought and in psychological understanding of human nature but one can hardly argue that he employed the tragic genre primarily to impart philosophic concepts.

To be sure, the whole question of literature's "utility" and "moral purpose" has been a recurrent and vexing problem in literary criticism for two thousand years. The exertions and requirements of moralizers never diminish, and many a theorist becomes frankly ambivalent. Thus W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. insists that he tends to side with those who would separate art from morality; yet later he admits that, for him, the greatest poetry will not be immoral or indifferent, but "morally right."\(^{13}\) Perhaps such ambivalence cannot ever be eliminated.

Both art and morality have an ideal... but the ideals are not the same... Morality aims at eradicating and abolishing evil..., whereas the aesthetic contemplation of life recognizes [evil] as an element necessary to vivid and full interest... I do not think that this opposition can be altogether overcome.\(^{14}\)

Elder Olson, the neo-Aristotelian critic, draws a distinct line between works of aesthetic beauty and works of rhetoric and didacticism - the work of Homer as opposed to the work of Dante, "one... concerned with beauty of form, and the other with the inculcation of doctrine."\(^{15}\) Already, the liberal reader should be uncomfortably wincing: are we to concede, willy-nilly, that there is no "philosophy" in the pages of Homer? no "aesthetic beauty" in the cantos of Dante? Somehow, such twin Procrustean beds of art and ethics threaten ruthlessly to cleave, to curtail, and to savage the writings of two of the world's major literary figures.

And indeed, the problem is more extensive and compromising even than it first appears. For these are two age-old categories, distinguishing works that strive to persuade an audience, seeking to influence its thought or its action, juxtaposed with works that "nothing affirm,"
imitations that strive to create a complete poetic whole, "a perfect pattern." 16) Such a distinction indicates, in effect, that rhetoric is a "useful" art, while poetics or poesis is a "fine" art.

Useful art, employing nature's own machinery, aids her in her effort to realize the ideal in the world around us, so far as man's practical needs are served by furthering this purpose. Fine art sets practical needs aside; it does not seek to affect the real world, to modify the actual. By mere imagery it reveals the ideal form at which nature aims in the highest sphere of organic existence, - in the region, namely, of human life... 17)

Or, according to the distinction more recently enlarged upon by Susanne Langer, rhetoric is discursive; poetry, presentational. 18) For rhetoric is a means to creating "action" in the real world; whereas poetry is an end in itself, the creating of a complete and imitative "action" - not in the real world, but - in the world of art.

And yet, these two categories have been difficult to maintain in rigorous isolation. As Aristotle himself concedes, all men - artists among them - employ rhetoric at all times:

... all men in some way partake of both [rhetoric and dialectic]; for all men to some degree attempt to examine and to support an argument and to speak in defense of it and to speak against it. 19)

In addition, boundaries between the two kinds - useful and fine art - have continually been broken down, allowing and even encouraging the two to become confused. It would prove foolhardy to insist that an artist in his work overtly propound moral precepts or, at the opposite extreme, scrupulously expunge every moral quality whatsoever from his work. The artist, frankly, can satisfy neither of these immoderate ends. Typically, for instance, Mark Twain, like many a first-rate author, perceived very clearly the paradox that morality must never predominate in art, although such morality must never be entirely absent: "humor must not professedly teach, and it must not professedly preach," he writes, "but it must do both if it would live forever." 20)

Moreover, we should note that literary drama - even Senecan drama - is by its very nature mimetic; yet many periods in history simply make no distinction between the mimetic and the didactic. Regardless of genre, all eighteenth-century works of art, it has been pointed out, were to some degree consciously directed to an audience: "... the poet's task, like the orator's, was to arouse in his audience certain emotions about the subject of his poem." 21)
Indeed, conscious of the censures of Plato in the *Republic*, all literary criticism for some twenty-two hundred years tended to defend art by proposing that it was always didactic. Horace in the *Ars Poetica* affirms that all poetry desires "*aut prodesse... aut delectare,*" to teach or to delight. Scaliger, in his *Poetice* (1561), agrees "that the poet teaches moral habits through actions. 'Action is therefore a mode of teaching; and the moral habit is what we are taught to apply.'" Similarly, Sir Philip Sidney's *Apologie for Poetrie* (1583) claims that poetry's end is "to teach and delight," and that "Poetry ever setteth virtue... out in her best colours." Furthermore, by a quirk of history, the analysis of poetry was cast primarily into the hands of rhetoricians for some two millenia. It was authors like Longinus and Cicero and Quintilian and their commentators who influenced medieval and Renaissance thought. Only in the 1940's and '50's did the vogue of the New Criticism, focusing its attention upon the literary work itself, commence to distinguish once again, as Aristotle had done, between works of didacticism and of aesthetic. But it has been by no means a prevailing tradition.

