

Write a critical appreciation of senecas apocolocyntosis

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



Seneca 's Apocolocyntosis provides us with one of the richest and most unusual texts to hold emerged from Rome. The Apocolocyntosis covers the narrative of Claudius, emperor of Rome and, while it is likely that the sarcasm was composed for Saturnalia in AD54, and does non incorporate a great figure of historical truths, it does possess important artistic virtue insofar as it is rich with dual entendre and critical argument. The typical qualities to Seneca 's Apocolocyntosis have led critics to oppugn the cogency of the text as a work by Seneca himself. Indeed, Seneca is most often known as a author of stoic philosophical treatises in a proto-Christian manner ; the Apocolocyntosis is chiefly representative of an entirely different manner. However, although these subjective responses to Seneca 's writing have been legion, it 's innately subjective nature does non travel so far as to assume that the work was written by person else. In add-on, many of the subjects in the Apocolocyntosis can be traced back through Seneca 's old work. Second, the rubric of the text itself is slightly deep, and is a word to depict the transmutation of a adult male into a Cucurbita pepo. Of class, in a actual sense this does non go on, although some critics have attempted to place the literary and the metaphorical togss that may hold warrant this deeply unusual rubric. This debatable rubric has led some critics to reason that the Apocolocyntosis is unfinished, or that the portion of the text where the metabolism occurs is losing.

The apocolocyntosis provides a alone chance for us to look at the precise compositional nature of the Menippean sarcasm, a genre of which few texts survive. Menippean sarcasm was developed as a peculiar manner and signifier of sarcasm formulated some 300 old ages therefore by Menippus of

Gadara. Its main features include are in its signifier and composing, which include a mixture of prose and poetry. The intervention of its topics is characterised by a " serio-comic " attack, where the serious implicit in subjects of the drama are obfuscated with comedic overtones. This is important both in portraying the function and the significance of the drama, every bit good as in discoursing its literary virtues. The satiric qualities of the drama focal point chiefly around the Roman province, but other subjects besides emerge and are lambasted by Seneca: historiographers are attacked from the really beginning, possibly imparting creed to the fictional manner employed by Seneca himself. Historians are mocked for their nonpartisanship (1. 1) and besides by avoiding citations (9. 2) . The usage of citations is a peculiar point in which Seneca 's scathing satirization flows. His usage of Homeric citations in 5. 4 besides draw attending to the abuse of citations: " Claudius was really pleased that there were philologues at that place: he hoped there would be some topographic point for his ain histories. So he excessively said in Homeric poetry: 'From Ilium the air current transporting me drove me ashore at the Kikonians ' " (5. 4) . He continues by adding " (But the undermentioned poetry was more true, every bit Homeric: 'and there I sacked the metropolis and killed the people ') " The attending Seneca draws to the usage of citations to pull strings and warrant a peculiar position. The ability of Seneca to overreach Claudius is, nevertheless stating, and suggests that Claudius himself came to the throne, in many peoples eyes illicitly, on the shoulders of the Praetorian Guard. Hercules ' original inquiry, " Of what race of work forces are you? Where is your metropolis and your parents? " is answered in a barbed and dry manner

to depict Claudius 's rise to power. As Fraudenberg suggests, `` the inquiry posed by Hercules has, in the class of the replies offered, go a inquiry about how Claudius came to be emperor ; by (legal) heritage, alludes Claudius ; by (illegal) force, alludes the storyteller " (98) . Of class, the dismissive tone in which Seneca attacks his legitimacy via the execution of these narrative `` asides " provides a rich satiric presentation of the humor Seneca was capable of. In add-on, Seneca draws attending to the difference between these two mentions to Homer - the first, a inquiry used to show exactly, is obfuscated `` intelligently " by Claudius, who ab initio appears to win out on the embezzlement of citation until the storyteller intervenes with a citation as brash and as purportedly unprocessed as Hercules. This question of the legitimacy of Claudius is both elusive and barbarous, as it invokes attending to Claudius 's controversial rise to power, every bit good as the ferociousness he employed during his clip as emperor. By add-on, Hercules, who here assumes the function of the common adult male, is non ridiculed but, furthermore, is celebrated for his genuineness and his stoical attack to the usage of citation. His unfavorable judgment extends to the usage of citation by historiographers, every bit good as offering a elusive deployment of biting linguisticcommunicationagainst the supposed nonpartisanship of the storyteller, who purports to be a historian despite offering a fictionalised history of Claudius 's reign.

