INTRODUCTION

1. *Life and Works*

THE life of Lucius Annaeus Seneca the younger is well documented, at least during his later years. He was born two or three years before the beginning of the Christian era at Corduba in southern Spain, and was taken to Rome in the care of an aunt, where he received the standard education of the day, with its rhetorical bias, and acquired a taste for philosophy. His family was a literary one: his father was a historian and the author of the surviving collections of rhetorical exercises, the *Suasoriae* and *Controversiae*, and the poet Lucan was his nephew. He married at least once, achieved a quaestorship and some fame as a public speaker, and presumably moved in high circles, for in 41 on a charge of adultery with the emperor Gaius' sister, Julia Livilla, he was banished to exile in Corsica. His recall in 49, engineered by Agrippina, and his subsequent appointment as Nero's tutor led directly to the great powers and greater dangers of high political office when Nero became emperor in 54. For some years, in collaboration with the praetorian prefect Burrus, Seneca as imperial counsellor and speech-writer maintained an increasingly uncertain control over Nero's vicious tendencies; but by 62, when Burrus died, Seneca had had enough, and with some difficulty persuaded Nero to let him retire from public life. He did not long enjoy his respite, for in 65 he was improbably accused of favouring the conspiracy of Piso and, in the fashion of the time, died by a dictated suicide.

There is much in Seneca's life and his connection with Nero's activities which is distasteful to us, and a standard charge against him is that in acquiring great wealth and insufficiently opposing Nero he notably failed to follow the moral precepts he constantly offered to others. The charge must in part be admitted, but it should also be allowed that he lived in

appallingly difficult times, that he certainly attempted to set his face against brutality and corruption, and that when he failed to curb it probably no one suffered more anguish than himself.

As a thinker Seneca was the most notable exponent in writing of the modified Roman Stoicism fashionable in his day, with its main emphasis on ethical teaching. Stoic ideas to a greater or less extent inform most of his prose works—the ten so-called dialogues (which include three *consolationes*), the *De Beneficiis*, *De Clementia*, and the *Epistulae Morales*, addressed to Lucilius, which have had the most lasting subsequent influence. His scientific interests are shown in the *Naturales Quaestiones*, and the tally of extant prose writings is completed by the *Apocolocyntosis*, a satire on the deification of Claudius, an interesting work, not least for its 'Menippean' form of mingled prose and verse.

Apart from a corpus of epigrams attributed to Seneca, most of which are almost certainly spurious, his poetic output consists of nine tragedies, entitled *Hercules Furens*, *Troades*, *Phoenissae*, *Medea*, *Phaedra*, *Oedipus*, *Agamemnon*, *Thyestes*, *Hercules Oetaeus*.[1] The *Hercules Oetaeus* is probably only partly by Seneca; another tragedy, *Octavia*, attributed to him and the only surviving *fabula praetexta*, or historical play, is for metrical and other reasons generally agreed to be by another hand. The themes of the plays derive, as the titles suggest, more or less closely from the Greek tragedians, but their characteristic features are explicable only by reference to the literary and educational background of the period which gave them birth.

2. *Seneca and Latin Tragedy*

Seneca's plays are the only surviving complete Latin tragedies, but in the third and second centuries B.C. there was considerable activity in this field. Tragedies are known to have been written by Livius Andronicus and Naevius, followed by

[1] This is the order of the plays in *E*. In the *A* group of manuscripts the order is different, and the titles of the *Troades*, *Phoenissae*, and *Phaedra* are given as *Troas*, *Thebais*, and *Hippolytus*. The *Octavia* is in *A* but not *E*.