What in our time has been labelled "the didactic heresy" was the basic theory of literature for some twenty-two centuries. Renaissance critics and poets have little to say about self-expression or the agonies of creation, but they are never weary of insisting that literature is philosophy teaching by examples, that it moves men to the love and practice of virtue and the abhorrence of vice. Thus the aim of literature is identical with the aim of education, virtuous action.

In general, then, over the centuries moralism and didacticism in literary criticism has tended to prevail. We might well answer critics' "discovery" that Seneca is philosophizing and moralizing in his dramas by reminding them that Sophoclean or Aeschylean or Euripidean drama is all too frequently comprehended in precisely the same instructional light.

Indeed, most dramatists in some sense employ ideas in their plays, and this is particularly true of the ancient Greek playwrights. William Arrowsmith, for example, has argued that both Aeschylus and Sophocles use their contemporary cultural situation "as framing dramatic ideas" in their plays, and he goes on to urge that Euripides especially was the experimentalist who literally creates a theater of ideas. There was something of a hue and cry when Eric Bentley's *The Playwright as Thinker* first appeared in 1946, but Bentley has stood by his general thesis: that the major dramatists of the modern era (Wagner, Ibsen, Strindberg, Shaw) have fostered
ideas in their dramas.

Yet the difficulties with a predominant didacticism should become apparent. Far too frequently, for instance, in such a climate, the literary work is yanked and pulled and distorted by allegorizing, in order to force it to yield up its acceptable modicum of lesson and message. At its most silly, such message-mongering leads a critic like Thomas Rymer to discern two "morals" in Shakespeare's Othello:

... a caution to maidens of quality how, without their parents' consent, they run away with black-amours... [and] a warning to all good wives that they look well to their linen.

Still more importantly, a regnant moral didacticism is tempted to become "militant," demanding that religious and philosophical instruction in the literary work be made pikestaff clear and overt. At its worst, such criticism is recurrently moved to advocate censorship (necessitating just as repeatedly that authors counter with their Areopagiticae). Such rigid moralizing criticism commences by doubting whether good poetry can ever be written by "bad" men. Where it cannot censure, it attempts to prescribe what sort of literature is "acceptable." Over the years, for example, this practice led to the development of the concept of "poetic justice" in the drama of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - that doctrine which called overtly (as at the tacked-on conclusion of the Book of Job) for the on-stage punishment of vice and the remuneration of rectitude (and may be perceived in the curious pabulum of Richard Steele's sentimental plays or in Richardson's novel, Pamela or Virtue Rewarded [1740]). By such a standard, only a limited number of "cheerful" plots would be admissible. Tragedy would be virtually ham-strung (unless the protagonist be vicious); satire would prove unruly (refusing in tone, word, and deed to "suffer fools gladly"); and comedy would only be permitted to trifle and jest at the expense of the morally reprehensible. Lest these reflections seem extreme and at any rate unnecessary in our own enlightened era, let us remind the reader of the frequency with which Tennessee Williams has been chastized for dwelling so frequently in his dramas upon the unsavory and the depressing, and recollect as well Kenneth Tynan's strictures of Eugene Ionesco's plays for failing to be "affirmative."

Such ethical vigilantes are ever upon the alert. Furthermore, it has become commonplace in recent years for the occasional moralist to raise his voice against our own period's literature for celebrating decadence, violence, pornography, obscenity, and vice - the most recent instance being Mr. John Gardner's On Moral Fiction (1978).
The truth of the matter is that we cannot, even if we wanted to, prescribe what we will accept as suitable to world literature. In the epic, in the novel, in much poetry, and especially in the drama - in all of these fictional modes the author simply is not present in *pro pria persona*. Nor will normative literary conventions allow him to break in upon the scene. It is indeed true that readers of a particular cast of mind wish fully to "know" what an author "means" by a certain character or a certain event. (We constantly hope to learn to "know" as much about the perplexities and incidents of life.) Yet it is virtually impossible for fictional genres to satisfy this obsession fully to know. Given such a frustration, too many readers (who after all do not wish to read fictions, but yearn instead for lectures, editorials, and cablegrams) are tempted to discover the author hidden beneath the mantle of one or another character within the creative work, as if fictional portrayal were merely a game of hide-and-seek. After such experiences, the bewildered author often has to deliver, outside his fiction, something of a disclaimer: characters and scenes, he might feel constrained to inform us, in his book are wholly fictional, and any resemblance to actual places or persons - living or dead - is strictly coincidental. Milton was once moved to explain himself in just this vein:

