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words

Seneca on anger, mercy and sadistic homicide

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Seneca (4 BCE–65 CE), while writing *On Anger* and *On Mercy*, recognised wickedness as requiring proportionate correction. He describes dispassionate punishment as similar to a physician deciding on appropriate remedies according to severity and circumstance. Seneca also described in withering terms those who took pleasure in multiplying and prolonging pain, taking pleasure in cruelty and killing as a delight. He termed this diseased – a condition of utter moral depravity. Having anticipated Krafft-Ebing's account of sadistic homicide, Seneca may also have influenced fictional homicidal psychiatrist Dr Hannibal Lecter, describing a mentally unwell slave who ate the liver of his victim.

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