Ennius and Pacuvius, and above all by Accius (170–*c.* 85 B.C.). The titles and surviving fragments of these poets indicate that they derived their themes largely from the Greek tragedians; it is harder to say what modifications they made in the structure of fifth-century Greek tragedy, but it is at least probable that they retained the chorus.[2]

Accius was the last great tragic playwright in Rome, and in the closing years of the Republic and the early Empire the Muse inspired few new tragic poets. The theatre did not die, though it had increasingly to contend with different and more garish forms of entertainment: there were revivals of earlier plays, and some notable new ones—Pollio was famous for his tragedies, Varius, the friend of Horace and Virgil, wrote a *Thyestes* (29 B.C.), and Ovid a *Medea*, both of which received lavish praise.[3] But the nature of play-performances was changing as public taste altered, and by the Neronian period the production of complete plays, though not entirely abandoned, seems to have been largely replaced by the presentation of scenes or extracts, and the art of acting had become the more restricted art of giving a solo virtuoso recital. Thus, in Tacitus' *Dialogus* (dramatic date 74–5) Curiatius Maternus had recently been reciting (*recitaverat*) his tragedy *Cato*, and under Nero he had acquired fame *recitatione tragoediarum* (*Dial.* 2 and 11). It should be stressed that this is a controversial matter and the evidence is inconclusive, but some such picture of dramatic literature in the mid first century A.D. fits the known facts fairly well, and helps to explain some of the formal features of Seneca's tragedies.

In order to understand these plays we must also bear in mind one dominant feature in the educational system of the time, and that was the concentration on rhetorical studies, on learning the art of declaiming. Schools of rhetoric had at least from the time of Cicero's youth begun to form the recognized third stage of a Roman boy's education, following his studies

[2] On this difficult point see H. D. Jocelyn, *The Tragedies of Ennius*, Cambridge, 1967, 18 ff., 30 ff.

[3] Tacitus, *Dialogus* 12, Quintilian x. 1. 98.

under a *litterator* and then a *grammaticus*; but by the early Empire this training under a *rhetor* had acquired a greatly increased complexity and importance, and its effect on literature was becoming much more strongly marked. We know a great deal about the teaching at these schools largely through Seneca's own father, whose interest in the subject led him to make the collections of *suasoriae* and *controversiae* which give us a clear idea of the nature of these exercises, the staple diet of the students of rhetoric. Briefly, *suasoriae* were speeches composed to be spoken in the person of historical characters debating with themselves how to deal with some great crisis in their lives; *controversiae* were speeches for both sides of a debate on some invented topic involving a legal or moral issue. The problem to be debated was often of an extraordinarily far-fetched, intricate, and contrived nature, which thus put to an extreme test the wit and verbal resource of the student: interest and merit lay not so much in deciding on the moral or legal rights of the case as in the linguistic inventiveness and subtlety displayed in marshalling one's own arguments or capping those of one's opponent. This fostered a taste for the clever use of language for its own sake, and it is easy to see that the literature as well as the oratory of the first century A.D. was deeply affected by the techniques of declamatory rhetoric. To some extent, of course, rhetoric had been endemic in Latin literature from its early days, but the 'Silver Age' of Latin prose and poetry shows in a greatly increased degree a love of rhetorical techniques: epigram, contrived balance and antithesis, striking verbal effects of all kinds, and above all the *sententia*—a pithy thought pithily expressed. Writers naturally varied in the extent to which they showed these characteristics, but Lucan may be taken as an extreme example in verse, and Seneca himself on almost any page of his treatises and letters illustrates the fashionable tricks in prose. It is likely that he inherited his father's particular interest as well as being a child of his age, and when he turned to writing tragedies it was inevitable that they should exemplify the popular literary tendencies.

The first essential for the appreciation of these tragedies is to come to terms with the rhetoric that informs them through and through. They illustrate all the declamatory elements outlined above, in particular the use of epigram and the *sententia*, and because of the static nature of their plots, their unsubtle characterization, their profusion of set-piece speeches, and their preoccupation with horror and blood, they have long since lost the wide appeal they once enjoyed (see below, section 4). Seneca followed the structure as well as the themes of Greek tragedy, using a chorus to divide episodes of dialogue or monologue, retaining stock figures like the nurse and the messenger, and using the iambic trimeter (as in Greek) as the standard metre for dialogue and a variety of lyric metres for the choruses. The old debate on whether the plays were acted or recited need raise little dust nowadays: in view of the known conditions of drama in the Neronian age discussed above and certain characteristics of the plays themselves, it is generally agreed that anything like a full-scale production is most unlikely, though of course the individual declaimer or actor in reciting the play, or extract from it, would have introduced whatever histrionic effects he liked of movement and gesticulation to enliven his own performance. Without analysing the controversy in detail, it is worth stressing that the old argument against staging of the plays, based on the grounds of the violence and bloodshed which would have been visible, will cut no ice with anyone who considers some of the effusions which were successfully performed on the Elizabethan stage,[4] and who recollects what the Romans were used to seeing in the arena. Rather we should note the basic lack of dramatic continuity in the action of some of the plays, the overriding importance of the individual scene, and some internal features, like the frequent uncertainty about the entrances and exits of characters, and the detailed circumstantial