One is not to regard what the poet says, but what person in the play speaks, and what that person says; for different persons are introduced, sometimes good, sometimes bad; sometimes wise men, sometimes fools; and such words are put into their mouths, as it is most proper for them to speak; not such as the poet would speak, if he were to speak in his own person.\(^35\)

One need not be a demon to create the figure of Satan, a madman to devise a Quixote, a fool to generate a Falstaff, a chatterbox or cynic to conceive a Thersites - although many a reader has faltered in comprehending that this is so. In opposition to such a view, which he designates "the personal heresy," C. S. Lewis urges that such critics act as if all poetry "must be the expression of [the poet's] personality," that such poetry "is about the poet's state of mind." Critics, Lewis notes, are guilty of this fallacy even when dealing with the drama, for their major premiss [is] that the cynicism and disillusionment put into the mouths of some Shakespearian characters are Shakespeare's.\(^36\) It is in this light that many a critic comprehends Senecan drama - as exclusively the expression of Seneca's own personality, of Seneca's own ideas.

In short, an author can never be assessed ethically by the numbers of good or evil characters he invents; on the contrary, if the artist's
vision of good and of evil is overwhelming, that is merely a testimonial to his creative force, and not at all an indicator of the level of his immaculateness or the certification of his creed. Yet the characters an author creates can hardly be judged without taking morality into account. In Aristotle's words, for instance,

... tragedy is... an imitation of... action, of life, of happiness and unhappiness... and the end is a certain action, not a quality; men are what they are as a result of their character, they are happy or unhappy as a result of their actions.\(^{37}\)

Whenever a fictional creation makes a choice of speech or action, he reveals (as do people in life) his moral character. He cannot help it; his actions bespeak his morality - and any behavior is in some sense moral. Henry James once entirely dismissed a critical squabble that sought to distinguish two literary kinds: novels of character and novels of incident.

There is an old-fashioned distinction between the novel of character and the novel of incident... It appears to me... little to the point... There are bad novels and good novels, as there are bad pictures and good pictures; but that is the only distinction in which I see any meaning, and I can as little imagine speaking of a novel of character as I can imagine speaking of a picture of character. When one says picture, one says character, when one says novel, one says incident, and the terms may be transposed at will. What is character but the determination of incident? What is either a picture or a novel that is not of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is an expression of character.\(^{38}\)

Hence, an author may well brilliantly express action and character in literary works of art, but he cannot express himself; he cannot express his morality or his philosophy. We obtain only a hint of these latter by the breadth, the particularity, the assurance, and the intensity of his creativity. We cannot be certain of the discursive meaning of Seneca's plays (we cannot be certain of such meaning of any plays - and debates over interpretations of Hamlet and the Oedipus Tyrannos are relevant here), but we can indeed be certain of the force and intensity of much of Seneca's achievement - the gloomy atmosphere of the Oedipus, the furious rages of a Medea, an Atreus, or a Juno, the witty asperity of a Megara's rejoinders to the tyrant Lycus, the frustrated clairvoyance of a Cassandra,
the desperate sufferings of the mother Andromache, the poisoned physical torments of a Hercules, the insane loves of a Phaedra. We cannot in all honesty label these works "pseudotragedies" or thank our stars that they are without aesthetic interest - lest with the art we toss out the artifact, and there be nothing left!

If we set aside hypotheses about instruction and philosophizing for a time and examine squarely into Seneca's plays, we ought to discern those features that lend them psychic power and dramatic force. For one thing, his plays are austere etchings and rich mood-pieces, as Herington has observed. Herington stresses in Seneca a tone of "almost religious fervor" and a "terrible moral sensitivity" realized by the playwright's "concrete, pictorial imagination" and brilliant painter's eye for "fantasy." Prescient choruses keen and brood, and grotesque images recur with a fatal insistence. Such features lend an intensity to scenes of suffering, as Regenbogen has particularly remarked and astutely explored. Further, of course, such settings and distorting scenes suggest the nightmarish, almost hallucinatory visions that bespeak a lurid and perceptive psychological presentation enhanced by his characters' soliloquies, dramatic laments, and "self-apostrophes."

