

huic uni rei vivit: Slave Training in the Younger Seneca

In *De Tranquillitate Animi*, Seneca contrasts his preference for simplicity against the trappings typical of Roman *luxuria*. Seneca represents himself embracing customary elements of idyllic life, eating readily available food upon sturdy plates at a table of no significance (*De Tranq.* I.1.7). Seneca's Stoicism recommends this simple life, since nature guarantees that all of our needs can easily be satisfied, while *luxuria* is characteristically complicated and extravagant. Included in this description of the simple life, Seneca characterizes his preference of slave: "I like an untrained servant and a simple homebred slave" (*placet minister incultus et rudis vernula*) (*De Tranq.* I.1.7). As part of Seneca's invective upon *luxuria*, I suggest that the simple and uneducated slave serves to contrast against the specialized urban slaves who performed specific in the wealthy households in Rome.

Such highly and discretely trained slaves were an important element of conspicuous consumption in Rome. The household of Livia, for example, subsisted on the efforts of slaves and freedmen fulfilling, according to Susan Treggiari's estimates, at least 55 distinct jobs, ranging from cooks to hairdressers to silversmiths (Treggiari 1975). Likewise, Trimalchio's spectacle of wealth is waged as much by his cooks as by his entertainers, not to mention Trimalchio's accountant who interrupts the banquet to deliver a report of his master's estates (Petr. 53). In his attacks on *luxuria*, Seneca frequently rebukes masters for their reliance on numerous and specialized slaves (*Epp.* 27, 47, 95). A notable example includes the exotic bird carver (*alius pretiosas aves scindit*), who lives for this task alone (*huic uni rei vivit*) (*Ep.* 47.6). While the poor slave is reduced to the importance of his task, Seneca finds the master more wretched (*miserior*) who requires the duty be performed than the slave who performs it (*Ep.* 47.6). Seneca's criticism of slave training is not limited to these specialized roles within the

wealthy Roman household. Elsewhere, Seneca also vilifies the training schools of gladiators, which strips men of their humanity (cf. *de Ira* II.8.2-3, *Ep.* 95.33).

This paper will investigate Seneca's representation of slave training, including his apparent rejection of the pervasive role played by specialized slaves in Rome. Furthermore, I will investigate the implications of Seneca's stance for the treatment and education of slaves in general, whom Seneca assures are slaves in body alone, but remain free in mind and spirit (*de Ben.* III.20). Specifically, I will demonstrate that Seneca's characterization of both specialized training and gladiatorial training suggests that these dehumanize the slave, attempting to claim both their mind and their body under the banner of slavery.

Bibliography

Treggiari, Susan. "Jobs in the Household of Livia." *Papers of the British School at Rome*, Vol. 43 (1975), pp. 58.