[4] So the fact that Seneca ignores Horace's precept 'ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet', *A.P.* 185, is not an argument against production, but if Seneca was in any case not writing for the stage he would not feel himself bound by the Greek convention of excluding violence from the visible stage.

descriptions by characters of events or activities on the stage which would be visible to the audience of an acted play (see note on 382 ff.). These points taken individually are not conclusive, but they combine to banish almost all doubts on the question.

It is more interesting to speculate on Seneca's reasons for exploring this curious literary form, though the answer is not easier to find. It has been suggested that Seneca was using the dramatic form as a vehicle for Stoic moral teaching similar to that of the prose works.[5] But while we certainly find Stoic sentiments in profusion throughout the tragedies—and Stoic resignation can appear a consoling and edifying reaction to the blows of fate and overpowering moral dilemmas in which they abound—it is arbitrary to force a system of teaching on the plays as a whole, and not everyone will agree that Stoic lessons are to be derived from the treatments of individual plots. We should probably settle for a less august motive, and, bearing in mind Seneca's preoccupation with language and with the potential range of the declamatory style, consider the possibility that he simply wanted to present the old tales in a new dramatic form. From the schools he may have derived the idea of the characters of legend, and human beings generally, as type-figures—the tyrant, the loyal son, the suffering wife, and so on—and by exaggerating characteristics and polarizing contrasts he could both simplify and intensify his picture of struggling, passionate humanity. His framework was Greek legend, and his tools were mainly language and the clash of arguments, whether between different characters or in a self-debating monologue. At his worst he is extraordinarily turgid and bombastic; at his best he can show quite movingly the pathos and futility of human suffering. He has not on the whole a lyric bent, but occasionally there are passages of great beauty, like the lovely *aubade* in the first chorus of the *Hercules Furens*. For those who want a short-list of the better plays it might be said that the *Troades*, *Medea*, and

[5] See articles by B. M. Marti in *TAPA* 76 (1945), 216 ff. and *REL* 27 (1949), 189 ff.

Phaedra have on the whole less of the Senecan extravagance, and are the most palatable to modern taste.

The plays are undatable, in spite of efforts based on various criteria to locate them at some point in his career.[6] Speculation is unprofitable, but one can bear in mind the years of exile, 41–9, when time hung heavy, and an experiment in literary drama might have satisfied a craving for mental stimulation.

3. *The* Medea *legend and Seneca's treatment of it*

The passion and violence associated with the story of Medea made it an obvious choice for the kind of dramatic treatment Seneca was attempting. The witch-princess, whose love and whose hatred equally drove her to appalling deeds, had a wide appeal, and the story was immensely popular with writers, dramatic and otherwise, before and after Seneca. It appears early, in Hesiod, *Theogony* 992 ff. and Pindar, *Pythian* iv, an extensive treatment of the Argonautic expedition. About six Greek and about six Latin *Medea* plays are known, but only fragments survive apart from Euripides' (431 B.C.) and Seneca's plays. The Latin playwrights include Ennius, Accius (a fair number of fragments each), and Ovid (two lines only). Ovid also treated the legend at length in his *Metamorphoses* vii. 1–424, and in the twelfth of the *Heroides*, an imagined letter to Jason from the deserted Medea. The only other version of much interest to the study of Seneca's play is the epic *Argonautica* of Apollonius Rhodius (third century B.C.), particularly the third and fourth books, where Medea plays a part in the story.[7]

One of the most familiar phases of the legend concerns the period when Medea and Jason were in exile at Corinth,

[6] See, for example, O. Herzog in *Rh. Mus.* 77 (1928), 51 ff., and M. Coffey's critique in *Lustrum* 2 (1957), 150.