To add to this psychiatric milieu, characters speak with stichomythic and almost shot-gun tenseness and unreal clarity, as violent emotions build. Moreover, scenes tend to be isolated, blocked off, separate - even disjunct. Jo-Ann Shelton speaks of temporal repetitions in the Hercules Furens and the Thyestes and of the playwright's presentation of "simultaneous events linearly;" but what is achieved is a staccato-effect in the dreamlike tracing not of clock but of psychic time. For example, in the Thyestes when Tantalus curses the House of Atreus, characters in the play are already infected, and subsequently edged and jarred and caromed onward into a mainstream of emotional fever pitch and taut melodramtic posturing and performance. Needless to say, such a psychological theater of extremity and cruelty was particularly attractive to Elizabethans and Jacobean. As Michael Higgins notes, 

... the Stoic revival of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a symptom of a general dis-
solution of established beliefs and institutions. This atmosphere of chaos, of moral and intellectual disintegration, is reflected in the tragedies of the Jacobean era.43)

Seneca's theater clearly reflected crises of a mass urban society and of the rising dictatorships of first-century Rome. The Neronian world of chaos, foreboding, fantasy, and the grotesque are perhaps best exemplified in his Oedipus.44) Moreover, such characteristics are again in the twentieth century a particularly relevant dramatic form of art.

Seneca's influential, psychologically charged, and violently emotional theater is hardly tragic or cathartic in the traditional Aristotelian sense - characters in his plays are too frenzied and furious in their violence and obsessions; and a suppurating flux of evil prevails. As the Chorus in the Phaedra (978-82) gloomily intones:

Fortune in disarray governs human affairs and blindly scatters her gifts, favoring the foul; dreadful lust conquers blameless men, fraud in the lofty palace prevails.

Nor is Fortuna even so innocently blind; for spirits like Tantalus and deities like Juno actually intrude in behalf of savagery and mayhem. But, most importantly, despite all of the fury and destruction, Senecan drama is pervaded by a large and persistent irony. Vice triumphs - but is never gratified. Phaedra's revenge, after all, includes her own destruction and the slaughter of her beloved Hippolytus. Medea's righting of the balance betwixt herself and Jason includes the murder of her own children; her final claim that she has been restored to chastity and innocence is perceived as being outrageously and pathetically deluded.45) Atreus, for all of his towering fury, continues frustrated and insecure even at the moment of his most horrible victory over Thyestes: his jealousy, suspicion, and ire are pitched at such an extremity that they can never be satisfied or allayed.46) Similarly, in a broad historical sense, Clytemnestra's and Aegisthus' vengeance upon Agamemnon is but the helpless accomplishment of recompense to Cassandra and the dead of Troy; and, to be sure, the play concludes with no resolution or pause in the train of crimes and reprisals, and the mad Cassandra has the last prophetic word
with Agamemnon's assassins: "veniet et vobis furor" (1012) - upon the destroyers shall mad destruction be yet to descend. Even beyond the human realm, the spirits of Thyestes and Achilles, the shade of Tantalus, cry for cruelty and vengeance. Even the deity Juno is rabidly incensed. Whether among humans, among spirits, or among the gods themselves, Senecan theater merely presents a brutal ethos of continual slaughter. His pervasive, secular irony merely attests to the ignobility of gods and heroes alike that borders upon - nay, that topples over into - insanity. Ultimately, such characters stand revealed as puppets in the universe, for their freedom and self-realization and self-expression has been totally lost to mania and passion.

It is erroneous to argue that Seneca composed such intense, original, and powerful dramatic visions merely to inculcate philosophic thought. Yet, to be sure, such thought abounds in his plays. Needless to say, all major literary works that have been presumably admired are replete with intellectual content. A true classic is remembered for its distinction in content as well as in form. It is virtually impossible to insist that Seneca wrote these tragedies merely to formulate a syllogism or a maxim. He is rather endowing us with a poetic, creative, new tragic invention - one that envisions a livid, ruinous world where evil characters rant and rave, perpetrating the destruction of themselves and of others. His brilliantly darkened world-picture can hardly be reduced or construed as torts and orts of instruction for little Marcus-es and Juliuses. Rather he has created for us an unreasoning universe, a second world closely set beside our own, a nightmare neighborhood where passion and frenzy are forever in fullest flower. If he touches us profoundly, it is because his neighborhood, after all, is dangerously near to our own. Such is his gift to us of a genuine literature.

