

Questions of Style in Seneca

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Abstract

Lucius Annaeus Seneca (1 B.C.- 65 A.D.), when writing his Moral Epistles to Lucilius, adopted a unique style of writing in order to be coherent with the new literary genre that he proposed: the philosophical letter. Given Seneca's opinion on the matter in the seventy-fifth epistle, this presentation will provide a commented translation of this letter, which will outline some aspects of Seneca's style, taking into account both the literary and linguistic resources present in his works, as well as the ways in which these aspects function within his work.

Key words:

Seneca, Style, Epistle 75.

Introduction

Lucius Annaeus Seneca, The Philosopher, was the second son of Seneca, the so-called *rhetor* or the *elder*. Born in Cordoba around 1 B.C., he received an education based on stoic thought, which would greatly influence his writing. During his life, Seneca became an important political figure in Nero's Rome, and was to become one of the greatest writers in Latin literature (ALBRECHT & SCHMELING, 1997, p. 1158 and 1159).

The epithet "The Philosopher" was particularly apropos, for many of the author's works contained philosophical and moral reflections. Among these works are the one hundred and twenty-four moral epistles, which became his most famous work.

The letters that at present constitute the *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium* are an incomplete version of a larger work and are organized in twenty volumes. They are a collection of letters with moralizing, educational, and philosophical content. However, among the different aspects of this collection, one tends to stand out: the stylistics adopted by Seneca.

When composing these letters, Seneca modified his writing style to better suit the new literary genre that he proposed: the philosophical letter; and, as a result, he would break with the Greco-Roman literary tradition. Many of the features of this new style meet the ideals of the philosophy that the author himself prescribed and which made many consider his writing rustic or inelegant when compared with many of his contemporaries.

With this criticism in mind, Seneca's seventieth-fifth letter is a comment on the style that he adopted, as well an attempt to justify it.

Objectives

Considering Seneca's elaboration and justification of his style in the seventieth-fifth letter, this presentation will provide a commented translation of this epistle, which aims to establish a discussion regarding his style.

Methodology

For the translation of the seventieth-fifth moral epistle, by Seneca, the noted Latin text by L. D. Reynolds (1965, p. 233-236) will be considered, as well as other previous translations. In addition, a broad range of theoretical studies will support the comments in this presentation, principally taking into account previous studies that analyze the literary and linguistic resources found in Seneca's works.

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¹ ALBRECHT, Michael von; SCHMELING, Gareth L. *A history of Roman literature*. New York, NY: E. J. Brill, 1997. 2 v. pp. 511-563; 1158-1204.

² REYNOLDS, L. D.; SENECA. *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1965. pp. V-XVIII; 233-236.