[7] Other accounts of Medea include Apollodorus, i. 9. 23 ff.; Diodorus Siculus, iv. 46 ff.; Hyginus, *fabulae* 22–7; Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* vi et seq.; a tragedy *Medea* in the form of a Virgilian cento, possibly by Hosidius Geta (*c.* 200 A.D.), which survives in the Latin Anthology (Baehrens, *PLM* iv. 219 ff.); a hexameter poem *Medea* by Dracontius (fifth century A.D.; Baehrens, *PLM* v. 192 ff.).

and it is here that the action takes place in the plays of Euripides and Seneca. After assisting Jason to obtain the Golden Fleece at Colchis, Medea eloped with him and accompanied him back to his native Iolcus; she there engineered the death of Jason's uncle Pelias, they were forced to flee, and they took refuge with Creon in Corinth. Jason here abandoned Medea for the king's daughter, and Medea in revenge destroyed her and killed her own and Jason's children.

So far as we can judge, Seneca's chief model was Euripides' play, but he made substantial structural alterations, such as eliminating the Aegeus scene and reducing the Jason/Medea scenes, enlarging the nurse's role, and reversing the sympathies of the chorus. (The more significant links with, and divergences from, Euripides are noted in the commentary.) Of other possible models Ovid's lost *Medea* has been a favourite source of speculation. In his edition of the tragedies Leo (Vol. I, 163 ff.) pointed out that Seneca's Medea displays a high degree of frenzy throughout the play compared with Euripides' portrayal of her, and, arguing from Ovid's treatment of her character in *Heroides* xii and from the two surviving lines of his *Medea*, he suggested that this play was a major influence on Seneca. Seneca must certainly have read Ovid's play, just as he certainly knew *Metamorphoses* vii and *Heroides* xii, but Ovid's habit of self-quotation and the evidence of two fragments cannot lead us to the firm conclusion that the Medea of his surviving poems and the Medea of his lost play were identical creations. No doubt Seneca's heroine is in many ways unlike Euripides', and it is likely that Ovid's Medea was nearer to Seneca's, but more than that we cannot safely say (see note on 123). One other source should be stressed: Seneca was evidently familiar with Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* (justly famous for its account of the birth of Medea's love for Jason in the third book), as the commentary tries to indicate where the links seem clear.

But discussion of sources must not obscure the fact that Seneca's play is an original creation. The difficulty is to discuss

it as 'drama', for, as suggested above, it is only in a modified sense dramatic. Medea is a woman who has done much wrong and loved not wisely; but she has a claim to sympathy, and a case, and the play is fundamentally an exploration of this case, as it is put to the nurse, Creon, Jason, and above all to herself. This is what interests Seneca. In the course of the play her character does not 'develop' (this is probably true of most of Seneca's protagonists): she simply loses hope and becomes increasingly deranged, and, in the end, because of her extraordinary powers she destroys and ruins others as she has herself been ruined. The other characters are in effect foils to her passionate dialectic: she dominates the play totally. In addition Seneca has thrown in a long and brilliant incantation scene, and some quite pleasing choruses, which compare favourably with those of his other plays in variety of metre and theme. The play is of considerable interest, but it depends for its enjoyment on a suspension of the usual preconceptions with which we approach the reading of drama.

Since antiquity Medea and her troubles have continued to interest playwrights, and some of the subsequent versions derive, often quite closely, from Seneca. The following are worth mentioning: in England, Richard Glover's *Medea* (1761), of little interest except to students of the legend; in France, Corneille's *Médée* (1635: his first tragedy) and Longepierre's *Médée* (1694), both strongly indebted to Seneca; the Austrian poet Grillparzer wrote a *Medea* (1820), a powerful and effective play, as the third part of his trilogy *Das goldene Vlies*; and in our own day Anouilh's *Médée* (1946) is a testimony to the continued influence of Seneca, whose lines Anouilh virtually translates in several parts of the play.[8]

Traces of Seneca's *Medea* can also be found in later plays not on the same theme, e.g. Gregorio Corraro's *Progne* (in Latin: written *c.* 1429, printed 1558), and Fulke Greville's *Alaham* (*c.* 1600).[9]

[8] See J. C. Lapp in *Modern Language Notes* 69 (1954), 183 ff.