"What?" we might question: "Seneca a maker of 'literature'?" It is quite true that Seneca, in his philosophical writings, appears to give pure literature a second-row seat. The Stoics naturally placed philosophy above the other "arts"; thus Seneca claims philosophy is the only art that investigates good and evil and contributes to the perfection of the soul. 47) Yet we know of his impressive familiarity with Ovid, Homer,
and Vergil from the great number of times he mentions or quotes from them. As he makes clear in one passage, it is not so much that he ignores literature, as that he approaches it — not as the philologist or the grammarian — but as the philosopher; his chief concern is how to live and how to die, how to obtain strength to practice virtue, to strive for intellectual perfections, and to be borne, as it were, aloft toward the gods. Seneca knew that outstanding literary achievement, whatever its genre, guaranteed for the writer immortal glory. At one point he quotes from Vergil: Optima quaeque dies miseris mortalibus aevi/ prima fugit. (For wretched mortals, the best days of life are the first to flee). Overcome with emotion and response to the poet's painful insight, Seneca observes: Clamat ece maximus vates et velut divino esse institutum salutare carmen canit. (Behold the greatest bard exclaims and as if inspired with divine words sings a salutary song.) In his studies, Seneca regularly honors the great minds of every genre, the grand geniuses of every age: ... sed cum optimo quoque sum; ad illos, in quoque loco, in quoque saeculo fuerunt, animam meam mitto. (... but I am with all the best; to them, in whatever place, in whatever century they have been, I send my own soul.) And he, like them, escaped the oblivion of time, not only through his philosophic Letters and Dialogues but through his Tragedies as well.

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NOTES

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1) Berthe Marti, "Seneca's Tragedies. A New Interpretation," TAPA 76 (1945), 216-45. She has been especially influential (although he has reservations) upon Norman T. Pratt, Jr. See his "The Stoic Base of Senecan Drama," TAPA 79 (1948), 1-11; Pratt does not analyze image-patterns in the Senecan plays but "massive systems of words expressing abstract ideas" and believes this peculiar usage to stem from the playwright's "fusion of rhetoric and Stoicism" in the plays ("Major Systems of Figurative Language in Senecan Melodrama," TAPA 94 [1963], 199-234).

2) Hercules Furens, Troades, Phoenissae, Medea, Phaedra, Oedipus, Agamemnon, Thyestes, Hercules Oetaeus.

3) Marti (above, note 1), pp. 222-223.

4) Some of this scholarship on the authenticity of the plays is summarized in Virginia Iorio, "L'autenticità della tragedia 'Hercules Oetaeus'


6) Much the same may be said for the hypothecations in Marti's "The Prototypes of Seneca's Tragedies," CP 42 (1947), 1-16, that suggest Seneca's indebtedness to a tradition of "philosophical" or "pseudo-" tragedy that includes such authors as Diogenes and Varro. It is probably true that Antisthenes developed the Socratic "dialogue" even before Plato, and that a number of Cynics and Stoics - Diogenes, Crates, Persaeus, Herillus of Carthage, Timon of Phlius - wrote dramas of a sort, not to mention the mock-dramatic Bionian and Menippean diatribes of the kind found in the work of Lucian. But these "plays" are not extant, and it is impossible for us to determine how much they are like or unlike the dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, or of Seneca. It can even be said that there is virtually no question but that upon Seneca there was some influence exerted; we simply cannot in the least posit what sort of influence it happened to be.

7) "The Tragedies," in Seneca, ed. C. D. N. Costa (London, 1974), pp. 108-109. Some critics go too far in either direction. There are those like F. Eggermann ("Seneca als Dichterphilosoph," Nbb. 3, [1940], 18-36) who perceive the primary function of the plays to be the teaching of Stoic philosophy. On the other hand, there are those like Joachim Dingel (Seneca und die Dichtung [Heidelberg, 1974]) who see the plays as lacking in philosophical meaning and even running counter to Stoic philosophy.


9) Marti (above, note 1), pp. 221, 219, 216. Elsewhere, Dr. Marti is explicit about what she means by Senecan "pseudo-drama." Devoted, as such a form is, she believes, "to expound[ing] his own brand of Stoicism, it is "Totally lacking in anything dramatic... It can hardly be said to have a plot but consists rather in a series of monologues and duologues which tell a pathetic story and proceed to moralize it. All is told, nothing acted. The only clash of personalities is a cold and argumentative debate... All is static exposition, without progress, growth, or crisis." Such works are "deliberately composed... as the imitation of drama" ("Seneca's Apocolocyntosis and Octavia: A Diptych," AJP, 73 [1952], 28-29).