The complexness of the sarcasm, as to whether Seneca is mocking himself, his characters, or the state of affairss in which he finds them, are skillfully and equivocally negotiated by Seneca, whose rhetorical endowments for

obfuscating, leading and playing with the purposes of his audience are here demonstrated with all of its biting possible. Equally good as characters themselves, and their usage of citation to add cogency to their (illegal) invasions of power, the formalities of argument in the Senate are besides brutally mocked and rendered absurd by Seneca (9. 5, 11. 5) . As such, this would impart quality to the reading that Seneca is out to mock the full political system in operation in Rome, instead than the propensities and eccentricities of one peculiar adult male. Of class, these subjects in the context of satirical plants, which lightly mock about every convention and single, can non be separated. The topic of Seneca 's sarcasm is Claudius himself, whose inability to go a divinity is brutally and carefully dissembled and made to look farcical.

The rubric of Seneca 's drama has provoked a ample sum of interesting argument sing its beginnings and its significance. Scholars have debated the significance of Apocolocyntosis in the rubric, and how that relates to the content of the sarcasm. The Apocolocyntosis is a drama on the ideal, with the add-on of Cucurbita pepo or gourd - literally, the word has been taken to intend `` transmutation into a Cucurbita pepo or calabash '' . Many have suggested that the calabash referred to in the rubric is a mention to the die box that Claudius is given. While this position has its protagonists, the metaphor seems a small stretched: Sullivan remarks that `` the die box account is far fetched even for a first-century gag, and it does non run into the point about the 'gourdification ' '' (210) . Besides, the statement that the Apocolocyntosis is uncomplete as a text is besides a debatable one ;

merely, the sarcasm, although it ends slightly suddenly and hurriedly, ties up the secret plan and seems to not look to arouse extra scenes. One interesting statement is that the Apocolocyntosis contains a deep copiousness of " Cucurbita pepos " in the authorship: Creitz (1966) suggests that the opening sentence of the sarcasm, " Quid actum sit in caelo ante diem III, idus Octobris anno novo, initio saeculi felicissimi, volo memoriae tradere " may incorporate the concealed Cucurbita pepos in the text: " Is there any significance in the first missive, Q? Could it not be considered a kinky Cucurbita pepo or melon? " (202) . In add-on, Octobris draws attention to the missive " O " , which is a Cucurbita pepo shaped missive. In add-on October is the month for reaping Cucurbita pepos. Symbolic importance of the Cucurbita pepo may besides hold metaphorical significance in the last scene, in which the myriad of cut-off caputs may be taken as representative of Cucurbita pepos. The derogatory position of Cucurbita pepos besides draws attention to the elusive satirical devices employed by Seneca to pull attention to Claudius 's regulation. Creitz continues by proposing that " The sarcasm pictures a individual unwanted and deformed on Earth, undesired in Eden and even undesired in the lower universe, who, figuratively, like Cucurbita pepo seeds, purged many " (202) . While this provocative reading of the text draws attention to Seneca 's gaiety, it is noted that this reading does not trust to supply a historical history of Seneca 's existent purposes, moreover it is merely based on " what his words say to us today " (202) . Creitz argues that statements that look to show the writer 's purposes are likely to be subjective because small exists about Seneca 's purposes for the text. Other readings of the rubric of

the piece expression alternatively at the nuances behind the existent significance of Apocolocyntosis ; some argue that it is a severely represented wordplay, intending non so much Transformation into a Cucurbita pepo and more Transformation of a pumpkin-head, a reading that would make greater analogues with the behavior of Claudius throughout the text. This is moreover given cogency by the common relationship at the clip between the word calabash and empty-headedness or folly. This, Sullivan argues, is `` correspondent to the nineteenth-century association in England and the United States of the Cucurbita pepo with stupidity and ego " (210) . As such, the reading of Cucurbita pepo as stupidity prevents a actual readings of the text and focal points alternatively upon the metaphorical significance of Cucurbita pepo as stupid.

The critical response to Seneca 's Apocolocyntosis has provoked many vindicators of Seneca 's work into denying that it was written by Seneca ; so, Seneca 's work here is radically different from other plants that he has produced, which tend towards humourless and stoical philosophical contemplation (e. g. Letterss to Lucilus) . In add-on, the damning of Claudius in this sarcasm does non work good with his old work, notably the Consolatio ad Polybium, which flatters Claudius. Of class, guesss over writing and genuineness of course depend to a great extent upon the given that Seneca himself had consistent sentiments about affairs. In add-on, a reading such as this denies the political function Seneca had ; so, from what is known about Seneca 's life, about his expatriate by Caligula and his subsequent poesy keening his expatriate, that these pieces were probably to hold been

politically motivated. Sullivan remarks that Seneca 's `` philosophical pen was barely of all time unguided by practical or political motivations " (212) .