[9] For this play see *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville* Vol. II, ed. G. Bullough, Edinburgh, 1938.

Finally, one non-dramatic account of the legend worth mentioning is William Morris's *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867), a long poem, heavily overlaid with medieval trappings, but retaining still a kind of period charm.

In art too Medea was a favourite subject for representation in antiquity.[10] Numerous vases survive depicting scenes from her saga, and of the many known paintings the most celebrated was by Timomachus of Byzantium, who sold it to Julius Caesar for a handsome sum.[11]

Since antiquity, too, painters have continued to be fascinated by the legend, and there have been several operas, notably the *Médée* of Cherubini (1797). Few tragic figures have inspired artistic endeavour in so many fields.

4. *The influence of Seneca's tragedies*

The astonishing impact of the tragedies on later drama, especially French and English, is widely recognized and well documented, though the wrong emphasis has sometimes been placed on the elements of these works supposed to have most affected later writers. But enthusiastic acceptance was long in coming, and in the later first and the second centuries there was much criticism of Seneca's style—his prose style certainly, but many of the strictures would apply to his verse. Quintilian, who preached the gospel of Ciceronianism in style, condemns Seneca in measured and judicious terms (x. 1. 125 ff.). It is noteworthy too that Quintilian does not include Seneca in his list of Latin tragedians, though he quotes from the *Medea* as Seneca's (see note on 453), and refers to a discussion on tragic diction between Seneca and Pomponius Secundus (viii. 3. 31). Fronto, in a letter to his friend and former pupil Marcus Aurelius, and Aulus Gellius also speak slightingly of Seneca, not unnaturally in view of their archaizing literary practice.[12]

[10] See the excellent discussion on Medea in art in D. L. Page's edition of Euripides' *Medea*, lvii ff.

[11] There are several references to this famous painting: Pliny, *HN* xxxv. 136, 145, Plutarch, *Mor.* 18 a, *Anth. Pal.* xvi. 135, 136, 138, 139.

[12] Fronto in Loeb edn. ii. 102; Aulus Gellius xii. 2.

It should be noted that these three critics all concede that there is worthy ethical content to be found in Seneca.

By the end of the thirteenth century the tragedies were taking a first step towards fame through the activities of a group of Paduan humanists. Lovato Lovati wrote a brief note on Senecan metre, apparently based on a careful reading of the plays. The florilegist Geremia da Montagnone in compiling his *Compendium moralium notabilium* quoted extensively from them. Finally, in 1315 Mussato took the logical next step and wrote a successful Senecan tragedy in Latin, *Ecerinis*. At just this time, too, in England the Dominican Nicholas Trevet wrote his commentary on Seneca's tragedies, which has survived.[13] By the end of the fifteenth century the tragedies were in print, and in the course of the sixteenth they helped to change the nature of tragedy in France and England.

Full details cannot here be rehearsed, and the story is a familiar one.[14] In France the effect of Seneca was strong on Garnier's tragedies (1563–90), and Garnier influenced others. In England, starting with the schools and universities, with the writing of Latin imitations and the production of Latin plays, the Senecan model became all-pervasive. Important landmarks were: 1562, Norton and Sackville's *Gorboduc* produced, in a sense the prototype of the English Senecan play; 1581, Seneca's *Tenne Tragedies* (by various translators) collected and published by Thomas Newton (the *Medea* was done by John Studley in 1566); *c.* 1590, Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* appeared, immensely successful and an important advance in the structure of English tragedies. Finally, the genius of Shakespeare which now appeared was also receptive to the Senecan manner, whether directly or through his own predecessors, and, more especially in some early plays (e.g. *Titus*, *Richard III*), he gave a kind of vicarious immortality to Seneca's achievement in tragedy.