11) W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley, The Verbal Icon: Studies


19) Rhetoric I.1 (our translation).


22) Ars Poetica, line 333; see also 343, "omne tulit punctum qui misert utile dulci."


27) The allegorical interpretation of major literary works was commonplace in the ancient, medieval, and Renaissance worlds. On such a tradition, consult Joshua McClennen, "On the Meaning and Function of Allegory in the English Renaissance," The University of Michigan Contributions in Modern Philology, no. 6 (April 1947), 1-38, and Donald Lemen Clark, Rhetoric and Poetry in the Renaissance (New York, 1922), pp. 139-61. If anything, the Renaissance's and Reformation's new emphasis upon the individual threatened enormously to proliferate private allegorizing; see Abraham Bezanker, "An Introduction to the Problem of Allegory in Literary Criticism,"


29) Albert Guérard observes that in the "[Neo-] classical age" "It was a commonplace of criticism that no bad man could be a good writer," and he refers particularly to passages in Milton and Boileau (Art for Art's Sake [Boston & New York, 1936] p. 161). The question has been raised about profligates like Petronius and Byron, and, in our century, about the racist Roy Campbell and the deranged fascist Ezra Pound.

30) As an example of enlightened aspiration, Eliseo Vivas sets out to harmonize and reintegrate the disparate views that separate a formalistic and aesthetic comprehension of art from the moralizing and instructive conception that perceives art as "knowledge". But, amusingly enough, his schemes for reunification break down and his moralism prevails; for, after considering Louis-Ferdinand Céline's novel, Voyage au bout de la nuit (1932), he finds its "presuppositions" stemming from "hatred" and the book itself the product of a "perverted mind," and consequently providing an art and a knowledge that is "objectionable" and "open to condemnation": ("Literature and Knowledge," Essays in Criticism and Aesthetics [New York, 1955], pp. 115-116).


33) Vid. The (London) Observer, June 22 and 29, July 6 and 13, 1958, which include Ionesco's replies. It is quite common for critics of Tynan's ilk to search in literature for "the power of positive thinking." We have often heard the layman inquire why authors have to write tragedies: isn't there enough misery and depression, they inquire, in everyday life? Why give us any additional pessimism at all?

34) For other recent examples, see Duncan Williams, Trousered Apes: Sick Literature in a Sick Society (London, 1971); George P. Elliott, Con- versations: Literature and the Modernist Devotion (New York, 1971); Robert M. Adams, Bad Mouth: Fugitive Papers on the Dark Side (Berkeley & Los Angeles, 1977).


37) *Poetics*, VI.12 [our translation].

38) "The Art of Fiction," *Partial Portraits* (London, 1911), pp. 392-93. Nor can the artist avoid presenting moral actions; as James observes elsewhere: "Then it is a question of an artistic process, we must always mistrust very sharp distinctions. ... It is as difficult to describe an action without glancing at its motive, its moral history, as it is to describe a motive without glancing at its practical consequence. Our history and our fiction are what we do..." ("Guy de Maupassant," *The Future of the Novel: Essays on the Art of Fiction*, ed. Leon Edel [New York, 1956], p. 203).


44) Consult Anna Lydia Motto and John R. Clark, "*Violenta Fata*: The Tenor of Seneca's *Iedipus*," *CB* 50 (1974), 81-87, and "There's Something Wrong with the Sun': Seneca's *Iedipus* and the Modern Grotesque," *CB* 54 (1978), 41-44.


46) For extended discussion of this play, consult A. L. Motto and J. R. Clark, "Seneca's *Thyestes* as Melodrama," *RSC* 26 (1978), 363-78. Too frequently, the term "melodrama" is automatically used as a term of disapprobation; but see Clark & Motto, "Gasps, Guffaws, & Tears: A Modest Defense of Sentimentality, Bathos, and Melodrama," *Thalia* 1 (1978), 61-70.

47) Ep. 88.28; see also Ep. 85.32, 90.26, 95.8-9.

48) Concerning Seneca's special devotion to Vergil, the poet, see A.L. Motto and J. R. Clark, "Philosophy and Poetry: Seneca and Vergil," *CO* 56 (1978), 3-5.


51) De *Prev. Vit.* IX.2; Seneca likes these lines about time's winged chariot well enough to quote them again in Ep. 108.24.

52) Ep. 62.2.