The premise environing the incompatibilities of Seneca 's work assumes that Seneca operated with genuineness himself ; of class, the likeliness is that Seneca himself was composing this drama in order to curry favor or to accomplish his political purposes. Incompatibility in Seneca 's work hence, does nil to turn out the cogency of the Apocolocyntosis as a work by Seneca.

Critics have besides argued that the stylistic qualities of the Apocolocyntosis, as a visible radiation and satirical piece, appear out of topographic point in Seneca 's overall canon, and that the auctorial presence of Seneca is hard to identity as a consequence of this. Of class, the dismissal of the Apocolocyntosis on these evidences mask the serious implicit in political subjects of the work. The discrediting of Claudius, presumptively, satisfied some political purpose at the clip, as power shifted from Claudius to Nero. In add-on, the structural features of the Apocolocyntosis, which strictly employ Seneca 's typical and ample accomplishments in rhetoric and poetry, echo that of a Menippean sarcasm, which had been used extensively across Roman literature at the clip. As such, impressions of writing on evidences of incompatibility of manner can be dismissed.

It is likely that the Apocolocyntosis was written hurriedly for a choice audience of a few people ; while critics have debated the relationship Seneca had to Claudius, and the incompatibilities of his attack, it is likely that this represents a more realistic portraiture of Seneca 's positions on Claudius - while other work flattering of Claudius was written as an effort to revoke his

expatriate from Rome, the Apocolocyntosis and its scathing portraiture of Claudius is likely to stand for Seneca's personal hate of Claudius. Despite the haste of its construct, the work employs and efficaciously utilises a figure of devices used by poets at the clip; many transitions demonstrate Seneca's capacity to satirise the bad poesy used by other Menippean authors; in add-on, the subdivision praising Nero represents an aside in which Seneca shapes the narrative to include. This Aureate Age suggestion points to a more precise dating of the piece, as it was by and large accepted that the startup of a new emperor brings about an explosion of adulation. Therefore, Seneca's drama can be dated to around AD54, during the clip of Nero's startup. Its purpose, which is evidently an of import factor to see when discoursing Seneca's work, is likely to be to discredit Claudius specifically, although some argument on philosophical evidences have suggested that Seneca was satirising the deification of all emperors instead than merely Claudius himself.

The complexness of Seneca's sarcasm has led to a figure of treatments about the purpose and the intent of the drama itself; it is likely that the new epoch ushered in by Nero provided the footing for Seneca's sarcasm. But there are besides sarcasms of more general, philosophical and political subjects that add grist to the factory. Seneca besides satirizes bad poets, poetic conventions and poetic linguistic communication, and utilises more conversational phrases, and even utilize these conversational phrases for the Gods themselves. The sarcasm therefore satirizes the physical stature of Claudius, but besides goes farther in its satirization of Roman civilization in

general. The gaiety of the work makes it distinguishable from Seneca 's other work, which focuses alternatively on trying to delight Seneca 's many powerful disparagers and enemies.

Overall, Seneca 's Apocolocyntosis provides us with a alone penetration into the mechanics of the Menippean sarcasm, as it provides us with the lone complete edition of such a drama. In add-on, while the drama is clearly shaped as a fictional history which attempts to jab merriment of Roman society and peculiarly of Claudius himself, it besides provides penetrations into the historical conditions that provoked the building of the drama itself. In add-on, the Apocolocyntosis besides provides us with a presentation of Seneca 's typical endowments for pun and elusive sarcasm, which provides us with a rich penetration into the more playful properties of this contradictory figure. While the elation of Seneca 's tone is unusual in the context of Seneca 's other plants, it besides masks more serious thematic content, notably on the abuse of rhetoric in order to acquire political addition, which is smartly satirized by the usage of Homeric citations and of historical claims of legitimacy. The voluminous scholarship composed refering this drama has besides focussed on critical facets of the drama, notably in the map of the rubric, the mentions to Cucurbita pepos and calabashes, and of the precise map of Seneca 's analysis of Claudius, which radically alters by comparing to his earlier work. Overall, the penetrations offered, the considerable literary virtues of the work, and the critical treatments of this work have sparked a great trade of contention environing this unusual drama ; while argument continues over the genuineness, the quality and the

authorization of this work, it besides provides us with alone penetrations into both the building of sarcasms in this manner, of the conversational manner used at the clip of its Hagiographas, and of the historical conditions that surrounded its creative activity.