[13] Trevet's commentary, which is largely a paraphrase, is of virtually no use to a modern editor: see E. Courtney in *CR* xi (1961), 166.

[14] See, for example, the useful account in F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy*, Cambridge, 1922.

But critics have sometimes stressed the wrong elements in Elizabethan tragedy as derivative from Seneca, and the crudest excesses of the 'revenge' tragedy—the horrors of murders, mutilations, ghosts, and so forth—are usually laid at his door. Certainly the example of Seneca would not discourage these features, but they are evident too in earlier vernacular drama, which thus prepared fruitful ground for the arrival of the Senecan seed.[15] The more important legacy of Seneca to early English tragedy was the declamatory style, to which the Elizabethan dramatists were particularly receptive—the profusion of *sententiae*, epigram, and word-play, the use of stichomythia (dialogue in alternating lines), the set speech and the soul-searching monologue.[16] His influence is possible too in some formal elements, e.g. the five-act structure (a controversial point) and the use of a chorus. Some idea of the impact of the Senecan style on Shakespeare can be gained by a study of (to choose at random) *Richard III*, IV. iv, where the rhetoric of Queen Margaret's speeches beginning 'If ancient sorrow be most reverend', and the stichomythia in the exchanges between Elizabeth and Richard, starting at 'Infer fair England's peace by this alliance', show the real debt to Seneca of the Elizabethans.[17]

The attitude of the sixteenth century, then, can be represented by Giraldi Cinthio, who in his *Discorsi* on tragedy (1543) praised Seneca above the Greeks (a view shared by J. C. Scaliger). The seventeenth century continued to admire him, and Dryden (himself, like Giraldi, a tragedian) can be its spokesman in his *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (1668), in which he refers appreciatively to Seneca.[18] This century in England

[15] For arguments against over-stressing the Senecan influence see G. K. Hunter in *Shakespeare Survey* 20 (1967), 17 ff.

[16] The delight of the Elizabethans in Senecan *sententiae* can be seen in Sir William Cornwallis's *Discourses upon Seneca the Tragedian* (1601), the first English book devoted entirely to Seneca, which consists of meditative commentaries on eleven *sententiae* from the plays, and suggests that interest lay in these rather than the plays as a whole.

[17] See T. S. Eliot's brilliant essay 'Seneca in Elizabethan Translation' (noted in Bibliography).

[18] Amongst other comments Dryden praises the 'gravity and sententiousness' of the *Medea*—though he thought it was ascribed to Ovid (Everyman edn., p. 41).

showed no significant developments in Senecan influence, but in France the classical theatre reached its peak with Corneille and Racine, and to a large extent it was a Senecan peak. The debt here is clear and uncontroversial, and the commentary will refer to the more interesting links between the Medea plays of Seneca and Corneille.

By the eighteenth century, if the tragedies were looked at by critics, it was with a cooler eye. Thus Lessing in his *Laokoön* (1766) referred to the characters in Seneca's tragedies as 'prize-fighters in the cothurnus',[19] and expressed a low opinion of Roman tragedy.

The plays have never recovered their former reputation, and the epithets 'Senecan' and 'rhetorical' applied to literature are nowadays usually terms of abuse. No doubt the plays do not deserve the high praise they once received, but they do deserve to be understood, and when understood they can be enjoyed. They are a by-product of a most important phase in Roman education and literature, and they are a unique survival.

5. *Text and Manuscripts*

The manuscript tradition of the tragedies is divided into two branches. One is represented almost solely by E, the so-called 'Etruscus', of about the end of the eleventh century. The other is known as A, or the 'interpolated' tradition, of which there exist over three hundred manuscripts, the purest and most reliable being C, P (both first half of the thirteenth century), and S (fourteenth century). The two branches probably diverged before the end of the fourth century. The supreme authority once assigned by Leo to E has long since been demolished, and the tendency now is towards giving the A

[19] *Laokoön* iv. 3: 'Klopffechter im Kothurne'. Lessing's point was that gladiatorial deaths in the arena, where a display of human nature and feeling was eschewed, affected Senecan tragedy, which under the influence of such 'artistic' death scenes descended to bombast.

tradition an equal hearing in difficult cruces. This change in attitude is the result of work on the manuscripts which started in the early years of this century with C. E. Stuart, W. Hoffa, and T. Düring, and has been continued by, among others, G. Carlsson, R. H. Philp, and G. C. Giardina. (See Bibliography for references. Philp's article (1968) is a valuable survey of the tradition and different scholars' approaches to it; Giardina's edition (1966) has the most reliable apparatus to date.) As a result of this work knowledge of the manuscripts has greatly advanced, and for the purposes of this edition I have not attempted a fresh recension. The apparatus offered is a select one, in which, it should be noted, the symbol A is abandoned as unspecific and misleading. The text of the *Medea* does not present many insoluble problems, and in general I have recorded only the more interesting or important variants and conjectures.

6. *Metre*

Dialogue. The metre of Senecan dialogue, as in the Greek tragedians, is regularly the iambic trimeter, a six-foot (or three-metra) line based on the iambus ∪ –. Several equivalents are allowed for the iambus, and the full scheme of the trimeter is as follows, the bracketed feet being rarely found:

1	2	3	4	5	6
∪–	∪–	∪–	∪–	(∪–)	∪⏑
––		––		––	
∪∪∪	∪∪∪	∪∪∪	∪∪∪		
–∪∪		–∪∪		(–∪∪)	
∪∪–		(∪∪–)		∪∪–	
(∪∪∪∪)					

The trochaic tetrameter catalectic, a 7½-foot line based on the trochee –∪, and also allowing equivalents for the trochee (spondee – –, anapaest ∪ ∪ –, tribrach ∪ ∪ ∪, dactyl – ∪ ∪), introduces the incantation:

cōmprĕcōr vūlgūs sĭlēntūm vōsquĕ fērālēs dĕōs 740

grăvĭŏr ūnī pōēnă sĕdĕāt cōniŭgīs sŏcĕrō mĕī 746

Lyric. The lyric metres found in the choruses and incantation are:

anapaestic: ∪∪– allowing as equivalents the spondee – – and dactyl –∪∪, but avoiding a run of four short syllables:

āiīdāx nĭmĭīūm quī frĕtă prīmūs
rătĕ tām frăgilī pērfīdă rūpīt 301–2

glyconic: – – – ∪∪ – ∪ –

vīncīt vīrgĭnĕūs dĕcōr 75

minor asclepiad: – – – ∪∪ – – ∪∪ – ∪⏑

ād rēgūm thălămōs nūmĭnĕ prōspĕrō 56

sapphic: the usual sapphic stanza is three hendecasyllables of the form – ∪ – – – ∪ – ∪ – ⏑ followed by the adonius – ∪ ∪ – ⏑ (but see introductory note on 579 ff.):

nūllă vīs flāmmāē tŭmĭdīvĕ vēntī
tāntă, nēc tēlī mĕtŭēndă tōrtī,
quāntă cūm cōniūnx vĭdŭātă tāedīs
ārdĕt ĕt ōdĭt. 579–82

Points of special interest or difficulty are discussed in the commentary.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

THE literature on Seneca's tragedies is enormous and I have merely tried to offer a realistic selection of the more useful works. More extensive lists may be found in Schanz–Hosius, *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* ii[4], 1935, 456 ff.; Coffey, *Lustrum* 2 (1957), 113 ff.; Mette, *Lustrum* 9 (1964), 18 ff., 160 ff. Particularly important works are marked with an asterisk.

Editions of all the tragedies

(L) indicates a Latin commentary

Tragedies first printed by Andreas Gallicus at Ferrara, *c.* 1484.

*H. AVANTIUS, Venice, 1517.

J. LIPSIUS and H. COMMELINUS, Heidelberg, 1588–9 (L).

JOS. SCALIGER and D. HEINSIUS, Leiden, 1611 (L).

T. FARNABY, Leiden, 1623 (L).

*J. F. GRONOVIUS, Leiden, 1661 (L).

*J. C. SCHROEDER, Delft, 1728 (L, Variorum).

F. H. BOTHE, Leipzig, 1819 (L).

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codd.	consensus omnium codicum

SENECA

MEDEA

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